

TITLE: "With Whom Are You Walking?"

TEXTS: Luke 24:13-35 (NT p. 90)

The following took place on the first Easter, the second day after Jesus died on the cross:

¹³Now on that same day two of [Jesus followers] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles 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 Messiah 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. ²⁸As 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 [Jesus]; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us 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 [Jesus] had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Introduction – Where do you go for guidance?

Christie Craig sent the following little story to *Reader's Digest* (2/96):

My husband yearned for a boat, yet the cost always conflicted with his frugal nature. As he approached his 40th birthday, he came across the obituary of an old high school friend named Ted. Certain this was a sign that life was too short, my husband went out and purchased a boat that weekend.

A couple days after, another former classmate called. "Sure was a sad thing, wasn't it?" He said. "You know, Ted's boating accident and all."

What is it that determines the choices that you make? In our text for this morning, two followers of Jesus suddenly realized that it was JESUS who had been walking with them. The choices they made, from that moment on, were influenced by Jesus ...and they and the other disciples who walked with Jesus changed the world.

Our lives are deeply influenced by the people with whom we choose to walk.

Some people choose to walk by themselves.

Others choose various people with whom to walk.

Still others choose Jesus as their walking companion.

These choices are VITALLY important. Why? Because they will determine the course of your life, the course of our church, the course of our communities and the course of the world. Our choice with whom you walk will also determine what you will be doing a thousand years from this morning.

1. Walking with Ourselves

A guy walked into Barnes and Noble and asked the information clerk where the self-help section was. The clerk said, "Figure it for our YOURSELF!" ...Some people choose to walk by themselves and do what they think is best. This seems to work out very well for some people. BUT, there is a problem ...and it is a major one.

I was visiting someone in our congregation at Cayuga Medical Center one day and a woman I didn't know asked me to visit her husband. She was a Christian, but her husband had always refused to have anything to do with her "religion". Now he was dying and she was very concerned and she asked me to talk to him.

I sat in a chair beside his bed and he told me his life story, which was fascinating. The recurring theme in his recollections was that he had always paid back any debt he had incurred. Once he had borrowed money from friends and family to start a business that soon failed. He worked at another job for years until he had paid back every cent. He was proud of his accomplishments and rightly so.

When he finished, told him that I was impressed. Then, after a few moments, I asked if he had paid back his debt to God. When he asked what I was talking about, I explained that God gave him his life and God intended him to love God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength and to love his neighbor as himself. I asked if he had done that. He said, "You sound like my wife. I don't believe in any of that religious stuff."

I said, "Well the doctor says you only have a few days to live. When you die, you are going to come face to face with Jesus Christ. And it is JESUS who is going to say where you are going spend eternity. I have screwed up more times in my life than I care to recall. My only hope is my faith in Jesus Christ, who paid my debt to God on the cross. So why don't you think about that."

The next day I came back. He looked up at me and said, "I want Jesus. What do I have to do?" I led him in prayer and he accepted Jesus as his savior and asked God for forgiveness. He, his wife and I cried. A couple days later he died.

You see, THAT'S the problem with walking by yourself. You may be able to do OK in THIS life, but it's the NEXT life, which will go on forever, where you are going to have problems.

2. Seeking help from others

A group of hunters from New York City hired a guide to take them deer hunting in northern Maine. After a few hours they were hopelessly lost and began to doubt the competence of the guide. "You said you were the best guide in Maine," one of them reminded him.

"I am," he said, "but I think we're in CANADA now."

You don't have to go to Maine to find a guide. I am amazed at how many TV programs and books there are in which people tell you what to do.

Dr. Phil can tell you how to reach your goals.

Dave Ramsey will tell you how to be financially secure.

Oprah Winfrey will tell you how to find fulfillment through good relationships.

Dave Barry will tell you how to be an idiot and enjoy it.

And there are zillions more.

But there is a problem with following someone else's advice. I just read about a woman who found this out. She was driving home one night in a terrible snow storm. A snow plow appeared ahead and she decided to follow the plow until she reached her exit. After about twenty minutes, the plow pulled over and the driver came to her window.

"Where are you HEADED?" the man asked.

“I was hoping to follow you to the downtown exit,” she explained.

“Well you won’t get there by following me,” the guy said, “I’m just getting ready to plow this rest area.”

