

“Things Seen and Unseen”

Luke 24:13-35 (The Road To Emmaus)

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.

Slow Of Heart To Believe

(All Church Read)

Luke 24:13-35

April 19, 2026

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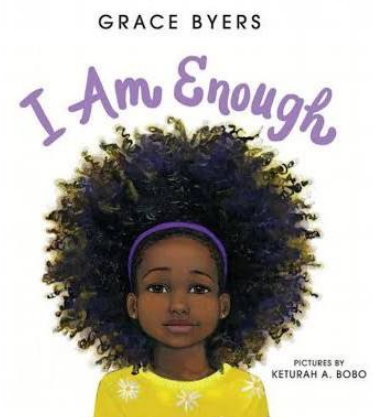
I.

As you can see from the insert in today's bulletin, we are celebrating the 23rd year of our annual All-Church Read which was begun in 2003. Joining a long list of distinguished, notable, fun, and beloved books are this year's selections: I Am Enough by Grace Byers, Nat Enough by Maria Scrivan, and A Life of Being, Having, and Doing Enough by Wayne Muller. Special thanks to Linda Potter for, once again, making these selections which share a common theme and effectively convey it across the spectrum of readers within our congregation: young kids, Tweeners, as well as older Teens and adults. No small task, I can assure you. Especially when you consider that beyond needing to be interesting and engaging books in and of themselves, together they must also yield subject matter suitable for a sermon.

II.

I have often said that, conceptually, the sermon for the All-Church Read is the hardest one I write all year. Not only must one consolidate a great deal of information, one must also relate it to the specific scripture passage randomly generated by the lectionary. This year, though, is an exception. While it did not quite write itself, by the time I had read all three books it was abundantly clear there was a framework for a sermon which was just begging to be written. Moreover, it is a sermon ideally suited for where we currently find ourselves as a congregation, nation, and world.

This year's selection for the younger kids, Grace Byers', I Am Enough is a #1 New York Times bestselling children's picture book that promotes self-love, kindness, and respect, inspired by the author's own experiences with bullying. As we heard during the Children's sermon, the book uses simple, powerful poetry to affirm that every child is unique and valuable, celebrating differences and encouraging self-acceptance.



III.

Close on its heels, thematically, is our Tweener book, Nat Enough by Maria Scrivan which is but one of many books in a popular graphic novel series about middle schooler, Natalie, as she struggles with self-confidence and friendships, learning to accept herself as she navigates social challenges like losing her best friend and finding new ones. The series, which includes titles like Forget Me Nat and Absolutely Nat, is both relatable and humorous. I found it to be quite a fast and fun read.



The theme and topics inherent in these first two books come to full fruition and bloom, beautifully so, in our adult selection, A Life of Being, Having, and Doing Enough by Wayne Muller. In addition to being a psychotherapist, community advocate, consultant, public speaker and bestselling author, Muller is also an ordained UCC minister and a graduate of Harvard Divinity School (he probably couldn't get into Princeton).

IV.

While Muller certainly brings to bear a wide variety of experiences from his 35 years working closely with people suffering abuse, alcoholism, poverty, illness, and loss, it is his theological interpretation and extrapolation which really sets his book apart from the great many new age, feel-good, you can do this, pat you on the back kind of books that are out there.



Though not at all overt or heavy handed, Muller grounds his ideas in scripture and in our shared Christian perspective and approach. Which is something I found quite refreshing. He does, of course, bring other traditions and perspectives to bear, but all of these serve to compliment and reinforce the primary Biblical premises.

While it made writing this sermon a bit of a challenge, the other thing I really appreciated about the book was the lack of linearity. Though I, myself, am certainly an adherent of the shortest distance between two points being a straight line, Muller is more of a meanderer. The appeal of which I am beginning to appreciate more and more these days.

V.

Let us meander, then, through Wayne Muller's A Life of Being, Having, and Doing Enough.

