

Luke 24.13-35
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Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The risen Christ is different than we expect.

Strange even.

Cleopas and his companion don't recognize him.

In fact, they identify him as a *stranger*;

they ask him,

*"Are you the only stranger
 who doesn't know?"*

...and he's actually even more strange
 than we might think.

If ancient, Koine Greek

was our native language,

we would know that the word

Luke uses here

means more than "stranger."

It means foreigner.
 It means immigrant.
 Resident alien.
 Someone from
 the *outside!*

The risen Christ must not look like
 or speak like the disciples.
 They don't seem to expect that he's Jewish.
 They don't expect that he's
 from around there at all.

Yes. I think the risen Christ
 is different than any of us expect,
 even those of us who know him.

Here's something
 that we know *about* him, though,
 that should tip us off to his identity.
 He meets them "on the road."

Nearly half of Luke's gospel
 locates Jesus' ministry
 "on the road, on the way."
 That's where he teaches, heals,
 prays, feeds, liberates.
 Almost all of it takes place
 "on the way."

And he comes near
 to walk with these two disciples
 "on the way"
 to Emmaus.

Here's another clue.
 This is Jesus' first post-resurrection appearance,
 according to Luke,
 and it's to two *nondescript* disciples.
 Cleopas isn't mentioned anywhere else in scripture,
 and his companion isn't even named.

These are *not* the stars of the show.
 But then, neither were
 the shepherds living in a field,
 keeping watch over their flocks,
 the night the angel chorus
 announced and sang to *them*

(and no one else)
about Jesus' birth.

And at the empty tomb
it's to *women* that
the angels announced
that he's been raised.
Women.
So insignificant in that society
that no one believes a word they say.

And it's not just the *people*
that are of no consequence;
the village of Emmaus
disappeared so long ago
that archeologists have no guess
as to where it even was.
The risen Jesus makes his first appearance
on the way *there* —
not Jerusalem, not the temple,
not a place of governance
or a palatial home.
And not to "important"
or high-ranking people —
like priests or presidents or popes.

It's all so strange — so *outside*.
These are not the social influencers.
Not the most desirable locations with amenities.
Not the leaders of anything more than sheep.

Yes this risen Jesus
is different than we expect.
He comes near to *us*
on the road to nowhere
as an outsider
outside of our expectations,
outside of conventions,
outside of influential prestige.

Cleopas and the other disciple, though, —
they *unknowingly* invite
this strange risen-Jesus
to stay with them.
They still see him as a foreigner,

an outsider,
 yet they ask him to come
 into their home
 for shelter and a meal.

And oh my God!
 There he is!
 They see him!
 In the breaking of the bread!
They see him!
 In an instant
 they recognize him —
and he disappears!

This part of the story
 has always felt heartbreaking to me.
 On the road they had lost hope.
 Their hearts burned within them
 while he was opening their understanding.
 And when their eyes are finally opened,
 when they see him at last,
 he's gone.
 To me, it feels like raw grief
 all over again.

Except they aren't *grieving!*
 They're filled with joy and excitement
 so much
 that they rush back
 to their friends
 in the dark of night,
 their dinner interrupted,
 their safety at risk.

I think the joy and excitement
 of Cleopas and his companion
 are because their eyes are opened
 to a more *expansive* way
 of seeing Christ —
 on every road,
 in every face,
 at every table.
 A way of seeing that's not restricted

to the particular, incarnate body of Jesus,
 but is now manifested everywhere
 in every tangible act of love.

We see Christ
 in coming near to another on the road.
 We see Christ
 in welcoming a strange stranger.
 Inviting them to rest and eat.
 In making way for
 (even *preferring* for)
 the less-than-important people
 to have a voice.
 Revealing the extraordinary
 to ordinary people.
This is seeing Jesus on our way.

In one of his Lenten devotions,
 Eric wrote that
 what we do here on Sundays
 is practice.
 It's not the game,
 but it's practice
 for the real game
 that plays out on the road,
 in regular conversations,
 at ordinary, every-day tables
 in our nondescript lives.

What we do here in this place,
 at this table,
 in these conversations,
 walking this path together
 is important practice
 for opening our minds,
 opening our hearts,
 opening our eyes
 to see the risen Christ
 in ways we don't expect.
 In the face of a stranger who looks different,
 talks different,
 is foreign to us.
 In a stranger who meets us
 on insignificant roadways

to unimportant places.
A person sharing an ordinary meal,
breaking bread in peace and in love.
We see the risen Christ
in every act of love
that is more strange
and more foreign
more unexpected
than anything we imagine.
Every path,
every conversation,
every encounter of friend *and* of stranger,
every table
is a holy path,
a holy conversation,
a holy encounter,
a holy table.
It's stranger than you think —
and more wonderful.