There are a LOT of talented, successful, well-adjusted people out there who are just full of good advice because their plans have worked out for them. HOWEVER, they do not know you. And that’s the problem. They may have plans that work out well for them, but they may not work out the same way for you.

Jesus knows your past, your present and your future. Jesus has every hair on your head numbered. Jesus knows each cell in your body. If you walk with Jesus, he will share what is best for you today, in 20 years and in 2 million years. Good as some of these human guides are, none of them can do that!

3. Walking with Jesus

A state senator from New York was sick and tired of the gridlock in Albany so he decided to turn to God for guidance. He went to a pastor and said: “Reverend, I need direction from God.” ...The pastor told him to go outside, stand in the rain and lift his face to the sky. ...The politician came back a while later and said: “Reverend, I didn’t get any REVEALTION. All that happened was that I found I was all wet and felt like a fool.” ...The pastor said, “Don’t you think that’s enough revelation for the first time?”

Many people, even Christians, find it hard to believe that Jesus IS walking with them. How CAN this be true? ...Jesus is God and so is everywhere. Jesus is also outside of time, which means that Jesus is with each of us as if we were the only person on earth.

There are times when we may be particularly AWARE of Jesus’ presence. Perhaps it is in the midst of Communion as it was for those disciples in the text. Some people are more aware of God in the woods, or in the mountains, in the desert or by the sea. Whether or not you are AWARE that Jesus is with you makes no difference. Jesus is ALWAYS with you, day and night, 24/7, whether you FEEL his presence or not.

There are lots of ways a person can listen and respond to Jesus. And I want to take a moment to say thank you to each of you who are walking with Jesus.

Thank you to those who love and care for your families.

Thank you for those involved in church repair projects.

Thank you for those who serve as elders and deacons.

Thank you for those in the choir.

Thank you to those who are involved in the Kitchen Cupboard.

Thank you those who care for children and grandchildren.

Thank you to those who helped with the Women’s retreat.

Thank you to those involved in the WEB program.

Thank you to those who support our church financially.
 Thank you for those who provide our Praise and Worship.
 Thank you to those who work hard to provide for your families.
 Thank you to those who give to mission programs.
 Thank you for those who keep track of church finances.
 Thank you for those who care for an elderly family member.
 Thank you to those who serve on a church committee.
 Thank you to those who have signed up to help at the chicken BBQ.

Because you are walking with the Lord and following the Lord, you are making our church, our community and the world a MUCH better place.

Conclusion – Being *present*

What helps me be aware of Jesus walking with me is what I call being *present*. What do I mean by being present? Not thinking about the past or the future, but being conscious of where I am and what I am doing that very minute, being aware of Jesus' presence with me and being open to his guidance.

I was in Florida for a course in March. When it was time to drive to the airport to catch my flight home, it was raining like MAD. I took the exit for the airport and came to a stop sign, but it was raining so hard, I could not see the sign that told me which way to go to the airport. Should I go left or right?

I prayed and thought I should go left. As soon as I made the turn, I saw a white car off the side of the road. It was hard to see why it was there in the rain so I just kept going. After about a mile of seeing no signs and nothing but woods, I figured I had gone the wrong way, but I still felt I should keep going. Eventually I came to some houses and I noticed the street sign for the road I was on.

I then felt it was OK and turned around and headed back the way I'd come. When I came to the white car I had seen, the rain had let up and I saw that it had gone off the road and was stuck in the mud. A young woman was standing in the rain talking on her cell phone and I stopped and rolled down my window. She was OK and she said, I'm calling a tow truck, but I don't know what road I'm on"

Remember, a couple miles down the wrong way, I had seen the road sign and I told her it was Duval Road. She then asked WHERE on Duval Road and I said, "100 feet east of the airport exit of route 90. She said, "Thank you" and got back in her car. I drove off and made it in time to return my rental car and catch my plane.

Practice being PRESENT. Instead of thinking about the past or the future, be conscious of where you are and what you are doing that very minute, be aware of Jesus' presence with you and be open to his guidance.

God has plans for your life and they are the BEST possible plans for you. God wants you to help make this church, make our communities and make the world a better place. All you need to do is realize that Jesus is walking with you, LISTEN to Jesus and follow where he leads you.