When we are in crisis, we can make very swift but often incomplete or inaccurate choices that may unintentionally seed yet other crises in the future. 166

The safer we feel, the more spontaneous, creative, playful, and joyous our lives can become. Constant fear of intrusion can inhibit these same impulses, corrode our imaginations, and choke our ability to play, to dream, to fly. 167

Connective technologies have created a cultural shift. One that presumes less and less a right to privacy and more and more a right to access. 167

Our work is on ourselves, to be clearly certain we have listened, seen, felt in ourselves what, in the moment, is required. Then, forces greater than ourselves will have their way with whatever we plant, build, grow, or create. This, then, is our work. To do what we can and have mercy. 186

VI.

Happiness is an inside job. Sufficiency and contentment, are grown in the soil of moments, choice points, and listening at each juncture for the simplest, most deeply true, next right thing. It sounds so trite, but the practice of authentic happiness is neither easy nor shallow. It is, instead, one of the more courageous, radical practices we undertake in a human life. 202 As Abraham Lincoln said, "Most folks are about as happy as they make their minds up to be." 201

Finding the next right thing is a subtle dance of both seeking and finding, of simultaneously reaching for and allowing in. 204

The less we sleep, the more fragile and ineffective we become, by nearly every conceivable measure. 209

When begrudging acceptance slowly becomes full-hearted, honest, loving acceptance, some uncontrollable, unpredictable alchemy invariably has its way with us, as we begin to feel grateful. Acceptance simply becomes gratitude.

VII.

Make no mistake, though, gratitude does not come swiftly or easily nor does it in any way erase the searing grief of loss, the pain, or the fury at injustice. It merely invites something beautiful, fresh, and new to grow and flourish right beside it. 214

Life is not a problem to be solved; it is a gift to be opened. 228

Every life is made of days. 227

Whatever we choose, however we decide to use our days, the shape of our days becomes the shape of our lives. Many spiritual traditions focus their practice on the way we most honorably and authentically place our heart's best attention on one single day. As the psalmist reminds us, "This is the day the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it." 228

We all share a common, compelling ache to be seen and known, just as we are, with love, appreciation, and mercy. Those who feel seen and known, with loving acceptance, begins to shine. They blossom. They grow taller before our eyes.

VIII.

They rise to their full stature; they find their strength, courage, and wisdom. They remember who they are: the light of the world, a magnificent child of creation. This happens every time. Every time. When people feel they can reveal with courage and honesty the person they are and the story they carry, and feel they have been seen, heard, truly known, with love and mercy, the likelihood of miraculous, impossible change in themselves and everyone else in the circle erupts as a tidal wave of infinite possibility that cannot, will not, be stopped. - 232

If we can gently hold the way our lives are unfolding this instant, with love, and mercy, listening only for the smallest, most easily true next right thing, the speed with which we find strength, wisdom, courage, luminosity...and an astonishing contentment that feels remarkably like a state of being, having, and doing enough...might just take our breath away. 234

IX.

Whenever we feel we must speak honestly of the most precious things, we inevitably invoke the heart. That place within ourselves where we are most passionately alive, where we sense what is beautiful and necessary, where we feel the truth of how things are. Only within the quiet intuition and fierce clarity of our heart can we find sanctuary for our life, our calling, our soul. 235

A life of enough is born in every moment in the way we listen, the way we respond to the world, the way we see what is and tell the truth of who we are. Every single choice, every single moment, every change of course can bring us closer to a life of peace, contentment, authenticity, and easy sufficiency, a life of being, having, and doing enough. 236

X.

Today's scripture reading, Luke 24:13-35, continues to unpack and interpret the events of Easter week; the cross and the empty tomb in particular. Last week we found the disciples huddled and hidden in fear, and the sudden arrival of the risen Christ who brings a message of peace and well-being. Then we learn of a return visit by Christ to assuage the doubt of Thomas. Today's passage continues the journey of understanding as it recounts events which occur on the road to Emmaus. Further unfolding the meaning and mystery of the resurrection now three days past.

