

"Open Eyes, Burning Hearts"

2019 Lenten Resource

Luke 24:13-34



Welcome to Luke 24! As we move together through Lent, we will be looking at what happened on the road, in the public square, the graveyard, and around the table. It is our hope that together we will explore what it is to become profoundly aware of the presence of God, of how God's story impacts our lives and changes us.

At the same time that we are dwelling in this text throughout the Lenten season, we will be offering opportunities to learn the basic practices of listening to God, listening to one another, and connecting with the community. The specific skill we will practice is that of telling God Stories. As we tune our senses we will become more aware of what God is doing and be able to tell new stories of what happens when God shows up on the pathways of life.

Luke 24:13-34

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.¹⁷ And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.¹⁸ 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?'¹⁹ 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,²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.²¹ 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.²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,²³ 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.²⁴ 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.'²⁵ Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?'²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.²⁹ 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.³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.³² 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?'³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.³⁴ They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!'³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Session 1

Luke 24:13-16

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

Read this text aloud two times. One reader should be a female voice and one reader should be a male voice.

Break up into pairs or trios for conversation about what is heard as the text is read. Practice mindful listening by making sure everyone gets to share.

What are the words or phrases that catch your attention?

Connecting scripture to life, through telling a story.

Share a time in your life where something unexpected interrupted your path and how you reacted. (Perhaps it was a closed door, a job loss, death in the family, health challenge)

Ask each other questions like "what kept you from feeling hopeful?" "What were your feelings?" Listen with care to the stories people chose to tell.

Group Feedback.

Popcorn sharing to get a sense of the stories. As a leader, you may want to make some connections or observations.

Ask in general about "barriers" to hopefulness

Ask for feelings

Preparing for next week.

Re-read these verses daily. Notice challenges--great and small--that are happening around you. Think about what might be keeping you from noticing the presence of God.

Song.

ELW 808 Lord Jesus you shall be my song as I journey

Prayer

O God, our traveling companion. As we walk through the pathways of life, barriers and roadblocks challenge us. We are occupied with many things and don't even notice you, blinded by our own self-absorption. Open our eyes to the miracles of your presence all around us and give us a voice to tell the stories. Amen.

Notes

Decorate the space with traffic cones, and yellow caution tape. Leaders might want to wear a reflective vest. As people leave, measure out a length of the tape to take home as a Bible bookmark to be placed at Luke 24:13-34.

Session 2

Luke 24:17-19

¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then 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?' ¹⁹He 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

Read this text aloud two times. One reader should be a female voice and one reader should be a male voice.

Break up into pairs or trios for conversation about what is heard as the text is read. Practice mindful listening by making sure everyone gets to share.

What are the words or phrases that catch your attention?

Connecting scripture to life through telling a story.

Tell about a time when something outside of a church setting challenged your thinking. It could be a question, some song lyrics, something you saw on TV, a tweet or a Facebook post.

How do you react when someone asks you, "what things?"

Group Feedback.

Popcorn sharing to get a sense of the stories. As a leader, you may want to make some connections or observations.

Where did the questions "unstick you" from what you were thinking? Did they make you more mindful, or heighten your senses?

The word "religion" comes from the Latin "religere" which means to reconnect. Were any of these challenges or interruptions things that reconnected you with God? How did that happen?

Telling a God Story is like a journey of reconnection. It starts with a challenge. Our journey is interrupted, perhaps detoured or even halted. We encounter possibilities, new insights. A powerful question gets us unstuck. God is reconnecting us through our daily experiences of loss and challenge. As we are able to identify these movements, we become tellers of God stories.

Preparing for next week.

Re-read these verses daily. Be attentive to the questions that the media, your neighbors, your co-workers and your family pose to you. How are these questions changing you?

How are you becoming reconnected to God through these questions?

Song

ELW 677 This Little Light of Mine

Prayer

O God, our traveling companion. As we walk through the pathways of life, powerful questions are posed that stop us in our tracks and force us to think in new ways. Help us to listen to these questions and mindfully struggle with the answers, that we might be brought to deeper understandings of your presence in the world. Amen.

Session 3

Luke 24:21-22

²¹But 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. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,

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What are the words or phrases that catch your attention?

