

It is good to be here today, at a place that formed me and started me on a journey that landed back a stone's throw from Good Shepherd. .Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Good Shepherd.

Thank you.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and Of the Holy Spirit Amen. Christ is risen!!! Try as we might to put Easter in a chocolate bar or bunny or an colored egg, we can't help but escape the reality that Easter disorients us, our lives, our hearts, our dreams and our expectations. Even the apostles needed time to "get Easter" to figure out how to live in a world where resurrection was possible, where death had been defeated, and where God's promises proved true. After Easter the risen Christ does all sorts of unusual things, he appears Mary as the gardener. He passes through locked doors to see his disciples, huddled away. He does an encore for Thomas a week later, and then he appears to cook his hungry disciple's breakfast on the shore. Jesus keeps appearing, keeps explaining, and keeps coming back. God relentlessly appears, one Gospel says that there were so many signs and appearances, they didn't bother to write them all down, another said there were so many all the books of the world could not contain them. God wants all of us to get the new reality.

Today's travelers are traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are disappointed because Jesus didn't live up to their expectations. They thought they knew what God would do God would liberate Israel from Roman rule. This pair wanted power, an armed uprising like the zealots, weapons, battles, bloodshed, and dare I say it, a regime change. They never fathomed that God's plan for redemption was different. It didn't cross their mind that God had another way. They had been too formed by their culture, their friends, and their lust for power. We don't like to admit it, but sometimes

we miss what **God is doing in** our lives and world because we were too worried about the fact that God is not doing what **We want God to do.**

Let's give our travelers the benefit of the doubt. They might have seen the crowds, the political machinations, felt the earthquakes around Jesus trial and death. They didn't get a rebellion, They get a cross, a savior hung and mocked by Roman guards, sealed away in a tomb given by a powerful, but secret follower. Like the travelers we all want God to fulfill our dreams our hopes our wishes our plans. We deliver God the blueprint and say, "God, build, deliver". We want a regime changing messiah that will make us and those we love powerful, wealthy and happy who will reward our enemies and punish our friends. . When they don't get what they want, they flee, looking for another savior, another messiah, another teacher who will give them what they want

We all have Holy weeks in our lives, tragedies and disasters that send us running like this pair, trying to make sense of things, looking for God, looking for direction, for hope. "I've been faithful to my husband or wife for twenty-five years but my marriage is ending, I've worked for all these years at my company, and got laid off because of cutbacks, I've been so healthy but the doctor says its cancer, I've prayed so hard and didn't get x or y or z, the police called there has been a car crash how could this happen. . God is supposed to deliver and we're left in a lurch." You've been there, you've asked questions, and you've been left wondering, angry, and wandering.

. But then a mysterious traveler shows up. He listens to this pair, and asks questions. They are shocked he doesn't know what's going on. Then, this traveler begins to teach them from the Scriptures of Israel. Perhaps he begins with the prophets saying

that about why God would come in suffering, perhaps prophecies about the messiah defeating death. Maybe he reminded them that God promised, “When you walk through the waters, I will be with you, when you walk through the fires they shall not consume you, for you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you.” He doesn’t talk about rebellions; he talks about washing feet, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, making the blind see, casting out demons, touching lepers. The pair on the road to Emmaus is reminded that their story of redemption is not God’s story of redemption, that the number of people God wants to redeem is far larger than their political boundaries. This pair had the right messiah. They just had the wrong dreams.

. It’s easy to get caught in the wrong story all sorts of forces, the media, our parents, our spouses try to tell us who we are or should. Amid these forces, we must remember God’s story. I sat with the youth pastor in Northern Ireland, who worked at the boundary between Protestant and Catholic communities bitterly divided in Belfast. For most of the year, he built trust between the Protestant and Catholic youth in his group. But then came what the Irish call the marching season comes, when British troops protect British Parades going through Irish Catholic neighborhoods to celebrate the British conquest of Northern Ireland. During marching season he said, my youth group breaks up, and throws rocks at each other, stands on opposite sides of the street, they forget that they are God’s children who have gathered at church, they become British and Irish, and that’s the story they live. When marching season is over, and I gather them all again, angry, bitter, divided, and remind them that we gather not at British or Irish but as God’s children, all of us. That story, not the stories told on the marches that make them who they are. Jesus reminds this pair who they are.

Then, these travelers stop for the night. They ask this stranger to stay with them. They are hospitable people; the teaching has started to resonate with them. So this traveler stays. Then he takes the bread, breaks it, and then, they know in whose presence they sit. They have to have been there somewhere along the line when Jesus did this, they might have seen him break bread before. Jesus, who by this time has a reputation for being a rather exceptional dinner guest who rarely follows etiquette, doesn't say anything else, he vanishes. But they have seen all they need to see..

The tough news is that the life of faith is like that. God appears, briefly, powerfully, suddenly, graciously, and then it seems, and only seems God vanishes. We're not given constant communion, the full plan, and all the details. What we see, amid the struggles, uncertainties, and heartbreak of our lives, are moments of Grace, moments when God's story and action of forgiveness, redemption, and love breaks through love our sin, our sorrow, our disappointment, our confusion. That's why we come here, to hear the story again, to have our dreams changed to God's dream, to break the bread, to remember what God has made known to us, what God intends for us. In wine and bread and in fellowship with one another, Christ pulls along side of us, and explains it again.

For twenty-five years the people of Good Shepherd have walked the road, come alongside travelers to tell them the story, to break the bread for amid life's moments of joyous and terrifying. You have felt God alongside you too. My family joined Good Shepherd when a stranger, who eventually revealed that his name was David Sloop, knocked on our door to share the vision of a new church. Some of you were here for all that, some of you just joined, some left along time ago to find ourselves on a journey that lands us back here. What the church does is tell people God's story, to invite them to

believe and belong and serve and be formed by it. Each week you gather to hear the story and break the bread to remember and recognize God in your midst. Listen to your hearts, are they not, underneath all the chatter of the world, burning within you? Taste and see!! God walks with you, with priced feet, and wounded hands God keeps showing up, in wine, in bread, in baptism, promising you not an easy journey, but life abundant, in the presence of that, how can we do anything but proclaim with joy Christ is risen, Alleluia!!!

Amen