

Faith on the Information Highway Luke 24:13-35
Saint Marks UMC, Charleston, WV – Third Sunday of Easter (Mother's Day-May 8) 2011

^{24:13} Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles¹⁴ from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.' ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' ¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth,' who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.' Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' ²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah¹ should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us² while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The [Road to Emmaus](#) is a hard text on which to preach, because for everyone who has done the Emmaus Experience, they have their own memories, their own expectations, their own understandings of the text.

Therefore, I am going to re-name this text; I'm going to re-name the road on which the two disciples: Cleopas and FNU LNU traveled. I'm going to call it ***The Road Back to Jerusalem.***

For, like the disciples we read about in last week's Gospel, who were ***behind locked doors for fear***, these two disciples were also on the lam. They were running away from Jerusalem.

Passover is done. Jesus, their leader, the pinnacle of their messianic hopes is dead. There is no good reason to stay in Jerusalem. If what's good for the goose is good for the gander, then a disciple of Jesus has good reason to not want to stay in the town that caused Jesus to weep for its killing of prophets. So off they went.

BUT, something happened. Something made them GO BACK THAT SAME ROAD. Something caused them to get up and, even though it is evening, travel BACK TO JERUSALEM. Same road, but no longer is it the Road to Emmaus, the Road AWAY FROM THE SORROW AND DEATH OF JERUSALEM. Now – if this were an interstate, it would be on the other side of the median strip – now, this has become the ROAD BACK TO JERUSALEM.

Sometimes roads have several different names. For example, there is I-64. You can also see a sign on it that calls it the Cecil Underwood Highway. And, for a good number of miles, south and east of here, it is called I-64 and I-79. Roads can have different names. So this Road to Emmaus, today renamed Road Back to Jerusalem, I am also going to call it the INFORMATION HIGHWAY.

Oh, for sure, no one back then would have called it such a thing. It wouldn't have made any sense at all. But we understand. We have heard that term a lot. I don't know if Al Gore originated that name, back in the day when he "invented the internet," but it is a name we recognize.

In fact, the INFORMATION HIGHWAY is moving from metaphor to physical. Three weeks ago (April 21, 2011) the New York Post reported that:

The Car Connectivity Consortium has sprung up seeking to establish common solutions for linking smartphones, Internet and navigation systems to cars. Members so far include Daimler-Benz, General Motors, Honda, Hyundai, Toyota, VW, Alpine, LG Electronics, Nokia, Panasonic and Samsung.¹

The Information Highway – a term that would cause a first century Palestinian to scratch his head and say, "Huh?" is one that I suspect every American today recognizes and understands.

In a study now almost two years old (June 2009) the IAB (Interactive Advertising Bureau) says:

Interactive advertising is responsible for \$300 billion of economic activity in the U.S. ... It directly employs more than ... 3.1 million people.²

But that's *just* the *ADVERTISING* component of the Information Highway – the *billboards alongside the roadway*.

INFORMATION – the blacktop and concrete of the Information Highway – has become *one of the new gods worshipped in our culture today* (right up there with the right of privacy, but that's another sermon altogether.)

But, **if I document too much** more the far reaching impact of the CRAVING FOR INFORMATION and the ECONOMIC and SOCIAL impact that it has on our culture, and on

¹ http://www.nypost.com/p/entertainment/information_highway_3wkdhgc3ZtIrdNZFJUpfRK

² http://www.iab.net/insights_research/industry_data_and_landscape/economicvalue

us, then I could indeed exemplify that craving by filling my whole time with the information that is available on the internet to prove my point.

HERE IS THE POINT. **FACTS WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING ... Information, without Insight** ... misses the boat. And **that boat is LIFE ITSELF.**

Life is more than playing a Game of Trivial Pursuit. **The Kingdom of Heaven is more than playing a Game of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire."**

We **can have lots and lots of information**, but **without understanding and wisdom**, we are **misinformed**; we are **misguided**; we are **LOST**.

At the Academy of Spiritual Formation, one of our teachers said that during our reflection break, after his lecture, he went to the front door of the building and looked out and began to think that he was lecturing to a bunch of idiots. He saw several of us up on the little knoll just walking around in circles. BUT, when he realized that a labyrinth (similar, but not quite as nice, as the one in our courtyard here at the Church) was up on that little knoll, it made sense.

If you saw a woman run into a building that was burning, you would say she is an idiot! But if you learned that her child is in that building, you would say she is a MOTHER. And you could probably understand it.

Just this past week, I heard about a preacher who said to the congregation, "Anyone with 'special need' who wants to be prayed over, please come forward to the front by the altar."

With that, Leroy got in line, and when it was his turn, the Preacher asked, "Leroy, what do you want me to pray about for you?"

Leroy replied, "Preacher, I need you to pray for help with my hearing."

The preacher put one finger of one hand in Leroy's ear, placed his other hand on top of Leroy's head, and then prayed and prayed and prayed. He prayed a "blue streak" for Leroy, and the whole congregation joined in with great enthusiasm.

