**Resurrection Conversation**

Acts 2:14a, 36-41
Luke 24:13-35

 It may not have been front page news in the Jerusalem Times, but it was headlines for the two disciples deep in conversation on the road to Emmaus. They were, of course, discussing Jesus, the One who invited them and invites us into a way of being and living, the Apostle Paul later calls a new humanity. Jesus opens the door to the Realm of God, making it clear from his words and deeds that the Realm of God often finds itself in conflict with the rulers of this world. Jesus challenges the wealthy and uplifts the poor, confronts the legalism of exclusion with the high demands of love, overturns religious self righteousness with a faith grounded in humility. In one of their many conversations, Jesus had said to them “For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it”. If you become a part of this “new humanity” you can expect tension with the dominant norms of society.

The two disciples deep in conversation know the rulers of this world have succeeded in their execution of the one they consider an insurrectionist, a rebel. Much like the botched execution of the death row inmate in Oklahoma this past week, crucifixion is a cruel and public demonstration of the states power, intended to not only punish but also intimidate.

The crucifixion of Jesus is a back page article of only minor importance to those who confidently believe they are in control. But, to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the execution of Jesus is all they can think about. Ever since Jesus had been nailed to the cross, they have had one sleepless night after the other. Now their heads are spinning with the claims being made by some of the women in their group that they have experienced the presence of Jesus. “How can this be,” the two disciples ask. “We know what we know. We saw him dragged off by the guards. We saw him nailed to the cross. A soldier ran a spear into his side, just to make sure he was dead”. The two on the road to Emmaus were doing what we often do when trying to make sense out of our lives and our world, they are deep in conversation, “as Luke says, talking about all these things that had happened.”

Among the conversations you might have had this past week is a conversation about the L.A. Clippers basketball team and more specifically their owner Donald Sterling. If some how you missed it, Sterling was recorded making some incredibly racist comments about not wanting his bi-racial girl friend to have her picture taken with African Americans like Magic Johnson or worse yet bring them to a game.

It was just the week before that Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy was front page news with his theories about African Americans. Bundy is probably saying “hey where did everyone go? I am not done yet. Doesn’t anyone want to hear more about my theories on how African Americans might have been better off as slaves, picking cotton and having a family life and doing things, rather than being on government subsidy?” We all know what a great family life slaves had.

Unfortunately for Cliven and his patriot buddies, Donald Sterling came along and was recorded saying things about his African American basketball players like, “I support them and give them food, and clothes, and cars, and houses. Who gives it to them? Does someone else give it to them?”  Sterling might as well have put a big sign on the LA Clippers basketball arena that reads, “Donald Stering Plantation”.

If you found yourselves, like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, talking about all the things that have happened this past week, then more than likely you have found yourself in a conversation about Donald Sterling and the LA Clippers. Conversations about race are, of course, not new for folks attending Cherokee Park United Church. Because we continue to talk about these things that most folks prefer to avoid, my guess is that you bring a richer and deeper understanding to the comments of both Cliven and Sterling than is typically the case. You recognize that Cliven and Sterling are hardly the single, solitary aberrations they are portrayed to be. Rather you see these two individuals for what they are, representatives of a view and understanding deeply embedded in the dominant American culture.

This past week Senator Harry Reid noted once again the outrageous nature of having a NFL Team named the “Redskins”. Two weeks ago I saw on the morning news a repeat of the famous study done in the 1940s, which was designed to assess the impact of racism on children of color. In the study it was found that children of color prefer lighter skinned dolls to darker skin dolls. That was 1940. The broadcasters on the morning news, including two women of color, were shocked to witness children of color in 2014 still preferring lighter skin dolls.

Because we have been and continue to be in conversation about race, you recognize that all of these individual manifestations are symptomatic of deeply embedded values and beliefs that keep racism alive. This is what is meant when we use the language “white racial frame”, which simply means a view of the world that continues reinforcing in both overt and subtle ways racial hierarchy, privileging and valuing one group over another based on skin color.

To be sure, all of us have a lot of work yet to do in understanding how deeply embedded these beliefs and values are, which is why we ask questions about the whiteness of Jesus in our stained glass window. What does the whiteness of our Jesus have to teach us about the dominant cultures way of viewing our world? Because we have been in conversation about race, we do know and can recognize with confidence that values and beliefs privileging one group of people over another stand in direct conflict with the Realm of God values Jesus offers. It is for this “new humanity” that Jesus died.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus were deep in conversation, “talking about all these things that had happened.” As they talked Jesus came up to them and in a short time the three of them had taken their conversation to another whole level. After listening to their fears, their worries, their questions and concerns, Jesus begins helping them discover connections with the prophetic word of Scripture and the unfolding news that has troubled them so deeply.

 They walk and talk, discussing all the events of the week, seeking to make sense of their lives and their world, and with the help of Jesus, drawing upon the values and the norms of God’s Realm found in the witness of Moses and all the prophets. At the time, the disciples have no idea they are talking with Jesus. It is only later, as they break bread together, that their eyes are opened and they recognize the presence of Christ. The mystery of that moment is only fleeting, as the experience of mystery always is. Yet, in the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup they are reminded of their discussion about the events of the past week. With the newspaper in one hand and the Scripture in the other, their hearts were “burning within them.” Christ has been with them all along, which is why their conversation is a resurrection conversation.

 When it comes to difficult issues and challenges in our world and in our lives, it often feels much easier to avoid, deny or pretend everything is just fine. As Jesus says, “the gate is narrow and the road is hard.” Whether the issue is race or some other personal challenge we are facing, it takes courage to have the type of life giving resurrection conversations engaged in by the two disciples. But, when we open our hearts to one another, when we are willing to truly listen, when we hear again the words of Scripture as a living testimony and when we break bread together, we discover anew the promise, “Christ is with us.” We are part of a new humanity, the Realm of God’s love and justice.

**Acts 2:14a, 36-41**

*In our first lesson we are reminded by Peter that following the way of Jesus is never about looking to justify our lives as they are. Rather to follow Jesus is to repent of those things that keep us from loving fully, that we may enter a new way of life, one that will be in tension with the world as it is.*

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

***Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.***

**Luke 24:13-35**

*In our Gospel lesson today, two disciples on the road to the village of Emmaus are deep in conversation about the killing of Jesus. If the death of Jesus were not troubling enough, only a few hours ago, a couple women, also disciples, told the two travelers about having just been with Jesus. As the conversation continues, they are joined in discussion, with a person they fail to recognize. But later, as they break bread together, their eyes are opened to the presence of the One who shows the way to a resurrected life.*

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "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, and 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. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

***Hear what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.***