

Luke 24:13-35 - Ben Wideman

This spring we've been journeying together through Luke's Gospel. Sometimes it has been meaningful, sometimes it has been challenging. Sometimes journeys are complicated and it's hard to tell where we're going. Sometimes we get lost and can't make sense of the details.

I want to talk about two journeys today where discerning the details are important. One is the journey the disciples were on after the discovery of the empty tomb, which Mason read from our scripture passage this morning. But first I want to begin with a new journey that we will try and take together - the journey of tuning up a bicycle.

Several days ago I put out a call on the church email listserv for a bike in need of a tuneup, and Gloria Rosenberger offered her bike. As soon as I picked up Gloria's bike I started taking a look at it in more detail. I figured out the brand of bike - a Cannondale, model M300, with this unique double triangle frame design. The 1994 Cannondale catalogue (SLIDE) has this picture, which seemed to match up nicely, so I think we're working on a beautiful 31 year old bicycle today.

Knowing the bike's age can be helpful - if it looks good, but it is a little on the older side, it was probably well cared for. Knowing that it was from the mid nineties also means that this bike was proudly handmade in Bedford, Pennsylvania, 16 years before Cannondale moved their production facility overseas. I see a bike shop sticker from Tailwind Bicycles in Schwenksville, PA, a shop that still exists today, albeit with a different name. Both of those signposts point to a quality, well-made item.

When tuning up a bicycle, we really have to slow down and look for the details. At Two Brothers bike shop (SLIDE) where I work, we remind each other to take our time and make sure we've covered all our bases.

As I work, I try to pay attention to the little details, which isn't always easy - figuring out if there is something loose, a worn or cracked tire, the kink in the chain. I hope I have the awareness to give attention to all of those small

things. And it doesn't help to just rush through the process. If you do, you might miss something, and the bicycle won't work properly.

Our scripture this morning, from Luke 24, is the story of disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. They're sad and confused, events have shaken their world, and they are walking away from everything they knew and expected. But then, something interesting happens. A stranger joins them on their walk.

Earlier this week I took Gloria's bike into the shop. Gloria's bike had a bit of grime - (show video) not too surprising for a bike in its early 30s, so before I did anything at all, I got out some cleaner and a shop rag and gave it a bit of a cleanup and polish.

Next I hopped on her bike, (SLIDE) pedaled a little bit, and tried to shift through its gears. While everything moved properly, I was having a little trouble shifting through all the gears. It occurred to me that I never would have noticed that issue if I had only stood back at a distance. I had to actually move with the bike to figure out what might need to happen. Her cables weren't seized or rusted, they just needed a little lubrication to get them moving again. So we'll see if we can make that happen here today.

(lubricate cables while going through the following paragraph)

We see this a lot in scripture. Journeying requires movement to take place, and often those movements become learning moments. In today's passage the disciples, still reeling from their loss, are moving again. It should be no surprise to them that movement leads to learning. It's like a scripture clue, movement hints that something significant is about to happen.

Next on Gloria's bike I wanted to check her chain, (show video) to see if the metal had stretched or worn beyond usefulness. Just like Jesus walking the road with the disciples, the bike didn't shout out at me right away about what I needed to notice. I couldn't tell just from looking whether the chain was worn and needed to be replaced. There was a bit of rust on the

surface, but that might have just been superficial. I needed to use other methods to determine that it was time to change the chain.

So I used this nifty tool called a chain checker. It told me that Gloria's chain had lived a nice long life, but it was about time for a new one - especially given that a stretched chain can start to wear out gears, leading to an even more expensive repair. So today we'll put one on. I'll use this chain breaker tool to remove her old one... and before we attach the new one we'll make sure it is close to the same length as her old one so that things still work properly.

(swap chain while going through the following paragraph)

It sounds cliché, but I learn something new just about every time I fix a bicycle. After just a few months as a bike mechanic, there are still moments where I can't figure out how to navigate a problem, and need to go to my coworkers or even to a Youtube video or website for help. Conversation with others also helps me notice the small details that I may have overlooked, and sometimes reminds me of my biases or preconceived assumptions.

