

Countryside Trinity Church

Connections

April 27, 2020 Edition

From Pastor Brant...

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" Luke 24:32, NRSV

This week we are invited to journey with two men who are very sad and disappointed with the way things turned out in their lives. The two men are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus and trying to make sense of what has happened over the course of the last week. They had such great hopes and expectations for who Jesus was and what Jesus would mean for them. But it didn't happen that way. They are left puzzled and pondering, trying to make sense of all that they have seen and heard. And in the midst of that confusion, frustration, and sadness, Jesus comes into their lives and asks them this question, "what are you talking about?" Their response is so heartfelt that we can imagine it for ourselves. They just stop, and turn their heads down. Their disappointment is so great that they can barely find the energy to give a response. Haven't you heard about Jesus of Nazareth? Don't you know about this guy who came into Jerusalem with such hoopla a week ago to loud shouts of hosanna? All of their confusion and emotion is caught up in their remark, ***But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.***

What do you think they meant by that, "to redeem Israel?" It may have meant that they had expected him to come and overthrow the government, to lead an uprising that would force the Romans to leave and for Israel to continue as a free nation. It may have meant for them a position of special power, wherein they would be part of a ruling party, that would go about cleaning up the land from foreigners. It may have been that they imagined themselves given positions of wealth and status. They don't really tell us what their expectations were, other than the fact that Jesus didn't meet them.

What do you think it means for you? What expectations do you have concerning what Christ will do for you? What will redemption be like for you? Will it mean any real changes for you? Do you think that Jesus will instantly make you a wonderful person, a saint who uses all her energy for the sake of others doing wonderfully creative ministry? Do you think that Jesus will instantly take away your craving for chocolate cake or banana pudding? Will Jesus empower you to leave behind your need for a drink? Do you think that Jesus will take away all of your flaws so that your wife will begin to brag about you to all of her friends. Do you think Jesus will take away that emptiness within you that drains you of energy and joy? Jesus might. Jesus has that kind of power. We all have expectations concerning how Jesus will save us, expectations that, from time to time, go unmet, leaving us feeling not only disappointed, not only sad, but hurt, really hurt, with the sense that God just doesn't care about us anymore.

This is where Jesus enters into the life of these two guys as they make their way to Emmaus. Jesus enters into their disappointment and sadness and transform it into a time of revelation and hope, where they experience and understand God's unlimited grace.

What is mysterious through most of this story is that for some reason, these two guys are kept from recognizing Jesus. It wasn't that they didn't know him, they did. It wasn't that he changed in some supernatural way, otherwise, how would they have recognized him at the end of the story. Perhaps they could just not perceive how someone who was crucified, dead, and buried, could be up and walking around. Their expectations of how God is at work in the world were so limited that they weren't able to make the connection.

How often do our expectations about what Jesus will do for us cause us to miss his presence with us? When we look for Jesus to change us, sometimes we miss the many choices before us when Jesus is right there with us, giving us the power to act differently from the ways we have acted in the past. When we look for Jesus to change our spouse, we may miss the chances we are given to see how the power of Christ can change our perspectives on the problems. When we think that Jesus is all about making our lives easier, we won't recognize Jesus when he places before us a challenge that requires all that we have to accomplish it.

So after hearing the confusion of the two, Jesus begins to reeducate them about who the Messiah is called to be. Using the books of the law, known as the books of Moses, and the writings of the prophets, Jesus begins to teach them about who God Messiahship 101. When the class is over, Jesus is ready to head off into some new direction and he seems anxious to get there. The two men noting the lateness of the hour, urge Jesus to stay with them. They offer him the simple kindness of a meal and a place to stay and with enough insistence that Jesus accepts the invitation, even if reluctant at first. As they gather around the table, and as Jesus serves the dinner in a way that looks very familiar to the Last Supper, their eyes are open and they finally recognize him for who he is. It is then that they recall ***"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us!"*** In their act of hospitality, this simple request to join in fellowship, the two men had unknowingly set the stage for further understanding of the relationship they have with God. Their deep longing to be in relationship with God had, for the moment, been fulfilled. And they went away with great joy and enthusiasm.

Each one of us has within us a burning desire to be both known and loved by God. John Calvin would gently remind us that we will always remain restless until we rest in God. This last month we have felt the longing to be out doing what we have always done, and connecting with people with whom we have connected. Christ will come to us in the longing, so be open and look that you might be open to what he has to share with you.

Combined Sunday Morning Worship on YouTube Continues

Our combined worship service with First and Second Presbyterian Churches continues this Sunday at 10:30 am. **Go to YouTube and search for First Presbyterian Church Saginaw.** This week Brant will be a liturgist, and our organist, Andrew Glynn will again be contributing music to the service.

As part of this service, I would invite you to participate in the offering time by making your regular offering to the church. Please take this time to either write your check to the church or mail it in, or use the Bill Pay option at your bank or use the new phone app using the instructions included in this newsletter. Mari and Kathy will insure that the mail is picked up and that your checks are processed. Please keep in mind any ministries to which you provide regular financial support that they might be sustained in this time where their might be reduced giving.

Weekly Zoom Beatitudes Bible Studies, Wednesdays at 7 pm

Our weekly studies on the Beatitudes continue via our Zoom account on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm. This week, on April 29th, we will be concluding our study of the beatitudes with *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

All members who have given their email addresses to the office are sent an invitation to participate on your laptop, tablet, smart phone or even your land line phone. You can download the Zoom app, and then use the information provided in the email to join the online meeting, or you can call the number given in the email. Though video is not needed to participate, we do love to see your smiling face as well as hear your voice. If you are having issues joining the meeting, please let the church office know so that we might be able to guide you through the necessary steps.

Next week we will begin a series on the Book of Acts. Though entitled "The Acts of the Apostles," this book really shares the work of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit guides, directs, and empowers the church to fulfill the mission it has been given by Jesus before his ascension in its first chapter.

Give+Church Phone App Now Available for Online Giving!

Included in this newsletter is a brochure that explains how to use your phone to make your tithes and offerings to support the ministries of Countryside Trinity Church. By following the instructions provided, you can securely make your gifts to Countryside Trinity without worrying about how you are going to get your check to the church. Please take the time to read the pamphlet and make your gifts, perhaps using it during our community worship service during its offering time.

Zoom for Lunch

One way people have always been connected is by sharing a meal, something that is a little bit more difficult to do these days. I would invite you, however, to use some of the different technologies that are available to share your meal time with others. You can facetime on your phone, or even share your meal time over the phone. So set up a lunch date with your friends. Just mute yourself when you slurp your soup.

Prayer Concerns

We lift up prayers for Lila Neumeyer, who is at St. Mary's Hospital and has been diagnosed with Covid-19. Let us also continue to lift up the members of our community and world who risk their health and the health of their families to ensure that we are safe and cared for, that they might be strengthened and protected.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Roger Scovill who will be retiring from his position at MCI Insurance in Bay City on April 30, 2020.