

Sermons at First Church

A Ministry of the Word

April 30, 2017

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First Presbyterian Church

Clarksburg, WV

Luke 24:13-35

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how (Jesus) had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:35 N.R.S.V.)

Show and Tell

Sam Walton the founder of the Wal-Mart stores was known not only for business genius, but also for his folksy down-home personality. One day while flying over in a helicopter over an interstate Walton noticed a string of Wal-Mart trucks below. He used his connection with someone high up in the State Police to have the lead truck stopped.

When the lead truck was stopped, all the other Wal-Mart trucks pulled over as well. The driver asked, what was going on, the police officer said, “There is no problem. Mr. Walton would like to speak to you.” Then the helicopter pilot landed Sam beside the road and he climbed up into the cab with the driver. He rode with that driver to the next truck stop and treated all the drivers to a friendly cup of coffee. Soon the story spread throughout the fleet of how the big boss himself had dropped in to talk with some of the drivers. (Homiletics/April 2017 pg. 71)

In our lesson from Luke, the big boss and risen Lord drops in to talk to two of his disciples. They are in despair. Their Lord has been killed and they don’t know what they are going to do. Even though Jesus is right in front of them, they don’t recognize him, so he opens the scriptures for them and shows how all of the prophets had said that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then enter into glory. At the end of the day, the disciples invite Jesus to stop with them for the night. While he was at table with them, he broke the bread and their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

Notice what happens next. The disciples are so excited that they cannot keep this news to themselves. They immediately set out to walk the eleven miles back to Jerusalem so that they can tell the other disciples. We have seen the Lord! He is risen!

Philip, Cassie, and Megan you are going to be entering a new world soon. You will be moving from your high school world to a college world. I have every confidence that you will be able to make this transition successfully. Nevertheless, along with the many good and wonderful things there will also come some new and scary things.

When those scary times come, when your world seems to turn upside down, remember who you are and remember whose you are. You are a precious child of God. You are loved and you are

not alone. Just as Jesus walked with those disciples along the road to Emmaus, so also he will be your companion. Whether you see him or not, whether you recognize him or not, he will be on the road with you.

When the disciples on the road to Emmaus were so frightened and lost, Jesus opened the scriptures for them. Later they would say, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

The church has given each of you a special study Bible. It is our sincere hope that you will keep this Bible with you and study it often. I had a member in my last church who used to talk about being “prayed up.” She meant that she spent time with her Lord each day. When a crisis came, she didn’t need to go into panic prayer. Her relationship with Christ was secure. She was “prayed up.” I hope that you will always be that way also in prayer and in Bible study.

Let me say one more thing about your Bibles. I have noticed that professionals are picky about their tools. After all if you are going to use a tool all the time in your work, you want a really good tool. My older brother worked as a carpenter the summer after he graduated from high school. The first thing he did was buy a good leather tool belt and a well balanced hammer. Both of those have seen much use over the years, but he still uses them and treasures them. We took care to give you quality study bibles. I hope that by the time you get to be my age your Bible will be well worn and much treasured.

Coming back to our scripture lesson again. After their experience with the risen Jesus, the disciples had to go tell someone. They wanted to get back to the other disciples and to share the good news. The eleven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus must have seemed like a long journey when they were dispirited and trudging along. But the eleven miles back to Jerusalem seemed like nothing at all as they joyfully returned.

If we read on a little bit more toward the end of the chapter, Jesus tells his disciples that they are to be his witnesses. What does that mean? Well, a witness tells what he has seen, or heard, or experienced.

A fellow pastor tells about being called to court as a witness in a child custody case. The court was not interested in what he did for a living. They didn’t care what his opinion was on how to raise children. They wanted to know. What did you see? What did you hear?

Many Christians are afraid of witnessing to others about their faith. So many make excuses and simply don’t talk about their faith. I hope that you are not going to go down that path.

Sometimes people say, my witness is in the way I live my life. I understand where that comes from. If your actions do not match your words, no one will believe you. If you talk about how joyful life in Christ is, but you always go around with a frown on your face. Who would believe you?

Still I would submit to you that there must be words with the actions. If you go around happy and generous, people will know that you are a good person. But they will not know that you are a Christian. There are many good, decent people who are not Christians.

Being kind and loving towards others, builds relationships. That is an important part of your witness. The people with whom you have a good relationship will listen when you tell about your experience of God. A stranger they might dismiss out of hand. But they know you. They will want to listen to what you have to share with them.

Some people don't witness to their faith, because they think everyone already knows about Jesus. While most people in our society are familiar with the name Jesus, they know very little about him or his teachings. How can they come to faith without hearing?

Some people don't witness to their faith because they are afraid that they don't know enough. If you are in this camp, let me put your mind at ease. What people most need to hear about is your experience of Christ. It is nice if you know chapter and verse of many helpful Bible passages, but that is not what people most need to hear. People need to hear about your experience, and you alone are an expert on that.

You don't need to have a story like the burning bush from which God spoke to Moses or the blinding light from which Christ spoke to Paul. You just need to tell your story.

Tell people about a time when you felt God's presence very close to you.

When I was about eight years old, I went with my Dad and older brother to bring the cows back from a distant pasture, through the woods to home. One of the neighbor's cows had gotten in with our herd. So when we came to the Hick's road, my Dad told me to drive our cows on home while he and my brother drove the neighbor's cow back to their farm. My Dad knew that if I just kept behind the cows they would go home. But I didn't know that.

I knew that somewhere along the Hick's road, we had to turn off and go out a ridge to home. I was not sure where that was and I became convinced that the cows had gone right by the turn off. So I tried to call them back, they turned and looked at me, but they wouldn't follow me.

By that time I was scared, lost, and crying. I started back up the road toward where my Daddy and brother had gone. I was praying that God would help me find them. Before long I heard them coming around a bend in the road. I was so relieved. I found out later that they had just got back on the road. A few minutes earlier and I would have missed them completely. That is one of the first experiences of God's help that I can remember.

Oh, and the cows made it safely home without me. When we finally got there they were all waiting by the gate to be let into the field.

Don't be afraid to tell others of the times when God has seemed very close to you. It's your story. You are the expert witness.

Another thing that we can all do is invite others to church. Again share your story about what you love about your church and God's love. Tell people why you come here and invite them to join you.

So here is my challenge to you who are called to be witnesses. That would be all of us right? Next Sunday is Scottish Heritage Sunday. It is one of the highlights of our church year. We are going to have bagpipers, special music, banners and flags, a special and outstanding preacher, and Scottish refreshments for afterwards. As you are leaving today, you will be handed a stack of five cards advertizing next Sunday.

Statistics tell us that every church member knows at least five people who are not going to church. So hand people one of these cards and invite them to come with you next Sunday. You can give them to your neighbor, the check out clerk at the grocery store, the person beside you at the gym. this week - you get the picture.

With God's help let's fill this church to bursting next Sunday.

Amen.