

FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 30:21, Luke 24:13-32

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Series Walk this Way

SERMON: Learning to Walk (not run)

(Credit Mark Buchanan – God Walk)

Introduction

Good morning. It is so good to be with you today. And those joining us online, welcome. Thanks for tuning in.

Often, one of the joys for parents is to watch their children start to walk. I remember how our oldest son, Hylton, began to walk. Let me say first that he had a father who was a soccer fanatic. His first toy, I think, was a **soccer ball**. His first word was “ball.” At least, almost every sound he made when he was happy, sounded like ‘ball’ to me.

So before he could even move from one place to the next, his father ingrained in him the importance of a soccer ball. As he would lay on his back, and kick his little feet, I would hold a ball near them and every time he touched the ball with his feet, I would cheer for him and say, excitedly, “good kick, Hylton.” When he was able to sit up by himself, I would roll the ball towards his feet, and if they happened to kick out at the right time and touch the ball, I would cheer again. I wanted to get ahead of the game in teaching him about soccer.

When he was about 11 months old, our Aunt Edna, a school teacher, came to visit us in Africa for a few weeks. Hylton was at the stage in his development that he would pull himself up holding on to the couch cushions. He would stand there for a bit, we would coax him to let go and walk, and he would promptly sit back down again. We would try it again. We wanted him to learn to walk.

Of course, by this time he had learned the word kick, and knew to aim his foot at a ball, which was almost perpetually in front of him, and kick his foot out, and we would cheer. Aunt Edna had this brilliant idea. She placed the ball near him, but just far enough away, that he

could not touch it. She also strategically placed it away from the couch he was holding on to.

Then she said, “Hylton, kick the ball.” Instinctively by now, he lurched towards the ball, letting go of the couch, and at the same time kicked out his little foot. His first step. We all cheered. He forgot he was not holding on to the couch so he didn’t sit down. Aunt Edna said again, “kick” and this time his other foot went out to kick the ball, his second free standing step. We cheered again.

He knew this was fun and garnered attention from the big people, and so he did it again, without prompting. Kick after kick, step after step. Cheer after cheer. Big grin all over his face. It might have only been 4 steps in a row, but you would have thought he had just walked a mile.

That is the legend of Hylton, learning to walk by kicking a soccer ball. Thanks, Aunt Edna.

I want to talk to us this morning, about **learning to walk**. My concern is NOT about the physical act of walking. There are many, who for various reasons, are not able to physically walk. If that is you this morning, I want to acknowledge you. I don’t want you to feel like you are not included in our conversation. I am not thinking primarily about physical walking. (SLOW DOWN) I am thinking primarily about **the pace at which we move through life**.

Interestingly, walking, along with eating and sleeping is our most practiced human activity. But some of us have forgotten how to walk. We run instead. I don’t know how many times as a boy, I had to be reminded, “Walk, don’t run.” I realize now, that I still need those reminders. So, I want to talk to us about learning to walk, and also begin the conversation on where and how to walk.

But **there is a problem. Walking is slow and we are accustomed to Fast**, Faster and Fastest.

Fast food, fast money, fast success, fast cars or planes, fast internet, fast responses, fast athletes. We want, and think, we need everything fast. We think that is how we become successful – by doing things faster than other people. When we reach a milestone in life, like paying off our house, or making enough to retire, faster than most other people, we consider

that a sign of superiority, or greatness. It seems to me, we are addicted to being ‘the fastest.’

I began reading a book called, “**God Walk**” by **Mark Buchanan**. I was not very far into the book when I realized God was speaking to me in the words I read.

I am not just accustomed to fast, I am addicted to fast and faster. I must be honest, in practically everything I do; if I’m setting up tables for an event, mowing the lawn, I always try to complete the task faster than I have ever done before.

When I take a trip – like going to MI or NC to see our children and grandchildren, I always time the trip. “Can I beat the time it took last time?” When Darlyss wants to stop for coffee or even to go to the bathroom, there is inner turmoil and frustration in my spirit, because it means I will not be able to break my previous record, because we had to stop for “her.”

For years I have lived my life at a fast pace – a running pace – not a walking pace. But I even walk fast – to get to where I am going as quickly and efficiently as possible. Sometimes, I will overload my arms so I can make fewer trips – even just from the car to the house, just to be more efficient, quicker. See, I am addicted to fast.

As I read, I was inwardly challenged to make some changes in my lifestyle. Primarily to learn to live at a slower pace – **I was challenged to learn to walk.**

I hear the objections – “Oh, you are just getting older.” “You are not as energetic as you used to be.” “You will be less productive.” “You will miss out on some experiences in life, because you will be left behind now.”