Connecting scripture to life through telling a story.

Tell a story about a time where you were blinded by your own agenda, or your own hopes and dreams. This could be a community story, for example a congregation wanting a new pastor, or more young families with children, or

_____.

How can a preferred outcome keep you from recognizing God at work?

Group Feedback.

Popcorn sharing to get a sense of the stories. As a leader, you may want to make some connections or observations. As we go deeper into awareness of God's work in the world, we find that our way is challenged by fog, or wet with precipitation, or even the blinding rays of a setting sun. These are things outside of us. There is also our own desires and our pre judgments that keep us from paying full attention to some others.

How do our agendas, hopes and dreams help/hinder our connection to God? What happens when prejudice, racism or sexism close our eyes to God's work? Share examples, where appropriate

Preparing for next week.

Re-read these verses daily. Be attentive to the ways that voices from the margins are challenging and changing you. We are on the road, and this journey is not finished.

Try listening to a different newscast, have a conversation with a service worker in your building, check the AMMPARO page on the ELCA website <https://elca.org/Resources/AMMPARO>, eat some different food. Be mindful of how these experience challenge you.

Where are you seeing God in these moments?

Song

ELW 815 I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

Prayer

Blessed Jesus, you spent time on the margins during your ministry. You met with fishermen, tax collectors, women and children. You traveled through places where the despised Samaritans lived. Teach us not to fear the margins, but embrace them as places where we can find you.

Session 4

Luke24:22-24

.²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,²³ 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. ²⁴Some 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.'

Read this text aloud two times. One reader should be a female voice and one reader should be a male voice.

Break up into pairs or trios for conversation about what is heard as the text is read. Practice mindful listening by making sure everyone gets to share.

What are the words or phrases that catch your attention?

Connecting scripture to life through telling a story.

It may be harder for you to think of a story or the start of one, where you have either had an interaction with someone on the margins, witnessed an exchange between people with power and people with little power, or even been on the margin yourself. If you are able, tell a story of a shift in thinking, or new behavior that was prompted by someone you normally would not pay attention to, or that you set in motion from your margin. (The men found out that things were just as the women had said)

Group Feedback.

Popcorn sharing to get a sense of the stories. As a leader, you may want to make some connections or observations. As we go deeper into awareness of God's work in the world, we find that our way is challenged by unexamined prejudices, cultural assumptions, our own power, or lack of it.

How do assumptions blind us?

Within and without the walls of the church, power, prejudice and unexamined assumptions form barriers to fully hearing the stories God is up to in our world today. Can you share an example?

This is a sensitive area to explore. It is possible that the women in the group immediately "got it" that their God story was not good enough and had to be checked out by the men. Continue to encourage mindfulness as people take risks to share.

This will take some skillful management by a leader.

Preparing for next week.

Re-read these verses daily. Be attentive to the ways that powerful voices tell a different story from the one told by those on the margins. How often are we willing to even check out a story "told by women" or from the margins? Be sensitive to how listening to the margins change and challenges us? We are on the road, and this journey is not finished.

Song

ELW 889 The Right Hand of God

Prayer

Merciful God, we call to mind all those on the margins, easy to forget, uncomfortable to hear. Open our ears to mindful listening. Turn our hearts to receive the challenges that their points of view offer to us. Make us ever more like Jesus who walked with the unworthy, blessed the unclean, and himself was an outcast.

Session 5

Luke 24:29

²⁹But 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.

Read this text aloud two times. One reader should be a female voice and one reader should be a male voice.

Break up into pairs or trios for conversation about what is heard as the text is read. Practice mindful listening by making sure everyone gets to share.

What are the words or phrases that catch your attention?

Connecting scripture to life through ...*"telling a story"*.

This conversation could take a couple of directions: Prayer and Hospitality.

Think about prayer as sacred space, a break in the journey, a holy interruption. Tell about a time when prayer blessed a space, a situation, a relationship in unexpected ways. How does this connection with God enrich your journey?

Reflect on an invitation you have received that changed you, or strongly affected your journey? What is it like to be the one who is invited?