After a few minutes, the preacher removed his hands, stood back and asked, "Leroy, how is your hearing now?"

Leroy answered, "I don't know. ain't 'til next week."

(Thanks to Julia Miller for this

illustration)

The disciples CLEOPAS and FNU LNU (that's the acronym for First Name Unknown

Last Name Unknown) seemed to have all the information that had been printed in ***The Jerusalem Times***:

There was this man, named Jesus. He was from Nazareth. He was a mighty prophet, both in word and in deed. The religious and secular leaders conspired to have him put to death. He was crucified. We had thought he would be our messiah. Women that we know went to the tomb where he was buried and they say it is empty. They say that they had a vision of angels who said that he was alive.

And then, the part that I really like (from verse 18):

Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’

What irony! As it turns out – ***ALTHOUGH THEY SEEMED TO HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION – this “stranger”*** to whom they were explaining things like he had just crawled out from under a rock – ***may have been the ONLY ONE IN JERUSALEM who really had a clue of WHAT REALLY WAS GOING ON.***

And, so, after hearing them out, without interrupting their RENDITION OF MERE INFORMATION, Jesus responded: ***“Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ...”***

Now, ***here’s where the Gospel writer Luke really makes his point.*** He tells us ***“²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, ...”***

Whoa! Stop just a minute, Luke! He interpreted the whole First Testament to them which explained his (Jesus’) mission and meaning. Don’t go running on into verse 28 with the continuation of the itinerary iteration. WHAT DID HE SAY TO THEM WHEN HE INTERPRETED ALL THAT SCRIPTURE TO THEM?!?!?!

See. ***We want INFORMATION.*** But, ***Luke wants to share with us MEANING.***

Later on – as they decided to go on THE ROAD BACK TO JERUSALEM – ***back to the land where disciples used to live in fear behind locked doors, back to the world of the people they used to believe had power, back to the place where people***

thought that **POWER OVER** was the key and who did not understand that God's Kingdom is about **RECONCILIATION** and about **EMPOWERMENT OF** –

Yes, when they decided to go on the ROAD BACK TO JERUSALEM, they said: **'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's message in telling "The Road Back to Jerusalem" story is not to convey information about biblical interpretation. That information is about how Jesus opened the scriptures to these first century Palestinian Jews, to change how they interpreted all the events of Jerusalem over the past three days.

That was information that worked for them, then. These are people who didn't even know what an information highway is. What makes you think that the interpretation given to them would work for us?

If we had that same information today, that Jesus spoke to those people in their time and place, we would probably try to use the same information in some rigid religious way to understand the meaning of what's going on in our lives. Jesus didn't work that way. When people asked him as question, he didn't tell them an answer; he told them a story.

Luke's POINT was not what their interpretation was.

HERE'S LUKE'S POINT:

- **We need more than information to get through this life.**
- **We need Jesus to explain it to you.**
- **We need to see the events of life through Jesus' eyes.**
- **Even scripture, you can't just read it and understand it without the intervention of Jesus.**

Let me make just one last illustration/question:

In this past week, we have lived through what may have been the biggest new story of the past decade – the discovery and killing of Osama bin Laden. And, in the days since last Sunday when it happened, there has been an avalanche of information and interpretation. It has filled the air waves and it has filled cyber space.

Let me ask: what is the percentage of time you have allocated to obtaining information and opinions about this event from the air waves and from the internet or from personal conversations versus obtaining wisdom and interpretation from study of scripture and prayer.

Oh, I know how much of the air waves and internet it has occupied. But I also know that every single one of us HAS THE CHOICE of the source and amount of information we receive.

I'm not here to interpret those events to you. That is only an illustration:

- **In the biggest news story of the decade, how much time did you spend with God, looking for the Kingdom of Heaven's interpretation of this slice of life.**
- **And DID YOU EXPRESS YOUR OPINION – adding to the information overload – BEFORE you sought Jesus' interpretation?**
- **Until we can develop new habits of processing information and seeking wisdom, we are going to **continue to be people who are incredibly well informed and incredibly misguided.****
- **Until we can develop new habits of prioritizing the choices we make of our guideposts for living, we will continue be **looking for love in all the wrong places.****
- **When our "common sense" is based on what the people around us think and believe, instead of how God wants us to see, we will always be seeking after what is already right in front of our faces.**

Christ is risen from the dead. Alleluia!

What will it take for us to **pay more attention to what he has to say about life than the **evening news, facebook, National Enquirer, Time, Newsweek, etc.,** or **people we know?****

Until **OUR HEARTS BEGIN TO BURN IN US** FROM **HIS EXPLANATION** OF LIFE, we will **not see Him in front of our face,** **NOR** be able to **see the world as God wants us to see it.**

It's not as hard to do as it is just a CHOICE of where and how we spend our time. How do you choose?

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.