

Reflections on the Shared Journey-

After the resurrection, the disciples faced the challenge of learning to live in relationship with the Risen Christ apart from his physical presence. They had to learn how to be aware of his presence, how to recognize his voice, how to sense his guidance, how to know his truth, how to feel his comfort, how to find his peace, how to experience his joy, how to access his strength. They had to learn how to live in relationship with Jesus all over again.

For 50 days, they walked with the Risen Christ, sometimes with his physical presence, generally in his absence. Then at Pentecost, the Spirit was given as the presence of the Risen Christ with them and among them and in them. Their experience of walking with the Risen Christ during those 50 days became a guide for how to walk in/with the Spirit.

Like the disciples with the Risen Christ, we too have to learn how to live in relationship with Jesus – how to walk in/with the Spirit – how to live in relationship with God. How does one recognize God's presence or God's voice or God's guidance? How does one experience God's peace or joy or strength?

None of us inherently know how to live in this kind of spiritual relationship. Our initial attempts are often awkward and frustrating. Without guidance, we are tempted to give up – to substitute believing in Jesus (God) for living in relationship with Jesus (God), to settle for involvement in religious and church activities in place of meaningful, personal relationship with God. We resign ourselves to doing the best we can.

Just as the Resurrected Jesus taught the disciples during those 50 days, we need someone to teach us and guide us – a spiritual guide or mentor or friend, a small group of trusted spiritual friends with whom we share. We need someone with whom to share the spiritual journey, with whom to talk about our struggles. We need someone who can instruct and suggest out of their own experience. We need someone who can help us find God in the things we do – worship, Bible study, prayer, fellowship, ministry/service, giving, journal-ing, retreats. This kind of spiritual mentoring is as old as our spiritual history (check out the experience of Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:2-10).

Living in the Spirit - with a particular focus on the transformation of heart that it brings – will be the focus on my preaching during this Easter season (Easter Sunday and the 6 Sundays that follow). Galatians 6:16-25 and John 14 & 15 will be the texts to which we give our attention.

I am grateful for the privilege of walking with you as we grow in our relationship with the Risen Christ.

Grace and peace, Steve