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*Christ Lutheran Church, Ferndale, WA*  
*Third Sunday of Easter – Year A*  
*April 30, 2017*  
*Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; I Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35*

I wore my walking shoes today because we are so blessed in this area of the world to have so many beautiful places to walk – the trails, by the waterways, in neighborhoods, and even at the mall.

I see many of you out walking in our community, often with each other. I hear stories of some men from our congregation who meet early in the morning at the mall to walk and then have coffee. I see your social media posts about hikes you take with those you love, and I watch students walk to and from school laughing and talking with their friends.

Tae and our exchange student Toby often go on a walk around the pond near our house playing Pokémon GO. Many Friday mornings I go walking at Hovander Park as part of my spiritual practice preparing for sermon writing that day. Sometimes I walk with a friend, another mom from Tae's school, who happens to be a seminary teacher. We talk about our experiences of the gospel, about how we see God present in our lives and our families.

And even if our bodies don't allow us to walk, each of us journey with friends in our conversations about life, health, and family. We all have Emmaus experiences, just like the one we heard about today in the gospel.

In that story, two friends, one of them named Cleopas, were walking seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The gospel doesn't say, but my guess is that they were confused and felt a little lost. They probably had last seen Jesus hanging from the cross in Jerusalem a couple days before, and then had heard an astounding story from the women who had been at the tomb that morning who told them that Jesus was actually alive. The two friends needed to process this with each other, so on their walk they talked about all these things that had happened.

And suddenly someone else showed up beside them as they walked and asked them what they were talking about. You'll notice that the gospel says the two friends stopped walking. They stood still, looking sad. Then Cleopas

said something to the effect, "Are you kidding me? You seriously don't know about the things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth?"

And then Jesus asked them a question that broke them open, "What things?"

The gospel says, "*They replied...*" – they both started pouring out the story of Jesus, a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people who was handed over to death and crucified and was raised from the dead. Then they heard this stranger tell the whole story of Jesus in the scriptures, connecting the story all the way back to Moses.

The stranger, of course, was Jesus himself, and the two friends finally realized it when they invited Jesus to stay with them and they shared a meal together. It was at that point that the two friends 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?"

An encounter with the living Lord does something to our heart. It breaks it open, it burns within us. We know we are in the presence of something beyond ourselves, of someone who accompanies us through disappointments and hopelessness. The two friends on the road to Emmaus were hopeless – they told Jesus "But we had hoped the he (Jesus) was the one to redeem Israel." But later, after their meal with him, they talked to each other and realized that they had just experienced the risen Christ. Their hearts burned within them and they knew they were in the presence of the divine.

Here's what I take from this story: sometimes it is hard to recognize the living Lord in our lives, even when he's right there in front of us. Two weeks ago we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus with joy and flowers and music and the message that because Jesus was raised we would be too. But the things that plagued our lives two weeks ago may still be there. The resurrection of Jesus didn't fix everything, did it? The things that made us hopeless then might still be making us hopeless now. We might not recognize that the resurrected Jesus is still right there in our midst.

And so that's why we need to do what the two on the road to Emmaus did. We need to walk with a friend and talk about Jesus. In order to recognize

the living Lord, we need to answer Jesus' question to us, "What things?"

Walk with a friend and share:

What things in your past that you got through can remind you you'll get through what's happening now?

What things make your heart sing, your heart burn, your heart break open?  
For that is what happens when the living Lord is working in your life.

What things that you notice on your walk remind you of Jesus' promise of abundant life? The beauty of flowers, the leafing of the trees, the movement of the clouds, the movement of your feet, one in front of the other.

And if you aren't able to walk, sit with a friend, sit with a Stephen Minister in the prayer station today during communion (offering), or write to someone you love and share what things remind you that the living Lord is really there, and journeying with you.

In my Easter sermon I encouraged you during the season of Easter to put together a real earthquake kit for your home and a spiritual earthquake kit to prepare for the things in life that shake you. This is one of the ways you do it. Walking and talking with a friend can help make sense of the difficult things you're going through in life, the pain you feel. It will give you sure footing and provide some relief for the next step, whatever that step might be.

The weather is getting nicer, and so sometime in the remaining 5 weeks of Easter, put on your walking shoes and ask a friend to walk with you – you have a whole congregation of people you can ask; it's a great way to get to know someone you don't know very well, and I'll be happy to be a walking partner with you, too – and then share with each other what things make your heart burn within you.

Because in doing so, you'll remember and be assured that Christ is alive, and he is with you on the road. Amen.