

## **“What the World Needs Now”**

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Last week Anne preached from one of the Gospel of John’s post-resurrection accounts of Jesus appearing to the disciples. Anne’s sermon was powerful. She began by comparing a current event...the ongoing debate over the authenticity of President Obama’s birth certificate and how even after proof of this certificate was given two weeks ago...some folk still have had a hard time believing it is true.

This was the reality we saw with the disciples last week. Even after seeing the resurrected Jesus...some still wanted more proof.

Such need for proof is what I was afraid was going to be part of folk’s conversation this past week after the news of Osama bin Laden’s death took place and it was reported that his body was buried at sea by our US military. While there was some early chatter about whether he was definitely dead or not...unfortunately...there was far more chatter about so many other realities and emotions related to killing.

I'm not going to make a statement about whether this was justified or not...because truth of the matter is, if you think this was justified...you can present your rationale as to why this is the case...and if you think this was not justified...you can present your rationale as to why this is the case...

What I will say is this...if you find yourself in conversation about this story regarding Osama bin Laden...if you're in conversation with family members or friends, with colleagues or fellow employees or with anyone for that matter...choose your words wisely, try not to be an extremist about your opinions...and listen with respect to the perspectives of others who see things differently from yourself...

More than a few people this past week have tried finding "biblical" parallels to this news story about Osama bin Laden. Frankly, I don't think there are any. One person I know however wondered if maybe this story about bin Laden has some similarities to the story of David and Goliath.

Many of you have heard me tell my story about David and Goliath and the time I used this story during the word for God's children time when Tara and I still lived in Pennsylvania. I had no choice.

At Upper Merion Baptist the tradition was that every week a different child could take home the mystery box and place in it anything they wanted for the following Sunday's children's time. I or anyone else leading that moment in the service every week had to extemporaneously come up with a lesson based on whatever was in the mystery box—it was a lot of fun! 😊

This one particular Sunday it just happened to be a children's story book about David and Goliath. I told the story as it was told in the book and figured I'd leave it at that. David was a little boy and yet God used him to kill the big, tall, mighty and mean Goliath.

I figured I played it safe. I told the story the way my Sunday School teacher told it to me. But then it happened...a boy named Luke was visiting that day. Quietly, he raised his hand before I could say, "Let's pray..." and he said with confidence, "I thought the Bible says we're not suppose to kill others and that Jesus says we are to love."

These words from this little Luke who I suspect is a young adult today...have stayed with me through the years...and they've been part of my own reflections this week...as I've struggled with how to make sense out of all that has been...

These words from the Gospel of Luke as we've heard them today have been part of my reflections too. I think Luke wants all of us as readers to reflect on this post-resurrection account of Jesus and the disciples. I wonder if maybe this Luke wants us to think again and again about who Jesus was and who Jesus is...and how he lived...and was killed...and somehow...mysteriously still lives.

We're introduced right away to these two disciples who are walking toward Emmaus. One is named Cleopas and the other remains unnamed. Scholars have tried to understand this. Some wonder if maybe this is a reference to the Mary in John's gospel who was married to Clopas—a similar spelling to Cleopas but in a different language.

Others allow this other disciple to remain unnamed and yet ponder the possibility that still this may have been a woman...perhaps Cleopas' wife. Generally speaking women in Jesus' day were not considered reliable witnesses or sources and so perhaps this was Luke's way of acknowledging one of the social realities of the first century. Women didn't count.

Now there's a statement for Mother's Day! "Good job Brian!" Please don't take that out of context.

Women didn't count...but if this unnamed individual was a woman...there's even greater power and significance to this story because it didn't matter seemingly to Jesus who or how these two were...rather...Jesus engaged them in conversation...Jesus walked with them on their journey...Jesus had Bible study with them...*and*...Jesus shared with them a meal.

I mean, technically speaking, they invited Jesus to eat with them but as things turned out...it was really Jesus who became the host. Jesus took some bread...blessed it...broke it...and gave it to them. And the text tells us that when they received the bread...their eyes were opened and they recognized who Jesus was.

At one level this account is about Jesus...it's a post-resurrection story...and yet...at another level...this is about disciples...disciples...people like you and me...this is account is about that good news of Jesus...the good news that God's love is for all people...it's for men and for women...it's for those of us who seem to fit in and it's for those of us who do not...

I wonder if maybe this account of Jesus meeting these two on the road to Emmaus is to remind us that the way of Jesus is a different way...the way of Jesus is not always the way of the world...it's not always the way of government or the way of the military...it's not always the way we think things should or shouldn't be...the way of Jesus is the way of love—that's what little Luke in Pennsylvania taught me many years ago...perhaps that's what the Gospel of Luke is reminding us of today.

Our challenge as people...as disciples like these two in Luke's gospel is to figure out in our post- 9-11 world of complexities and realities what the way of love is and to live in it.

We never hear again of Cleopas and this other disciple whoever she or he may have been. We will never know how they lived out the way of love shared with them as Jesus offered them the bread that he did.

What we can know however...is how our lives may tell of this way...of this love. It is the power of love that will resurrect in us and in others the potential and power to love in return.

*It is the power of love that will resurrect in us and in others the potential and power to love in return.*

And this...as it was in Jesus' day...is what the world needs now. Amen.