The bike shop world is not without its prejudices. This is my coworker Jenny. (SLIDE) She's got many years of experience leading bicycle tours across the country, tackling a variety of real bike issues while away from a shop. Yet we notice that certain folks don't seem to take her seriously when they arrive at the shop. They don't trust a woman to know more than *they* do about what might be in need of repair on their bike, or they don't trust her knowledge when she's showing them the bikes we have for sale in the shop.

Sound familiar? From our scripture on Easter Sunday, (SLIDE) and referenced in this morning's passage... *returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to*

the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

Perhaps sometimes, even the disciples needed to remember that patriarchy tries to convince us not to believe women. But that's rarely a good idea. Especially women who are closest to the situation, who have already gone ahead on the journey. I like that Luke reminds us to believe women.

Any journey requires that we take our time, but you also have to be willing to listen.

With Gloria's bike up in the workstand, I can spin her wheel. I'm not sure if the mic can pick this up, but what I heard when I did this earlier this week was a metallic rubbing sound. Something was stuck in the rubber of her brake pads, and when I opened them up, sure enough, I found a tiny little pebble embedded in the rubber brake pad. Listening to Gloria's bike helped me learn that it was time for a set of new brake pads.

The disciples had audible clues too, but forgot to pay attention to them. Our scripture says they admitted to the stranger that some women had told them that they found the tomb empty, and that angels had said that Jesus had risen. The truth was there, staring them in the face, but they weren't ready to listen, and clearly their recent experience had shaken them so that they could not perceive the truth.

This happens to us in our daily lives too, right? We read the latest news about some horrible situation happening here in our community, or somewhere else in the world, and it knocks us sideways, impacting our ability to be aware. Last week's constant messaging about wrongfully deported Maryland man, Kilmar Abrego Garcia, had my thoughts elsewhere. A coworker asked why I had left a random bit (SLIDE) of packaging on two bikes that I had assembled, and I had no answer... perhaps I was just too distracted by life going on around me to remind myself to check the details.

At Two Brothers we like to review our work along the bicycle in an M-shape pattern. (SLIDE) It helps us to double check our work when we use that as a guide. We start at the back wheel: Gloria's rear wheel is true, her tires look good, it's shifting well now with the lubricated cables and new chain. We move from there up to the seat. Still lots of life left there, and firmly attached to the seat post. Then down to the pedals and chainring - all good there - the derailleur is shifting well and the chain isn't coming off the gears. Then back up to the handlebars - oh, her brakes are grabbing well, but her grips are loose. These grips have a little lock bolt that I will tighten so that's good. Then down to the front wheel - all good there. And just like that, we've examined the whole bike.

It's easy for us to say in hindsight, but the disciples also needed to slow down and pay attention to the details. They're so focused on their own thoughts, sadness, and disappointment that they don't even recognize Jesus walking beside them. They needed some form of reminder, like our M-shape pattern, something that would allow them to pay attention to what is happening, and to remind them to look for the details, using all their senses.

When you slow down and take the time to listen and learn... isn't that when you truly notice who and what is around you?

We all need people in our lives to remind us of this message (SLIDE) - especially because it is so easy to be too busy in our culture today. We need people who know the journey, or people who know the ins and outs of the bicycle. Those are the ones who help us to see, they'll notice things we don't, and they'll know how to help when we cannot see for ourselves.

The same happened with the disciples. It wasn't until they listened to the stranger's interpretation of the scriptures and then shared a meal that they recognized Jesus. These were disciples who knew Jesus but couldn't see him until they truly looked at him and truly listened to him. Of course it helps that food was involved - perhaps we sense this intuitively when we share potluck meals with each other.

Well there we have it. Gloria's Pennsylvania-built Cannondale is just about good as new. Let's top up the tires.

Hopefully it gets used and appreciated for another 30 plus years of journeys.

May we also, just like repairing this bicycle, slow down enough to notice the details. We all have our own journeys, but if we slow down, pay attention to the details, and listen to the people around us, I think that's where we start to notice the Spirit's movement in the world, giving us an opportunity to see where we might join in its movement. Offering God's peace and healing, to a world so deeply in need.

May it be so, amen.