

The 3rd Sunday of Easter. The scripture text is taken from Luke 24:13-35

"In 1948, Harry Truman was running for the Presidency of the United States. He was, quite frankly, in a hopeless situation. Every public opinion poll predicted that his opponent, Thomas Dewey, would give Truman a run for his money, and that Truman would be beat.

Newsweek went to the top 50 political pundits in the country, and asked for their opinion. They agreed: Dewey would have a hundred more electoral votes than he needed.

The Fort Lauderdale Daily News published a prediction which said that Dewey would get at least 62% of the vote if not more.

Life magazine featured a full page picture of Dewey with the caption, "The new President travels by ferry boat over the broad waters of San Francisco Bay."

The Kiplinger Letter, a favorite among businessmen, had an article on the economic policies of the Dewey administration.

Truman's re-election was hopeless. The Manchester Guardian carried a report entitled, "Harry S. Truman, study of a failure.

And of course, the Chicago Tribune, had already gone to the press with an edition which headlined, "Dewey Defeats Truman."

It was a hopeless situation. On election night, Dewey was in New York, writing his acceptance speech, while, Truman was in Missouri eating dinner.

At 6PM, it was reported that Truman was defeated. At 10PM, Truman was going down in flames. At mid-night, the report came out that Truman, was ahead by one million, two hundred-thousand votes, but he was still going to lose the election.

At 4AM in the morning, Truman, was awakened by a secret service agent, who told him he was ahead by two million votes, but the experts were still convinced of his defeat.

The events of that night, tell us, that Truman's hopeless situation wasn't nearly as hopeless as people and the candidates had been led to believe."

Life has taught the optimists among us, that there is no such thing as a hopeless situation. There are only people who have given up hope.

That was certainly the story over 2,000 years ago, on Sunday night, after Jesus had been crucified.

Think of those two disciples, who were walking down that dusty road to the village of Emmaus, which was about 7 miles away. Their talk concerns the crucified Jesus. Their words come slowly, their faces carried the sadness of grief and loss.

Perhaps, one disciple said: "I can hardly believe that Jesus is gone." And perhaps, the other disciple said: "What do we do now."

Just then a stranger comes up behind them and says, “I am sorry, but I could not help, but over hear you. What things are you talking about?”

This event on the road to Emmaus, is a great story. It tells us about an encounter with the resurrected Jesus.

An encounter with Jesus is an encounter with God. This event on the Road to Emmaus is compelling. It equals the experience of Moses, before the burning bush, when he learned God’s Holy name.

Have you ever wished for a similar encounter with God?

Have you ever wished for a “mountain-top” experience with God?

Have you ever wanted an encounter with God, like Moses?

Can God be just as real to me as He was for the disciples on the Road to Emmaus?

Two sincere disciples recounting the events of the crucifixion, God is in disguise and listens patiently. His wounded hands buried deep inside his robe, he had just gone to hell and back, to give heaven’s hope to earth, and these two disciples were worried about the political situation in Israel?

So this lays the ground work for this question, “How does God speak to us today?”

In fact, it brings up, two more questions, “How can I know God is speaking? And “What does an encounter with God feel like?”

In the past, God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and the bush did not burn up. In that spectacular encounter with God, Moses knew he was standing on Holy Ground.

When Jesus spoke to the wind, and calmed the storm, the disciples encountered God. In Luke’s Gospel chapter 8, he (the writer of Luke’s Gospel) states: “They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, “who then is this, that commands even the winds and water, and they obey him.”

God has always been speaking to His people. Today, He speaks by and through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will use the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and other believers.

On the Road to Emmaus, a change was taking place. These two disciples were experiencing an encounter with God, the way it happens today, through the Holy Spirit using the scriptures.

In our gospel narrative for today, one of them, whose name was Cleopas asked him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” (verse 18)

The visitor on the road said: “What things? They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” (verse 19)

They (the disciples) did not know it was Jesus. Jesus used the Old Testament scriptures, it was, as if, He opened up the Bible and said, "Look at this verse, read this passage of scripture, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained these things.

So what was their response when they heard the passage of scripture quoted? In verse 32, the writer of Luke's Gospel tells us: "They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (verse 32).

There it is, an encounter with God, through the Holy Spirit. Don't all of us, want an encounter with God that is out of the ordinary? Like Moses walking up to a burning bush that wasn't consumed by the fire.

Even when I review the story of the Emmaus Road, I say, "Wow, wouldn't that have been a wonderful experience to physically see, walk and talk with the risen Christ?"

Then by experience, I could say, "Yes, Jesus really did rise from the grave".

Today, God still changes hopeless situations. Don't we confess with Luther in his definition to the third article of the Apostle's Creed: "I believe that I can not by my reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel."

The Holy Spirit is the One who guides you and me into all truth and teaches you all things. You and I understand spiritual truth, because the Holy Spirit is working in our heart, when the Word of God is read or heard. It is the Holy Spirit that makes the Word of God understandable.

The Holy Spirit of God, takes the written Word of God and impresses it upon our hearts. Our eyes are opened and we see the reality of God's Word.

You and I do not discover biblical truth, it is revealed. When the Holy Spirit reveals truth or knowledge and insight about God's character or His will for your life. He is not leading you to an encounter with God, it is an encounter with God!

An encounter with Christ, was an encounter with God for the two disciples, on the Road to Emmaus. In the same way, an encounter with the Holy Spirit is an encounter with God for you and for me.

The Spirit of God, knows the mind of God. Haven't there been times when you have read the Bible and a verse just jumps out at you, or you have heard something in a sermon, and it just speaks to you. In that moment, you understand a "spiritual truth", about God. It is an encounter with God.

When God speaks to you, through His Holy Word, or through the preaching of the Word, or may be through prayer, or even in certain circumstances, God is speaking to you in a personal way.

The encounter on the Road to Emmaus, was an encounter with the living God. It was to be the new pattern for God's relationship with His people through the Holy Spirit.

Today, God does speak through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will use God's Holy Word, prayer, life circumstances, and other people in the community of faith.

Before the evening was over in the village of Emmaus, these two disciples, found out as millions have found out, that with Christ Jesus as your Savior, there are no hopeless situations.

These two disciples heard from the mouth of the Living Lord Jesus Christ, that His plan to save sinners had been accomplished at the cross, in which Jesus shed His holy and life-giving blood, and God raised Him on the third day, in a resurrection, defeating sin, death and the devil.

Through the work of the cross, through Christ Jesus, death has lost its sting; in Christ Jesus, for all who believe and profess Him in faith, the grave has become a transition point to heaven.

As we live in the End Times, with so much of the world in turmoil, change and uncertainty, it seems at times like a hopeless situation.

But listen to this statement by King George the VI of England just prior to his death. The King spoke these words on New Year's Eve. "I said to the man at the gate of the year, 'give me a light, that I might walk safely into the unknown. 'And he said to me, "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God. It shall be to you, safer than the light and better than the known." Amen.

Let us pray:

Lord God, You come to us, in your Holy Word, through prayer, and through certain circumstances and certain people that come into our lives. Lord God, no matter hopeless the world around us looks, faith in You is all that matters. Let your Holy Spirit speak to us, strengthen us, affirm our faith and keep us steadfast in the faith until the Day of Christ Jesus' return. All these things we humbly pray in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.