

May 29, 2016

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS
Luke 24.13-35

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Picture the story we just heard. It was Sunday afternoon, and two disciples of Jesus, who I like to think of as husband and wife, were on their way home from Jerusalem. They had walked this road often and the eleven kilometre trip usually took them about two hours, but today their steps were slow. Their feet felt like lead and their hearts were very, very heavy. Three days earlier, their friend and teacher had been crucified. They had been shocked by the rapid turn of events and deeply grieved by his death. But they were dealing with much more than the loss of a friend! They had lost their hope. They had lost the one whom they believed to be the Messiah, the Saviour of the world

Because they were walking so slowly, another traveller overtook them. "Peace be with you," he said. "May I walk with you?" "Peace be with you, too," Cleopas replied. "Certainly you may. We are on our way to Emmaus." They walked a short way and then the man spoke. "As I was overtaking you, I heard you talking and you sounded very sad. What were you discussing?" Cleopas and Anna stopped walking, their dejection written clearly on their faces. Cleopas answered, "Are you a stranger in Jerusalem? Don't you know what has happened here the past few days?" "What are you talking about?" the man asked. So Cleopas told him the sad story about Jesus. He spoke of Jesus' mighty words and deeds. He explained how Jesus was arrested, tried, condemned and crucified. "And," he added, "his death took away all our hope, for we were sure he was the promised Messiah who would redeem Israel." Then Cleopas went on to tell about the astounding report of the women who had gone to the tomb and had seen angels who told them that Jesus was alive! "Of course," he said, "they didn't see him themselves."

The stranger listened carefully and seemed to ponder all that Cleopas said. He was silent for awhile, then he said, "My dear friends, aren't you being foolish to be so sad? Aren't you failing to understand what the Scriptures teach? Do you really think that these events mean that Jesus wasn't the Messiah? Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And he began to call their attention to one passage of Scripture after another, explaining to them how each passage bore on the events that had so saddened them.

The time passed quickly as the stranger spoke. Unconsciously, they picked up their pace to their normal walk, and before they realized it they were entering their home village of Emmaus. As they came to their house, the stranger bade them farewell and kept to the road. But Anna spoke up. "Sir, it is getting late. It's time for the evening meal. Unless you have a nearby destination, won't you stop and spend the night with us. We would be honoured to have you share our hospitality. You have taught us so much."

The stranger agreed. Anna quickly put together a cold meal and they sat together around the table. Then suddenly the visitor took over the place of the host. He took the bread Anna had set on the table, offered the usual blessing to God, broke it and handed it to

them. And suddenly they realized that it was Jesus! As the dawning realization showed in their eyes and on their faces, Jesus smiled, raised his hand in blessing and vanished!

Think with me about how Jesus revealed himself to those disciples. He revealed himself in the Scriptures, our Old Testament. I think he showed them how the whole sweep of the Old Testament story led up to the coming of the Messiah who must suffer and die to redeem God's people. It was not just a passage here and there about the Messiah, but the trajectory of the whole revelation of God's redemptive plan that pointed to the suffering Servant of God. That was important, for them and for us. Jesus did for those disciples what the New Testament writers have done for us - he showed them that he himself was the centre of all the redemptive plan of God for the creation. But....and I think this is important...but his exposition of Scripture didn't open their eyes.

Their eyes were opened when Jesus broke bread and shared it with them. Isn't that amazing? The simple act of breaking and sharing bread opened their eyes! I think there are two ways we can understand that. We can see it as a picture of the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, where Jesus is both the host at the table and the bread and wine we receive. But this would be an incomplete picture of Holy Communion - the bread without the cup. So I am more inclined to see this as table fellowship, the breaking and sharing of bread that, in the culture of that society, created a positive relationship between those who share the bread. When we see it that way, the most simple acts that we do -- at home, at work or wherever -- that draw us together with one another are places where Jesus may choose to reveal himself to us. For Jesus is not only present when we gather for worship. He is present with us in every action that unites rather than divides, that heals rather than hurts, that blesses rather than curses.

So what does that mean? When you share a meal with someone else, Jesus is there with you. When we gather to eat together as a church family, Jesus is present. When Side By Side has lunch together each Wednesday, Jesus is there. When we leave this service and have coffee together, Jesus is there. When you give a donation to the Food Bank, you are part of each meal that gift provides, and Jesus is there with you.

Jesus is not only with us in what we call the sacred, the holy, like this time of worship. Jesus is with us in all of life, in the profane as well as in the sacred. He is with us in our homes, in school classrooms, in the workplace, wherever we are. Our relationship to Jesus is not only for Sunday morning. Jesus is with us every minute of every day of every week. We only need to be able to see him. And that is one reason why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit, to open our eyes so that we may see our Lord in every part of our lives.

Dear God, open our eyes so that we may see your Son with us in all of our lives, now and always. Amen