

“THE GOSPEL IN GREAT MOVIES – JOURNEYS WITH JESUS:
I – EMMAUS”

Karen F. Bunnell
Elkton United Methodist Church
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Luke 24:13-35

One day, two friends were walking down the road deep in conversation. If you had passed them as they walked, you would have known that theirs was a serious, sad conversation. Their countenance said it all. Sadness and weariness etched their faces. They kept their eyes down and their voices low.

They were, indeed, incredibly sad. It was just days after the man they had been following, the man to whom they pledged their lives and their livelihood, the man they thought would save the world – instead had been put to death on a cruel cross. They, and all of his other followers were devastated.

Life was totally different now. It was like the joy had been sucked out of it, and evil stolen the day. They were in a bad, bad place.

And then, another man joined them on the road. They didn't know him, but he obviously had seen the seriousness of their conversation, and asked them about it. They looked at him incredulously, because how could it be that this man didn't know about what happened to Jesus? Everybody knew about it.

But he didn't, and so they told him all that Jesus had said and done, and then, how he had been killed at Calvary. He listened intently, and just when it was time for the three of them to part ways, lo and behold, the two men invited their new friend to dinner.

And when they sat down, and this new friend picked up the bread and broke it, it was like a bolt of electricity went through the room, because in that instant, they knew who he was – it was Jesus – alive, living, breathing, right there in front of them.

And then they remembered, that on his last night with them in the Upper Room, he had said, “when you eat this bread and drink this cup, remember me.” And so they did, on that day in Emmaus, and a day that began in sadness and weariness was transformed into one of energy and joy and hope.

One day, two sisters living in Denmark, received a cable from an old friend of their family. These sisters were daughters of the village pastor, who was part of a

very strict, very stern Christian sect. The village was very small. Everyone who lived there was part of his church, and over time, the village took on the character of the church – serious, stern, severe, sparse. Everyday was the same – an even keel – never high, never low, just the same.

Time went by and the father died, but the church went on. Then one day, the two sisters got a cable from their friend, who said he was sending someone to live with them to be their housekeeper. She needed to leave Paris – her husband and child had died, everything was gone, and she needed a fresh start.

So she came to the village. Her name was Babette. Their story is told in the wonderful foreign film called “Babette’s Feast.” When Babette arrived in the village, she had almost nothing to her name – the clothes on her back, a few personal things, and a lottery ticket. Every year she got a lottery ticket for the drawing in Paris.

Well, lo and behold Babette received word that she had won the lottery – 10,000 francs – an enormous amount of money. The sisters were about to have a service and reception in memory of their father, and Babette asked if she could prepare a dinner for it. The sisters tried to say no – that all they really wanted was cookies and punch – plain and simple, nothing showy or extravagant. That was the way of the village, you know.

But they also didn’t want to squelch Babette’s enthusiasm, so they said yes, and then watched in horror over the ensuing days as she went over the top in preparation for this fabulous meal. Now, they were embarrassed. What were they going to do? Life in that village was austere, and strict, and plain. That’s the way it was – that’s the way it had always been – and now this.

So, the villagers secretly got together and decided they would politely eat the meal, but make no comments about it. They would talk about the weather, or books, or whatever – but they would do nothing to draw attention to the food – no matter how good it was.

That was the plan – which lasted all of thirty seconds. When the food so lovingly and wonderfully prepared was laid before them, and when they tasted it, they were transformed. Their objections suddenly weren’t important. Their strict, severe regulations were forgotten. All they knew, was that they were being blessed by this fabulous banquet prepared just for them.

In the scene I’m about to show you, the guests are leaving the dinner. You need to know that before, and even during the dinner, there had been bickering going on between the neighbors, and some weren’t even talking to each other.

There was an air of disquiet, and mistrust, and on top of that, the whole religious “this isn’t right” thing about the meal.

Now, the meal has ended, and the group prepares to go to their homes. Take a look and see what has happened after this meal at table together.

Film clip – “Babette’s Feast,” 1:36:36 – 1:39:37

In an incredible twist at the end of the film, we discover that Babette gave all she had to offer this dinner, this dinner which transformed a village.

How like the eucharist is that? A meal prepared for us. A meal meant to transform us, and to help us embrace the fullness of life, the abundance of life. A meal meant to strengthen us for our journeys, and remind us always of the never-ending presence of Christ. A meal telling us yet again that we are loved, and forgiven, and called. And a meal which shows us that, like Babette’s feast for her friends, Jesus paid it all – He gave His all for you and for me.

Today, you’re invited to a feast – the feast of the Lord’s Supper. It is a time of joy, a time to remember the goodness of God, the blessings He gives us, the Savior through whom He saved us. Come to the feast today with joy, and let it transform you – from sadness and sternness, from inward focused, small thinking to fullness, abundance, gratefulness, hope.

Whether in a village in Denmark, on a road to Emmaus, at a church in Elkton – Jesus says, “whenever, wherever you break bread and share wine, remember me.”

And so we do today. We remember, we give thanks, we come with joy!

Thanks be to God.

Amen.