Each of those may be true. But as I read, I was drawn to what I might **gain**, and to the sense in my spirit, that I have lived much of my life trying to outrun everyone else. And in the process have run ahead of God far too often. When in fact, God wants to, as God did with Adam and Eve in the Garden, God wants “go for a walk with me in the cool of the evening.” And I have missed out on that.

So, for several messages this year, I want to invite you along with me on a journey – a

walk. I've titled these series of messages, although they will not be on consecutive Sundays, I've titled them, "**Walk this Way.**"

Today we will talk about:

Learning to WALK with God. How fast will we be going? If I can change my life habit, it will be slower than usual for me. Normal casual walking for most people is about 3 miles an hour. One author has suggested, **3 miles an hour is God Speed.** (I'll say more in a bit.)

I am suggesting this pace because I have come to believe that **walking pace is a primary way of knowing God and deepening my relationship with God.**

We find "Walking" mentioned all over the place in our bibles.

Walking in Scripture

We learn in the scriptures that **we walk with a God who seems in no particular hurry and who it seems enjoys the going there as much as the getting there.** I want to learn what it is like to be alongside the God who, when he came among us, as his Son, Jesus, he turns to us as he passes by, on foot, always on foot, and says simply, "Come, follow me." Jesus is saying, "Come, walk with me."

Mark 1:16-20 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will teach you how to fish for people." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹ When he had [walked] a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Now, In **2 Timothy** and **I Corinthians**, Paul makes references to **running** a race, to completion. The author of **Hebrews** makes a reference to running with endurance. But outside of those references, the biblical writers almost exclusively write about **living life at a walking pace.** And they encourage us to walk.

I am aware that most of the time we hear the passages I am about to read, we almost always think just about a way of life – how we behave, what decisions we make, who to follow, our character and so on.

But don't you think it is significant that all the authors use a way of moving that is characterized by a slower pace. Biblical authors knew about running, about eagles flying, riding horses or chariots when someone was in a hurry. But they almost exclusively use the metaphor of walking. Perhaps slowness is important to God – I believe it is.

Genesis 3:8 When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden.

Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

Genesis 6:9 Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God.

The prophets encourage us to walk.

Micah 6:8

**O people, the Lord has told you what is good,
and this is what he requires of you:
to do what is right, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.**

Jesus spent his life on this earth, walking around. Mark uses the phrases, 'Jesus came' and 'Jesus went.' He is always walking.

Paul encourages us to walk. He writes:

Ephesians 5:1-2 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Why the emphasis on walking?

Author **Rebecca Solnit** writes:

“We walk because 3 miles an hour, (casual walking pace) is about the speed of thought, or maybe the speed of our souls.”

Kosuke Koyama, in his book **“3 Mile an Hour God,”** writes:

“God walks slowly because he is love. (This is a reference to God’s character. Koyama noticed how slowly and patiently God acted in the story of the Israelites. 400 years in slavery in Egypt. 40 years in the desert to teach them to trust him. Over a thousand years of judges, kings, and prophets before God sent his Son, Jesus, to demonstrate the depth and extravagance of His love. God Speed doesn’t seem to be very fast.) Koyama continues:

If [God] is not love he would move faster. [But] Love has its speed. It is an inner speed. It is a spiritual speed. It is a different kind of speed from the technological speed to which we are accustomed. It is slow and yet it is Lord over all the other speeds since it is the speed of love. It goes on in the depths of our life whether we notice it or not.”

If you have ever been in love, you resonate with what Koyama is saying. When a couple go on a date, to enjoy and deepen their relationship, the enjoyment is lost, or greatly minimized when the date is rushed or has some deadline – like you have to get home for the baby sitter.

People in love take time. They love to go for leisurely strolls, unhurried meals. They love to have uninterrupted, pleasant conversations. And even long periods of quiet thoughtfulness are treasured when they are together.

Luke shares a story from the life of Jesus that demonstrates how intimate knowledge and relationship with Jesus occurs during a somewhat lengthy walk. This event occurs on Resurrection Day – Easter.

Walking to Emmaus

[Luke 24:13-32](#)

¹³ That same day [Easter] two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ As they walked along they were talking about

everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. ¹⁶ But God kept them from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?”

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. ¹⁸ Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.”

¹⁹ “What things?” Jesus asked.

“The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. ²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.”

²² “Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. ²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! ²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.”

²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” ²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, ²⁹ but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So, he went home with them. ³⁰ As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were

opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

³² They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”

Buchanan comments on this story,

Here are two people, trying to figure out what’s happened to them and their world. They are travelling from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. About 7 miles away. That is from here to the Greencastle Town Square. At three miles an hour, that is more than a two hour walk.

