

Walking in Joy:  
How Faith Changes Our Walk in the Lord  
A Bible Study for the  
The LWML – Eastern District  
June, 2020

## **Introduction**

In light of the convention theme this year, *We Walk by Faith Not by Sight*, it is good to consider the difference between walking by faith and walking by sight. Saint Paul certainly encourages us to remember that our lives are ever oriented toward the things of heaven – to our eternal dwelling place with God. We have not yet attained it, but by faith, we know it is there and that we are going to it. As a result, our daily walk in the Lord is impacted and changed, for we do not look to fulfill life by the things that are seen around us, but by that which is unseen. In this way, faith and hope go hand in hand. Faith enables us to cast our gaze upon that which we hope knowing that it is not just wishful thinking, but is a certain gift that is assured us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. In a beautiful way, what is not seen with the naked eye is clearly visible by faith.

But, what does it mean that we walk by faith? What does that look like? And perhaps more importantly, how does it impact our life or change the way we go about things?

A helpful story from Luke's Gospel can illuminate this for us. It is the familiar story of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). *Take a moment and read that passage.*

## **Walking by Sight**

These disciples were making their way back to Emmaus after having gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. They had also witnessed all the unusual things that took place around that feast in relation to Jesus: his arrest and trial, his flogging and crucifixion, and news of his resurrection from the dead. The latter had been a bit too much for them to understand, or believe just yet. Though they had been followers of Jesus, their faith was incomplete.

1. *What did these disciples explain had happened in Jerusalem to the “stranger” that joined them on the road? What had been their supreme hope for what Jesus would accomplish? What do you think they meant by that?*

As these disciples talk with the “stranger,” you get a glimpse of what it means to walk by sight. Based upon what they had seen, Jesus could not possibly have been the One for whom they had been hoping. He could not have been the promised Messiah for the people of Israel. “We had hoped,” they said. The things that Jesus said and did prior to his arrest and crucifixion made things seem like he was the One to come. But now, it didn't make sense, and their hopes had vanished. In many ways, the setting for this story is symbolic of where these disciples' faith was headed: darkness was beginning to creep in around them.

2. *Can you think of a time when your hopes appeared to have been snatched away from you? How did you handle it? Was there something that helped you find hope once again?*

## **Faith Delivered by Christ**

In the second section of this text we find Jesus at work to transform these disciples' hearts and minds. His goal was to transform their gloom and sadness and despair into true hope. *And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”* (Luke 24:25—26). Here we see Jesus' compassion and his heart for his people. Their hopes had been wrong-headed, and their faith slow in coming despite all they had seen.

3. *What does Jesus do for these disciples as they continue to walk along the road? What does he say these words from Moses and the Prophets were talking about? What does this mean in regards to all of the Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments?*

Upon arrival at the village, Jesus made it seem as though he were going farther. Perhaps this may have been a test of sorts, an opportunity for these disciples to see that the message they had just received from this “stranger” was more than just nice words. These words pointed to the true source of life, the Christ. Would they want to hear more? Indeed, they did, inviting the “stranger” to stay with them.

4. *What does Jesus do that enables these disciples to finally see him for who he is? What does this remind you of? In what ways does Jesus deliver faith to us today (see the Small Catechism, 3<sup>rd</sup> Article of the Apostles’ Creed, with Explanation)?*

### **Walking by Faith**

As Jesus disappears from their sight, these two disciples now see clearly. The man they had been conversing with, and had invited into their home, had been Jesus himself. In Word and Meal, Jesus had been opening their eyes to see him truly. Additionally, he was helping them to make sense of the events of the past few days in Jerusalem. As they make their way back to Jerusalem, we see how their lives have been transformed from a state of hopelessness to being eternally hopeful. What they “had hoped” was still something to hope in: Jesus is the One who has come to restore Israel, and the whole world.

5. *Who did these Emmaus disciples go to Jerusalem to see? What had changed their message? What kinds of emotions do you think these disciples were now feeling?*
6. *How does the story of Christ crucified and risen change the way we go about life? How does the story of the Emmaus disciples help us to learn to “walk by faith, not by sight”? How might you use the story of the Emmaus disciples, along with 2 Corinthians 5:7, to help someone who is going through a time of hopelessness?*

### **Conclusion**

We all go through times where our faith gets pushed to its limits. The way we think things ought to go does not always align with God’s plan for us, nor the impact that sin has in our lives. In the Word of God, our Lord still speaks to us, holding before us his promises and his grace which give us eternal assurance. In the Sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, our Lord feeds us with his very presence so that we may recognize him and his goodness toward us. In these ways, our hopelessness is met by Christ with his resurrected life, which he comes to impart to us. While we may not always see clearly by our own sight where our Lord is leading us, when we walk by faith, we know that his way leads to a blessed end. Thus, as we walk, we can do so with an overwhelming sense of joy, and this joy is what leads us to boldly proclaim that Christ is our hope, and he is our life. To walk by faith is keep your eyes fixed upon our Lord and upon the eternal gift he comes to give to you!

Let us pray: Eternal Lord, you have promised that we are your children by Baptism, and therefore co-heirs with Christ of the kingdom. Help us not to walk through this life with our eyes fixed upon only what can be seen, for it would surely lead to despair. Grant us your Spirit, so that we may walk by faith, so that we may know the joy of forgiveness and live in eternal hope so that in the end, we may dwell with you eternally; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Answers to the Study Questions

1. The disciples spoke of this man, Jesus, who was a mighty prophet, who had spoken well, and done amazing things among the people. They spoke of the injustice done to him as he was handed over to the religious rulers and had been condemned to death. And, they reported that the women had told them the tomb was empty.

Their supreme hope had been that Jesus would be the One who would restore Israel. They apparently believed that Jesus would reclaim the throne of David in the hopes of making Israel a great nation once again before the whole world.

2. Answers will vary. Perhaps the help that came did so through a pastor or a friend, through the Word proclaimed or read, or in a simple act of kindness and compassion from a fellow Christian in a time of need.
3. Jesus begins to explain everything in the Scriptures, from Moses through the Prophets. All of these things, he says, were concerning himself. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments all direct us to Jesus, and to the life and salvation he has won for us, and gives us freely by his grace.
4. Jesus breaks bread with the disciples in their home. It is reminiscent of the Lord's Supper where Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it. In the Lord's Supper, Jesus reveals himself to us and is physically present in our midst.

Even today, Jesus continues to do for us what he did for these disciples. He unpacks his Word for us, all of which speak of him; and, he feeds us with his body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

5. These disciples went to Jerusalem to see the 11 disciples of Jesus, to tell them what had happened. They were now overjoyed for they had seen the risen Christ and been taught by him. They had moved from hopelessness to hopeful joy.
6. Because our eternal future is certain, we can joyfully face even the darkest of times with the confidence that the Lord's promises to us hold true. We do not have to cry out "we had hoped" in despair. We have been given a living hope in Christ, and so our words and actions reflect our eternal confidence in the Gospel. It also changes the way we look at our sisters and brothers in Christ, as well as those who are our neighbors in our various vocations. As the Lord allows, these stories, and many others give us a firm foundation and joy upon which to share the hope we have in Christ, and the assurance that while we may not always be able to see clearly what the purpose for things is, our faith keeps us fixed on the eternal joys we have in Christ.