

Graphics, Audio and Video - Media Notes are highlighted in this background

- Please record sermon at both worship services

Key Questions

1. What is this sermon about?
 - a. This sermon is about those beliefs which we hold in common with other Christians, as introduced by the story of the Road to Emmaus.
2. Why is this sermon important?
 - a. This sermon is important because there are times when we focus on our differences as Christians. We share a great deal Christians across the world and are all part of God's family.
3. What are the next action steps?
 - a. Remember that an essential part of life as a United Methodist Christian is belief in those things that we share in common with those all across Christianity's family tree.
4. What is the good news (bottom line)?
 - a. The good news is that we are part of God's family in Jesus Christ.

Context

This is the first sermon in the series, Love Divine: Life as a United Methodist. During this series we will consider the defining characteristics of life as a United Methodist Christian and what makes our approach to faith distinct from others. We will look for ways that our heritage can defines our faith and challenge us to rediscover our spiritual passion.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - Unity, Faith,
- Books of the Bible
 - Luke
- Series
 - Love Divine: Life as a United Methodist Christian
- Tags
 - Methodist, United Methodist, United Methodist Church, Emmaus, walk, Holy Communion, Eucharist, unity, belief, believe

Luke 24:13-16, 28-32, CEB

13 On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. 15 While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. 16 They were prevented from recognizing him.

...

28 When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. 29 But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Sermon Starter Video

- [Play sermon starter video.](#)
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Introduction

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Each week, I hope that there will be at least one moment in the sermon in which you feel that God is speaking to you. You might take time to write down:

- Something new that you learned or a new question that you have.
- A connection between the sermon today and what is happening in your life.
- Something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus and be part of God's work transforming the world.

Then, take your bulletin home with you so that you can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people in need of care and read scripture to prepare for worship next Sunday. This is one tool for you to use to grow in your faith in the days ahead.

Opening Prayer

Will you pray with me?

O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a

congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Family Reunion - Who is related to whom?

One of my colleagues, who serves a church in southeast Kansas was at a family reunion recently and tells the story of being at a family reunion and having her six-year-old cousin look up at her very seriously.

“Is he your dad?” he asked, extending his arm and pointing his finger towards her dad.

“Yes,” she said.

Her cousin nodded. “I thought so,” he said. His dad put his arm around him. “We are still trying to figure out who is related to whom,” he explained. “It’s confusing.”¹

Have you ever had an experience like this at a family reunion? I know that I have. IT can be confusing to know who is who, from which branch of the family is this person, are we second cousins, third cousins or something else? Knowing who you are and the ways that you are connected is a place to start.

Love Divine - Series Introduction

Today we begin a new sermon series, Love Divine in which we will be figuring out where we belong as United Methodist Christians and what our life is like together. During the month of June, we will be asking questions like:

- What makes United Methodists different from other denominations?
- How do I tell my friends what it means to be a Methodist?
- What difference does it make that I am a United Methodist?

We will consider our history as a church, our approach to faith and look for ways that our heritage can defines our faith and challenge us to rediscover our spiritual passion.

Transition

It can make a difference when we recognize and see something for what it really is. Today we consider what connects us with other Christian denominations through the story of the Road to Emmaus. I want to remind you of the significance of this story in the gospel narrative.

Road to Emmaus - Context and Meeting

Context

“The story of the appearance of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is arguably the most developed and the most beautiful of the [stories of Jesus appearing to his disciples and others after the resurrection.] Its plot revolves around the failure of two disciples to recognize

¹ Blair Thompson. “We Are Family.” Awe Moments. Accessed May 30, 2014.
<http://awemoments.wordpress.com/2014/05/29/we-are-family/>.

their fellow traveler is Jesus, until they sit down and share a meal with him.² Let's take a closer look at the story.

The Empty Tomb

It is a Sunday, three days after Jesus died on the cross. Early that morning, women had visited Jesus' tomb. They found that it was empty and heard from angels that Jesus was alive and had gone ahead of them to Galilee. The women told this story to the rest of the disciples who found the story really hard to believe.

The Meeting

That same day, two disciples are walking the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The text tells us that Emmaus is "about seven miles from Jerusalem"³ and the best historical research about the location of Emmaus places the village a little further away, about 7.5 miles from Jerusalem.⁴ If you started west on Central from the church, 7.5 miles would take you to just outside Towanda.

