

Luke 24:13-35  
Acts 2:22-32  
4 May 2014

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One Sunday just as the choir was getting seated in the loft Satan appeared standing in front of the pulpit. Everyone starts screaming and running for the front entrance, trampling each other in their determined efforts to get away from Evil Incarnate. Soon, everyone is evacuated from the church except for one man, who sat calmly in his pew, seemingly oblivious to the fact that God's ultimate enemy is in his presence. This confused Satan a bit. Satan walked up to the man and says, "Hey, don't you know who I am?" The man says, "Yep, sure do." Satan says, "Well, aren't you afraid of me?" The man says, "Nope, sure ain't." Satan, perturbed, says, "And why aren't you afraid of me?" The man says, "Well, I've been married to your sister for 25 years."

### Showing the Way of Life

Luke is the only one who tells us of this Emmaus Road experience. For years it has always been about asking ourselves where we encounter Jesus on our own road of faith. Always. Until today. It's odd how a couple of little words inside Bible passage – one we think we know inside and out – can make us stop in our tracks. There, in the midst of the two walking along and hashing out all the evidence and experience, there, when they explain what has been going on to a complete stranger, there are the three life-changing words: "...we had hoped..."

"We had hoped he would be the one..."

The stranger, who of course we know to be Jesus, meets them in this moment – this precipice between hope and despair – this very human experience of having to face a future when life as we know it has changed.

It was the summer of 2005 and I was heading up to Silver Lake to lead a week of camp. I got a call from my mom on Saturday – between counselor meetings – that my dad was in the hospital. I was immediately terrified because one, for years my parents would never let us kids know what was going on and we kept urging them to keep us in the loop. They shouldn't have to face things alone. And two, because my dad was never sick. It turns out he had been really tired and only wanted to sleep over the last couple of weeks. Mom said they were doing blood tests and checking for a bad case of Lyme disease. We had hoped that would be it. The symptoms can be terrible but it's treatable.

When I called home on Sunday I found out Dad had been sent up to Boston for more tests. The week of hiking with 30 youth had to go on, so I got updates when I could. It wasn't until I got home at the end of the week that I found out Dad had been diagnosed with ALL – Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia. He was at Dana Farber. They were the cancer people and wanted to start him on therapy right away. This was good, Dana Farber does good work – and so it began.

The month of August Dad spent wandering the halls of the wing, attached to his wheelie IV and a face mask strapped to his face. The nurses loved him – he was always joking with them – and he always had an encouraging word for folks on the floor with him. One week my brother and sister flew out from California so I picked them up Logan. We got a hotel up on the Fenway not too far from the hospital. It was surreal to go past baseball fans all celebrating in the streets while we were heading down to visit Old Lyme Little League's most – liked? notorious? – umpire of over 30 years, who was fighting for his life.

In September, Dad got to go home while they waiting for a bone marrow match to a donor. The big, strapping 6 foot 2" guy was a bit less strapping, yet still carried on. But in October Dad had a stroke and was back up in

Boston. We had hoped my uncle would be a match for the bone marrow, but he wasn't. And neither was anyone else.

Dad eventually came back to a rehab center and was making progress with getting over the stroke – but so was the Leukemia. Eight months after the initial diagnosis, Dad died on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2006. All we had hoped for did not come to pass. And there we found ourselves on the precipice between hope and despair, because life as we knew it would not be the same.

This is true for all of us, isn't it? We are not strangers to loss and suffering and illness. But life, as Jesus showed those nameless men on the road, is more than this. That moment of recognition in the breaking of the bread was the turning point from despair to the possibility of life. Jesus showed them the way when he was alive. Then". . . God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power." (Acts 2:24) As Peter says, because death has "...no power over him", Jesus is able even today to show us the way of life.

Every day we have the opportunity to choose life – praying for one another and our world, coming together for a meal or to serve together, offering a ride or a helping hand – all these and more are ways in which we bring the presence of the living Christ to other. When we encounter Jesus, when we bring Christ to others, we are showing, even more, proclaiming that life as we knew it will not be the same. Life can be more than we imagined. As we gather around the table – this table set for us here, or the breakfast or dinner table – we are reminded that we live, even in the face of death – because death has no power over us.