A long time to talk.

A long time to think.

Enough time to change your mind.

Enough time to have your world turned upside down.

Cleopas and his companion are disciples of Jesus. Or had been. They are crushed by disappointment: Jesus is dead. Crucified before their very eyes. Unmistakable. Undeniable. Irreversible. Everything they had believed about Jesus has been proven false. Their words tell the story: **“We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”**

We **had** hoped. That he **was**.

Past tense. They were talking like defeated, discouraged friends – commiserating together.

But as they walked, a man joins them. He walks with them. He is an unusual traveler. A bit odd, maybe a tad thick perhaps: he seems clueless about the events that have shattered these people’s world and have gripped and rocked an entire nation.

This traveler doesn’t seem to know a thing about Jesus – his life, his words, his works. His brutal, messy death. Or anything about a strange rumor going around – Angels, an empty tomb, the dead raised.

Then the stranger starts to talk.

It turns out, even if he doesn’t seem to be up on recent news, he does know a lot of

Scripture. And he knows a lot about the great hope of the Scriptures, the promised Messiah. **As they walk, he talks.** He teaches Cleopas and his companion about how all Scripture, leads to the same place: the Messiah will suffer before he enters his glory.

At last they reached Emmaus. The traveler tries to go on. He seems to have further to go. But: **“They urged him strongly, stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.”**

So, the stranger enters their home. They serve him a meal. Then he does something very odd for a guest in someone else’s home: he takes charge. **“He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.”**

And that’s when it happens – **“their eyes were opened and they recognized him.”** He vanishes at that very moment. But it’s okay. It’s enough. They know who he is. They’ve seen this thing before – taking bread, giving thanks, breaking bread and giving bread.

This is the signature of the very Jesus they thought was dead. It is Jesus.

All this happens at the table. But the long walk isn’t beside the point. It isn’t wasted breath. Jesus has been walking with them.

The journey is the preparation. The two disciples commented to each other:

“Were not our hearts burning within us, while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

It was on this long walk with Jesus that Cleopas and his friend encounter and relate to Jesus in a deep, intimate way.

Now, this story is both about other people and about us. It is about Cleopas and his companion discovering Jesus, **present** with them even as they **lament** his absence.

But **This story can also be our story.**

Because, even today, Jesus keeps doing this. Jesus will become present with us even as we lament his apparent absence. Jesus will keep showing up, showing us things, walking beside us, making our hearts burn within us. We might not recognize him at the time. That often comes later – as we reflect on a particular time or event.

But it usually takes some walking, some slowing down, some intentional time spent, to get there.

So here is a valuable insight I want us to get this morning.

Walking, at about 3 miles an hour, with Jesus, is a discipline that will transform our lives. It is the speed, or should I say pace, or lack of hurry, at which we will have time to really relate to Him.

So, I want us to:

Practice Walking

Walking, talking, listening and thinking, asking questions; which can only occur well, at a pace much slower than we typically move. This pace creates an atmosphere in which a 3 Mile an Hour God has a greater opportunity to connect with us. And that is the desire of God's heart.

What did Micah say:

**The Lord has told you what is good,
and this is what he requires of you:
to do what is right, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.**

So here is my encouragement for putting into practice what we learn from Jesus:

Begin and develop the discipline of regularly and often, taking a walk with Jesus.

I mean a literal walk. Comfortable and relaxed, not hurried and tense. A walk on which you pay more attention to the going, and less attention to arriving at a destination.

During that time, engage in conversation with Jesus. Talk to him like you would talk to a

close friend about what is going on in your life. The things you are thankful for. Think about and mention the blessings you have received from him. Talk to him about the people and situations you care about. Also ask him questions you have about decisions you have to make or are considering.

Bring everything to Jesus, every last little thing, like a child brings home her art from school to show her parents. Especially, bring yourself to Jesus, no matter how strong the impulse to hide. And then, pay attention to the nudges and whispers of God's Spirit.

At walking speed, we are more apt to notice familiar things and are drawn to the comfort and re-assurance of the familiar. But at walking speed we are also more aware of new and fresh insights that encourage us.

For your first walk, go slow. Take a long time, even if you go only a short distance.

This can be a starting point for deepening your relationship with Jesus. I believe that you will find yourself, increasing your knowledge of Jesus.

Spending more intimate time with Jesus will result in your love for Jesus growing and growing. Out of that deeper relationship will develop a strong desire on your part for following Jesus – even if the path is difficult and sometimes dangerous and exhausting.

Perhaps we can become known as, "The people who walk, (not run) with Jesus."

Do you hear that? Jesus is calling you. Go. Go be with him.

PRAY