Tell about a time you invited someone who had intrigued or challenged you to share your space. How did that invitation change you?

Group Feedback.

Popcorn sharing to get a sense of the stories. Key concept to focus on is how invitation changes relationships and our part in them, or how prayer changes the God stories we have to tell. Invitation and prayer have transformation power. In them God's grace manifests itself. Encourage people to find God in receiving the invitation as well as in extending it.

Tell a story about how an invitation gave birth to a life giving relationship. Was there a time when an invitation was not received, or did not get extended? What stood in the way?

Preparing for next week.

Re-read these verses daily. Be attentive to the invitations extended or not extended. Be mindful of the transformative power of prayer. Think about where something has become holy because God was invited into it. Make a plan to extend an invitation to another person outside of the church walls. Make it an invitation to relationship, to listen, to understand.

Song

ELW 798 Will You Come and Follow Me

Prayer

Good and Gracious God, your risen son, Jesus accepted an invitation to stay with the travelers on the road. We are tempted to think of invitations as transactional, hoping to bring people into the church walls. Teach us to find transformation in our invitations, both given and received, that your purposes might prosper and we can become faithful tellers of your story in our world.

Maundy Thursday Session

Luke 24:24:30-31

³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

Read this text aloud two times. One reader should be a female voice and one reader should be a male voice.

Break up into pairs or trios for conversation about what is heard as the text is read. Practice mindful listening by making sure everyone gets to share.

What are the words or phrases that catch your attention?

Connecting scripture to life through ...*"telling a story"*.

Being fed changes and transforms us.

Think about eating bread, trying new ethnic foods. What are your reactions? Have you seen God, tasted God in new food?

These disciples had only experienced Passover with Jesus. They knew about a meal that celebrated God's liberation of an enslaved people. Tell a story about how a meal of transformation/liberation has unexpectedly changed you?

Group Feedback.

Popcorn sharing to get a sense of the stories.

This is a wonderful opportunity to share stories about feeding on the bread of life.

How has Eucharist been a meal of transformation? Are you perhaps worried because it doesn't seem so deeply spiritual as it "should be"?

In the Eucharist, the meal tells its own story: broken, shared, tasted, chewed. How does the Eucharist tell your story?

Preparing for our next encounter.

Re-read these verses daily. When you eat, practice mindfulness, not only of the taste, but the potential for growth and how eating food is a not only a personal activity, but a community experience. Look and listen for stories of transformation at the table.

Song

ELW 472 Eat This Bread

Prayer

Almighty God, you provide the true bread from heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that we, who feed at your holy table may abide in him and he in us. May the power of his endless life transform us on our journey.

Good Friday Session

Luke 24:31

³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

Read this text aloud two times. One reader should be a female voice and one reader should be a male voice.

Break up into pairs or trios for conversation about what is heard as the text is read. Practice mindful listening by making sure everyone gets to share.

What are the words or phrases that catch your attention?

Connecting scripture to life through telling a story.

Tell a story of an experience of “no God”. Maybe there was a time of doubt, deep pain, or total boredom when it seemed that God was not there. Was it a time of anguish, surprise, or indifference?

Has God vanished from your sight?

Group Feedback.

Popcorn sharing to get a sense of the stories.

Here is a time to share scripture stories of the absence of God, loss of the divine, Psalm 22. Jesus’ own words from the cross. Job’s “comforters”. Jonah in the belly of the whale.

Darkness, loss and doubt are both “in the walls” and outside the walls” experiences. How do we stay with that loss? Do we quickly try moving to a happier mode? What are some quick phrases of comfort, that we are inclined to offer?

When Jesus has vanished from our eyes, is he gone?

Discuss the experience of travelling through the road of life alone, versus walking with others

Preparing for Resurrection

Re-read these verses daily. Think about the transformation “from” “through” and “to” that God’s active presence in the life of the world provides.

Dwell in the darkness of a vanished God

Come to Easter morning expecting God to begin raising up new stories in your life and in the world, through telling stories and listening to the stories (of others)

Song

ELW 325 I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

Prayer

Blessed and most Holy God, your son experienced your absence on the cross. May the loss and absence we experience be a holy space in which your transformational grace may change and challenge us.