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## *Christianity is How We Walk*

**A sermon by Dean Sam Candler**

**Easter 3 – Year A**

*“The disciples told what had happened on the road, and how Jesus had been made known in the breaking of bread.” –Luke 24.35*

Some of you remember that my sermon on Palm Sunday was about walking. Some of you remember that my sermon on Good Friday was also about walking. And so were my comments after Easter. And so my canon colleague Wallace Marsh wants me to remind you of the same thing today, the third Sunday of Easter. It’s about walking. It’s still about walking.

Today’s service is a Eucharist, of course, but it’s also a service of confirmation wherein we welcome the confirmation of mature Christians into a next journey in their walk of faith.

These people about to be confirmed and received, however, are being confirmed with an understanding of Church that has changed over the years. I’m not saying that God has changed, but I am saying that our understanding of what it means to believe has definitely changed over the years. The times they are a-changin’. Believe it or not, Christianity is changing too. Christianity is changing just as it always has. People who walk understand that things change.

A few years ago I heard a wise Christian elder reflect on his journey as a Christian. He was Herbert O’Driscoll, a Canadian, former dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Vancouver and he said this: “You know, I was born in 1928. I learned the Christian faith in a dramatically different way than people learn it today. When I learned the Christian faith, it was a set of propositions. It was belief statements. Christian faith was the right answers to the Catechism questions. But today, we talk about faith as a journey. Faith is a walk; it is a pilgrimage. This image seems natural to us.

“But,” O’Driscoll asked, “do you realize how different that concept is from what we learned just 60 years ago? Just 60 years ago, faith was a system. Christian faith was a deposit of propositions and statements. We now speak easily of faith as a journey.”

Well I believe Herbert O’Driscoll was right. Those of you being confirmed today know what he meant, I hope. Your faith, all of our faith, is a journey. Christianity is a journey. Christianity is not so much about how we believe; Christianity is about how we walk!

O’Driscoll was talking about something called Celtic spirituality when he talked with me a few years ago. Celtic spirituality: the early, natural, local spirituality of England in the fourth and the fifth and the sixth centuries. It was a walking, journeying spirituality. And Herbert O’Driscoll noted that our present age has a lot in common with the age in which Celtic Christianity was developing. Large institutions, superpowers if you will, were gradually dissolving in the fourth and fifth and sixth centuries, but a local Celtic Christianity was gradually growing.

Those early Christians knew how to journey. They resisted empire and superpower and institution. And they developed communities of faith away from centers of power. They valued intimate relationships, trust and openness, God’s revelation in creation and in local community.

Well today, the same thing is going on in our culture: a rather distrust of large institutions and superpowers. Many of us so doing a lot of journeying too, spiritually and physically. Simply put, we move around a lot.

We drive down to work or to school each morning. We drive down an Emmaus road when we go to school. We travel down an Emmaus road when we return home from work. Maybe we go away for the weekend. We travel somewhere else during the summer. We fly in our airplanes to the next business engagement. We listen to the news. We follow a few tweets. We speak occasionally to strangers and to friends.

In our gospel for today, the original Emmaus road story, two early disciples are walking down a road. They are joined by a stranger. They all decide to stop for the night and the two disciples invite their conversation partner to join them. At supper that night, the stranger took some bread, blessed the bread, broke the bread, and gave the bread to the small group.

He took the bread and did the same thing with it that we do here in church every Sunday. He took, blessed, broke, and gave. It was Holy Communion.

At that moment—only then!—were the two disciples astounded, realizing that it was Jesus himself whom they had not recognized until that moment. He is the one who had been walking with them, talking with them, speaking to them about God and the good news, and they did not even know it was him.

But when the stranger, Jesus, sat with them at table—when he broke bread with the two disciples—only then were their eyes opened. And so they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the story to others. It finally got written down in the Gospel of Luke. The disciples had not recognized Jesus until he explained Scripture and blessed bread.

Now, scripture is code for “gospel,” good news. Breaking of bread is code for “community.” When the good news is made known in our walking, in our community, then Jesus appears. No matter who we’re with. That is the power of the Emmaus Road story.

No matter what roads we’re walking in this life. No matter whether it’s the traffic on Peachtree Road or the Downtown Connector or Interstate 85 with a big hole in it. It may be the soccer practice road, the business road, the school road, the MARTA line, the bus route, the airplane route. When we are Christians, we are traveling and any road can become an Emmaus road. When we are Christians, the Emmaus road will lead to the breaking of bread in Holy Communion somewhere.

If we take time to share good news, if we take time to eat together, all those roads turn into Emmaus roads, when we realize that it is Jesus who is next to us. Maybe we don’t recognize Jesus at first. Maybe we think that that fellow traveler is just a stranger.

And you know what? Sometimes that fellow traveler, that fellow walker, is somebody we thought we knew pretty well. It may just be our closest companion who turns out to be Jesus. It may be a despondent spouse, a cranky child, one of your weird parents out there. If we make Scripture and the breaking of bread part of our journey—good news and community—then that fellow traveler can become Christ among us.

Faith is a journey. Christianity is how we walk that journey: with love and openness, willing to be surprised that Christ is the person right next to us. When we are surprised by strangers and friends, when scripture and bread are opened up and broken before us, we are living the Christian life and walking the Christian walk.

When we walk the Emmaus road willing to love, and willing to be loved, then it’s Easter. It’s the resurrection. And Easter and resurrection is not just one day. The risen Christ—Easter—appears over and over again.

Amen.