

“WORDS OF WISDOM: VII – LOOK!”

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Elkton United Methodist Church
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Psalm 8

Luke 24:13-35

They were two of the luckiest men in the world and they didn't even know it. The guys in this morning's Gospel lesson were two of the luckiest men in the world and they didn't even know it! They were walking with Jesus Himself – Jesus! – and they didn't know who he was! How is that possible?

Oh, all of us know all too well how that is possible. Life sometimes blinds us to God's blessings around us. For those two men, it was grief. Grief consumed them, grief over losing the One they thought was going to save the world, grief over the loss of their hopes and dreams – grief. So consumed by their grief were they, that they didn't recognize the One who was walking with them.

If you've ever walked through the valley of the shadow of death, if you've ever lost someone you love, then you understand how easy it was for the disciples to not see Jesus. When you're walking through grief like they were, sometimes all you can do is put one foot in front of the other – and a whole lot of things go on that you never see.

And it's not just grief, but other things too that “blind” us, if you will. Sickness, for instance. Live with chronic illness for a while, and you know how consuming that can be – so consuming that you miss a lot of things going on around you.

And it's not just sickness either – actually, sometimes it's just life itself that blinds us to seeing God all around us. This crazy, busy, over-stimulated, over-scheduled life that we live. We go from one thing to the next, sometimes driving from point A to point B and not really knowing how we got there, or what we passed along the way. We have our noses stuck in our smartphones, tablets and computers and we miss the sunrises and breathtaking moments God throws into our days.

So we understand how those two men could be walking with Jesus and yet not see Him, not see God right in their midst, because sadly we do it every day – and we are the poorer for it.

A pastor named David Sellery wrote, “Look around you. We are surrounded by cell phones, cable boxes, PCs, DVRs, remotes. Most indicate their active status by a glowing red light. It tells us that the device is on. It's active. It's engaged. It's ready to receive. Sometimes (he writes) I wish our souls came with a little red light

that tells us when it's on, when we're ready to receive. Jesus is in our midst constantly. He promises us: Behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. He's here, but too often we don't see him. Our red light is off. To see Jesus, to recognize him, we need to be engaged. It's not a painful or even a particularly difficult task, but it does take practice. It takes a daily, conscious effort to connect with Christ and to stay connected throughout the day." (On-line, "In Our Midst," the Rev. David Sellery"

It takes practice. Well, this summer I invited you to practice. Early on, back at the end of June, I invited you to spend the summer seeing God all around you – to take the time, to slow down, to put down the electronics every once in a while, and look up and see the wondrous things God has put into your world. And then to send me pictures of those wondrous things so I could use them in this sermon today, this last sermon in the "Words of Wisdom" series, the sermon called "Look!"

And oh my, did you ever have your eyes open this summer! And what wondrous things you saw! I couldn't wait to open my email every day and see what pictures were there! In just a couple of months, you sent me well over 300 pictures of amazing, breathtaking, touching, humbling gifts that God put into your life.

So this morning, together, we're going to stop for a while, put away our distractions, and see God as you saw God and God's blessings this summer. So sit back, relax and look!

Powerpoint . . .

Oh my friends, the Kingdom of God is all around us. God is at work in wondrous ways, and all we need to do is take time and we'll see that every single day. It's not that we'll necessarily see extraordinary things, it's that we'll see the incredible love of God for us in the ordinary things.

Just last week, when Mom and I were on a cruise to Bermuda, I discovered the truth of that. One day, we took a day-long tour of the entire island of Bermuda. It was a gorgeous day, the people with whom we toured were really nice, the tour guides were phenomenal, and of course, Bermuda is incredibly beautiful. We got back to the ship around 3 p.m. after leaving at 8:15 a.m. so when we got back to our cabin Mom decided to lay down for a while, and I told her that I was just going to sit out on the deck and read. I walked over to the sliding glass door to go out on the deck and when I opened it up, I discovered a driving rain storm – and I mean driving. It was incredible – we hadn't been on the ship fifteen minutes – and boom, the heavens opened up! Well, blessedly, our deck was pretty big, so I could still sit in one of the chairs and watch the rain storm and not get wet, and that's exactly what I did. For about fifteen minutes, I watched the rain!

Now, if that had happened here on any normal work day, I would have probably groaned, picked up an umbrella, and tried to get to my car as fast as I could without getting soaking wet. But that day, I watched the rain – and it was phenomenal – sheets of it sweeping across the bay; puffy, dark clouds moving swiftly across the sky; and moment by moment, as the storm blew through, cooler weather came along as well.

I didn't read, I didn't look at my phone or my computer, I just sat there and watched the rain, and I was blessed. An ordinary rainstorm made for me, an extraordinary day.

Later on, on that same day when the disciples had walked unknowingly with Jesus, they sat down for an ordinary meal with this stranger – and it was in that ordinary meal, when He picked up an ordinary loaf of bread and blessed it – that their day turned extraordinary as well – because it was in the breaking of the bread that they recognized Jesus – and they knew that He was alive, the dream hadn't ended, and all would be well. An ordinary moment made for an extraordinary day!

Someone named R. S. Thomas once wrote, "I have seen the sun break through to illuminate a small field for a while, and gone my way and forgotten it. But that was the pearl of great price. The one field that had the treasure in it. I realize now that I must give all that I have to possess it. Life is not hurrying on to a receding future, nor hankering after an imagined past. It is turning aside like Moses to the miracle of a lit bush, to a brightness that seemed as transitory as your youth once, but is the eternity that awaits you." (On-line, "At the Edge of the Enclosure")

My dear friends, take time like Moses, to turn aside, to look and see, for the Kingdom of God is all around you, and like those disciples, you might just see Jesus! May it be so!

Amen.