Each of these passages, along with those which are to follow in the weeks ahead, represent an arc of understanding as the followers of Christ struggle to allow, then comprehend, how the theological paradigm and real world circumstances have shifted on a scale which is something akin to the tilting of the earth's on its axis. *Everything* must be reconsidered, reinterpreted, and reordered so as to not completely miss the entire point and purpose of God's redemptive work through Christ.

XI.

Which is exactly what *we* should be doing. Certainly the whole year through but, particularly, in these weeks of Eastertide. Now, I am very willing to admit that what I am about to say is *my* thing, rather than some kind of *universal* thing. However, while I can accept that you all might be so kind as to *hear* me out as I *work* things out, there is a part of me which believes that these words of mine might also resonate with each of you at some deep and meaningful level.

As I am sure most of you are well aware, churches spend a great deal of time *talking* about Jesus, and seeking an understanding of Jesus. That is to say, who Jesus was, what Jesus did, what Jesus means, and how we should regard him. Which is all fine and well.

XII.

However, the truth is my own *personal* interest in all of that has waned considerably if not petered out all together. Instead, what I now find most compelling, crucially so, is who *we* are, what *we* do, what our life *together* as a

church might mean, and how we are to regard each other and the world in which we live *if* all this talk of Jesus is actually and somehow *true*!

In today's passage, the two disciples are fully up on the story of Jesus and are walking along the road talking about Jesus and seeking an understanding of Jesus. However, and as Jesus himself points out to them, they are "slow of heart to believe." Now, there is a lot of this spiritual mopey going around, back in the day and right here in our day.

XIII.

As we read in James 2:14-26, "Faith without works is dead." Said another way, genuine religious belief naturally produces tangible actions, good deeds, and loving behavior. It argues that faith lacking action is lifeless, useless, and a faith which is neither true or saving. While works do not earn salvation, good works serve as evidence of an internal transformation. An internal transformation which allows our faith to believe that we *are* enough, *have* enough, and *do* enough. An internal transformation which begets authentic friendships, genuine self-acceptance, and provides the tools to navigate all the social challenges we begin to confront in our youth and continue to face throughout our lives. An internal transformation which promotes self-love, kindness, and respect while, also, celebrating our differences as the means through which we affirm that *each* of us is a child of God and, as such, unique and valuable.

XIV.

This is not some new age, feel-good, you can do this, pat you on the back kind of crap. This is the very Gospel of Jesus Christ and what the life of faith is actually all about. This is not just *talking* about Jesus, this is *living out* what Jesus taught us and has commanded us to do.

Think about it this way, do we really want to cultivate a faith and involve ourselves in a religious tradition which talks about loving our neighbors as ourselves when the way we are taught to feel about ourselves leaves us lacking in self-worth, cultivates a sense of scarcity when all we actually lack is sufficient gratitude, and exhausts us by insisting we do anything and everything except that which really matters?

XV.

Instead, and what puts the “difference” in our self-understanding of this different kind of church of ours, here on the Park we endeavor to share that common, compelling ache to be seen and known, just as we are, with love, appreciation, and mercy. If we can manage to do so, and this is no small feat, we begin to shine as people. We begin to blossom, walk taller, and cast our eyes further afield because we feel seen and know and lovingly accepted. We find our strength, courage, and wisdom. We remember who we are: the light of the world, each of us magnificent child of creation.

This is what a church *should* be. A place where people trust that they can reveal themselves with courage and honesty so as to begin to tell the story they carry. When we feel we have been seen, heard, and truly known, with love and mercy, the likelihood of miraculous, impossible changes in ourselves and everyone else who calls this place their spiritual home and center...well, then, we become a community of faith that is a tidal wave of infinite possibility that cannot, will not, be stopped. As we travel this road together Christ is being made known to us in the sharing of our lives, our stories, and, even, our very own selves. Amen.