On the way, "They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. They were prevented from recognizing him."⁵

This raises the question, "When ... will the disciples recognize Jesus?"⁶ How will they know that the man they saw die on the cross is alive?

How Do We Recognize - Superman, Friend, Methodists?

It is like Clark Kent and Superman. Are the glasses and the business suit really that great a disguise? Surely his co-workers at the Daily Planet would be able to recognize him. Well, evidently not.

How do you recognize a friend? You can recognize people by all kinds of characteristics - face, hairstyle, the way they walk or even a distinctive piece of clothing.

Could you recognize a Methodist the same way? Is there a hairstyle or secret handshake? What beliefs or actions are distinct to life as a United Methodist?

Transition

Let's go back to the story and see how the disciples will recognize Jesus.

Road to Emmaus - Conversation and Recognition

² Leander E. Keck, ed., *Luke*, vol. IX of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 475.

³ Luke 24:13, CEB.

⁴ Leander E. Keck, ed., *Luke*, vol. IX of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 475.

⁵ Luke 24:14-16, CEB.

⁶ Leander E. Keck, ed., *Luke*, vol. IX of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 477.

The Conversation En Route

Jesus joins the disciples and we hear their conversation in Luke 24:17-19:

He said to them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stopped, their faces downcast. The one named Cleopas replied, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?"

He said to them, "What things?"

They said to him, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of his powerful deeds and words, he was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet."⁷

The disciples tell Jesus the story of his own life, focusing on the events of the last week and ending with what had happened earlier that morning - that some of the disciples went with the women to the tomb and did not see Jesus.

"Then [Jesus] interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets."⁸

The Meal and Moment of Recognition

"When they came to Emmaus, [Jesus] acted as if he was going on ahead. 29 But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them."⁹

When they sat at the table, "Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them. The four verbs are Jesus' signature which the disciples (or at least the readers) may remember from the feeding of the five thousand (9:16) and the last supper (22:19)."¹⁰

When Jesus, takes, blesses, breaks and gives the bread to them their roles are reversed. The two disciples had been offering hospitality to their traveling companion. Now, Jesus becomes the host. This is the moment of recognition, which we find in Luke 24:31-32

Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight.

They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road and when he explained the scriptures for us?"¹¹

They recognize Jesus in the meal. When they reflect on the day, they remember how they experienced Jesus on the road, before they recognized him.

Significance of Sharing a Meal Today

In every meal that we share today, we have the opportunity to share hospitality with others and to recognize Jesus as we gather around the table. This is true for our everyday meals

⁷ Luke 24:17-19, CEB.

⁸ Luke 24:27, CEB.

⁹ Luke 24:28-29, CEB.

¹⁰ Leander E. Keck, ed., *Luke*, vol. IX of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 480.

¹¹ Luke 24:31-32, CEB.

and for the meal that we share in Holy Communion today. We may not have the opportunity to experience an appearance of the risen Christ, but we can see him clearly in Moses and the prophets and know that he is present when we share their bread with a stranger or gather for the Lord's supper.¹²

Transition

Recognizing Jesus in the prophets of the Old Testament and knowing he is present when we share in Holy Communion are essential to who we are as United Methodists. They are also beliefs which we share with others who are part of Christianity's family tree.

Just like that family reunion where you are not sure how you are connected, yet you know that something connects you to each other.

Conclusion

Good News

The good news is that we are part of God's family in Jesus Christ. God's family goes far beyond those who worship at First United Methodist Church, further than the United Methodist Churches across Kansas and Nebraska, beyond our denomination and across time and around the world.

Call to Action - Remember Who You Are

I want you to remember that an essential part of life as a United Methodist Christian is belief in those things that we share in common with those all across Christianity's family tree. Here are just a few:

- We believe in one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe everyone is made in God's image.
- We believe everyone has issues - sin is real.
- We believe you can turn your life around with God's help.
- We believe God wins in the end.

Invitation

My invitation to you today is to remember who you are - a child of God, made in God's image. Know that you have a family that is much bigger than the people to whom you are related. Life as a United Methodist Christian is being part of Christianity's Family Tree.

¹² Leander E. Keck, ed., *Luke*, vol. IX of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 480.