**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 5-1-2022
Fighting for Fellowship**

Yesterday, we were blessed to have the Christian band Westward Road lead us in an evening of worship. It was a joy to meet a new family in Christ. It was a joy to be here with many of you and others from our community to simply gather and worship our great God. There is no time better spent than time in worship. Amen.

It was also a blessing to share a meal afterwards. How many of you stayed for the meal?

One of the things that Westward Road was hoping that we could provide for them was a meal after the time of worship. At our Leadership Team meeting a couple of months ago, we considered what this would look like. We could have provided a gift card to a nearby restaurant or brought them a dinner to enjoy on their way out, but instead we decided to have a pot luck meal with them.

Why? It was because we thought it would be a great opportunity for fellowship.

Fellowship is a very important concept in the Bible. And food and fellowship go hand in hand. And that is especially so here at Chestnut Grove, with as many of us that love to cook and all of us that love to eat.

I hope in eating with the Roberts family that we were able to see them more easily not just as a Christian band, but as people just like us that are seeking to follow after Jesus.

We have been looking at the hands of Jesus in this sermon series for several weeks. On Easter Sunday as well as last Sunday, we see Jesus using His hands as part of His proof to His disciples that He indeed was alive.

Today, as we continue to celebrate the victorious resurrection of Jesus, we will look at the hands of Jesus once again.

And this time, it relates to the power of fellowship.

But before we dive into the passage, I just want to set the stage a bit.

Our passage today focuses on the day of Jesus’ resurrection. There were two people taking a walk towards a village called Emmaus. During this walk they are trying to process everything that had taken place in Jerusalem over the last few days.

Have you ever done that? Have you ever felt like “**I just need a** **walk**” to process my thoughts on something? I have. It could be over excitement or thankfulness or confusion or various other emotions and we just feel like we need to take a walk or do something to process our thoughts and to clear our minds.

That was probably what was happening here. We are told that one of them is named Cleopas, which is a male name. And we are not told the name of the other person. Was it his wife? Was it someone that is mentioned elsewhere? We really do not know.

But these two followers of Jesus are walking and talking and processing together. And then, suddenly, Jesus joins them. And Jesus makes conversation with them “**What are you discussing together as you walk along”?** He asks.

And they begin to tell Jesus about Jesus – not realizing that it was Jesus. They spoke of His suffering and death and how they thought that He might be the One to redeem Israel. And then they go on to speak about the events of that day. They had heard of the empty tomb and some of the women having seen angels who told them that Jesus was alive.

Please turn with me to Luke 24:28-35

**28As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.**

**30When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”**

**33They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” 35Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.**

This is a fascinating text. They arrive at the village of Emmaus and it appears that Jesus is going to continue walking.

But Cleopas and his companion began to compel Jesus to stay with them. They were pleading for more fellowship and Jesus choosing to go into wherever they were staying.

And it is here, in the midst of this setting which is designed for fellowship, that Jesus was at the table with them.

There was bread there and Jesus takes some of the bread that was there and gives thanks for it and breaks the bread and suddenly their eyes opened and they recognized that it was Jesus whom they had been talking with. And it was after this that Jesus disappears from their sight.

Today, I would like us to focus on Jesus using His hands to break the bread. They were sharing a meal.

And it was in this relaxed setting of fellowship that the Lord enabled them to see Jesus more clearly.

There is something about true fellowship that God can use to break down barriers and enable people to experience deeper connection to one another.

On many occasions in the Gospels we find Jesus eating with others. Jesus valued fellowship.

Think about this for a moment, Jesus had been walking and talking with Cleopas and the other person for several minutes at least. First, Jesus listens to them explain all the events that had taken place. Then, we are told that beginning with Moses and then going to all the prophets, Jesus explained to them all that the Scriptures said concerning the Messiah.

This had to of taken some time. But yet, they still do not recognize this man as Jesus.

It wasn’t until they were sitting at a table over food and giving thanks that their eyes are finally opened to recognize Jesus.

So what does this passage mean for us today?

I think that the Lord is teaching us that fellowship is something worth fighting for, worth making of very high priority, in other words.

When there is certainly a place to continue to explain the Scriptures to one another, there is something beautiful and rich and life giving that God desires to do in us as we value deep fellowship with others.

I loved how one of my professors from seminary had what he called a ‘snack syllabus.’ Different students would bring snacks to each class and it helped to create a class setting that made you feel like you were sitting around a kitchen table in a relaxed way. Fellowship was experienced and those classes were very special.

So sisters and brothers, what can we do to fight for fellowship, as a church community and as individual Christians?

Certainly, last night was one opportunity with Westward Road. But we also have our Bonfire in the Grove event on Friday, May 20th. There will be food and music and games and of course the bonfire. It is an opportunity to relax together and to eat together and play together.

That is a big deal. It is truly important in God’s eyes.

When we have board game nights or movie nights or our Fall Fest event each year, these things are all opportunities to build fellowship with one another, including those that we invite to those events.

But second, we as individual believers are called to value building fellowship, building relationships with people. While we cannot be everywhere at the same time, who is God calling us to be intentional to build fellowship with?

Think of a few people to invite over for dinner or to go out for coffee with. And seek to be intentional. Cleopas and his friend were intentional in urging Jesus to come and spend some time in fellowship there with them.

We need to be active with this, rather than passive. So think of at least one person to be intentional in building fellowship with that you haven’t been very intentional with before. Seek to build relationship with someone outside of our church community.

When we fight for fellowship, bridges are built for people to connect to us, to others, and most importantly to God.

And finally, above all, pursue fellowship with God. Jesus, I’m sure, was happy that He was urged to stay a while. Jesus finds joy when we are intentional in spending time with Him each day. We are invited into a beautiful fellowship with our Heavenly Father as well. Just as a parent finds great joy when their child just wants to spend time with them, our Heavenly Father is delighted when we just want to spend time with Him.

And the Scriptures are also clear that we are invited to experience fellowship with the Holy Spirit as well. He is our Comforter and our Counselor and our Helper and our Empowerer. We are invited to fight for fellowship with each Person of our Triune God.

So let us fight for fellowship each day. Fellowship with our Lord. Fellowship with one another. And fellowship with others whom God is calling to do around us.

Resources:

<https://nameberry.com/babyname/cleopas>

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)