

The Bethel Pulpit

Pastor John Swanson

November 3, 2019 - All Saints Sunday



BETHEL

LUTHERAN CHURCH

On the web at www.bethel-madison.org

217 Wisconsin Ave. Madison WI 53703

Psalm 121

“We Are All Just Walking Each Other Home”

“We are all just walking each other home.” This statement, as some of you may know, comes from Ram Das as American author, psychologist, and spiritual teacher. To me this statement sharply focuses both the theme of our worship this weekend as well as to the role we have in each other’s lives—“we are all just walking each other home.”

Today, first of all, we give thanks for the ones who have died, those who have walked with us in our lives either for long periods of time or, in some cases, for far too short periods of time. Today we remember these saints, as we write their names in the Book of Life and light candles in their memory. Recalling those relationships brings them alive in a very special way in our memory, for as someone has said, “as long as a name is said aloud that person continues to live.” They walked with us as far as they could go and will be with us always.

And today we are also reminding ourselves of who we are, the living saints, and what we are to be doing as we live in relationship with one another. Life is all about relationships—our vertical relationship with our creator God and our horizontal relationship with one another. And the primary action of that relationship comes out so clearly in the statement, “we are all just walking each other home.”

Our Gospel lesson this morning shares a powerful “walking home” story. You recognized it as what happened on that first Easter Sunday afternoon when two of the disciples, confused and troubled, were walking on the road to Emmaus. The

whirlwind weekend of the death of their friend Jesus had not yet been graced with knowledge of his rising. They were probably walking with their heads down trying to console one another. And then a stranger begins walking with them and, observing their stress, asks them, “What’s happening?” They couldn’t believe that anyone would not have heard the weekend news and told him so, explaining not only what had happened but also how this had destroyed all the hopes and dreams that they had. Jesus then shares with them “the rest of the story” and when finished accepts their hospitality to stay and eat with them. Then in the breaking of the bread it becomes revealed to them that this stranger is indeed Jesus whom they had thought was dead, and the startling news sends them hustling back to Jerusalem to celebrate with the disciples there. Jesus was just “walking Cleopas and his friend home”, and it changed their lives!

Today, while giving thanks for all those saints who have walked with us during their lifetime, we also commit ourselves anew to walking each other home today. That’s the task given to us by God—to walk with each other. This applies equally to those we know—family, friends, acquaintances—and to those we do not know—the stranger, the one who looks different than we look, the person with a different world view, or political stance, or sexual orientation, or place in life. There is pressure on us to be walking with each other right now because, while it is interesting, it is also very troubling to note that in a day and age when more means of connecting are available to us through multiple mediums; loneliness, depression, and suicide are on the rise! Our church, our message, the gift we have to give to one another is to do what Jesus did, walk with the strangers or the friend, to walk with them and share

the “rest of the story” of acceptance and hope in what we do and what we say. “We are all just walking each other home.”

I am struck and pleased that the name given to our gathering, hospitality space outside of our worship center is called the **Emmaus** Room. That space where we hold a cup of coffee in one hand and a donut hole in the other is where you and I connect with each other as “we are walking each other home.” It’s also the space and place where we are more and more meeting the stranger and, by choice, making ourselves available to letting the stranger meet us! With intention, the Emmaus Room along with the rest of our building and the footprint we are creating in this part of the city, is becoming the place of prayer, respite and connection as much as the room we are in right now.

Today look to the person sitting with you, or the stranger that you will meet today, or think about those separated by thousands to miles from you and join me in making the commitment: “I will walk you home”. As we walk with each other the Psalmist today gives us the ultimate words of hope, comfort and promise: “the Lord will keep our going out and our coming in from this time on and forevermore.” In the name of our ever-present God walking with us....
Amen.