

A New Direction when Meeting Christ, Luke 24: 13-35

Life doesn't always go the way we planned. It takes twists and turns and sometimes takes us in a completely different direction than we had originally planned.

The Gospel's story starts with two weary Jesus' followers walked seven miles (eleven kilometres) from Jerusalem to Emmaus one Sunday. They talked and discussed about all things that had happened. While they were talking, their faces were sad and downcast (verse 17). They had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah (verse 21), but due to His death they had concluded that He was only a prophet—a true prophet of God, a powerful prophet, but only a prophet, who died like many of the other prophets of old.

Their hopes had been dashed when the Jewish religious leaders suddenly succeeded in crucifying Jesus. So they were going home, depressed and disappointed. They were still in shock. They didn't understand why God had let them down.

These disciples were very discouraged. They had, for all intents and purposes, given up all hope. We know that big life changes can shatter even the most confident person's sense of self.

In the face of trouble, our natural tendency is not to ask the right question. Our natural tendency is to complain. Unfortunately, complaining to other people rarely helps solve our problems. Instead, it tends to drive people away. Nobody wants to hang around a person who has a self-pitying, pessimistic outlook on life.

But at the same time we can't just let it go. We need to pour our heart out to someone. Disappointment is too heavy a burden to bear. If we let disappointments pile up, they lead to discouragement. Too much discouragement leads to despair.

As they walked and talked, a stranger caught up to them. He was really not a stranger; He was the risen Lord Jesus Christ. But “the two Jesus' followers eyes were prevented from recognizing Him” (24:16).

When Jesus died. They didn't know what to do. They were very sad, disappointed and depressed. They couldn't see things clearly because they were so mixed up and upset. They didn't recognize who it was, but they told him all about what had happened to Jesus.

This man - this stranger - responded to their grief, their shock and horror - regarding what had happened. In that journey (maybe three hours) Jesus first rebuked these two men for their spiritual dullness – for their foolishness. (Sometimes rebuking is the best medicine for self pity).

Then He went on to show them from the whole Old Testament, beginning with Moses and the writings of all the prophets. All of these were prophesied for the Messiah to suffer and to be glorified.

Unfortunately Luke does not record how Jesus interpreted the Scriptures to the two disciples.

The Scriptures are an amazing thing -

Moses and David

Isaiah and Malachi

Jeremiah and Ruth

all speak of God's anointed one - of God's suffering servant - they speak too of God's purpose and plan for the world how the world began - and how it will end.

The scriptures are a way to come to know God and to come to know Jesus Christ the Son of God.

This stranger (Jesus) taught the two disciples about the mind of God and the purpose of God and how Jesus fit in with it all.

In the record of that encounter we are told that their hearts burned within them as this stranger talked to them about these things.

When it was evening they arrived at their home and invited the stranger to stay with them and have supper. When the stranger broke bread and blessed it, something happened. Suddenly they saw something clearly that they hadn't seen before. They realized that the stranger was really Jesus - alive and well, and with them.

Then they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples.

Sometimes the same thing happens to us. We can feel really mixed up and not see things clearly. We need help to understand our lives more clearly. Jesus helps us all to do that. He helps us to understand that God loves and that there is nothing to be afraid of. Jesus is with us at all times. When we stop and pray with each other - he helps us to make sense out of things.

The story speaks to us of how Christ walks with us on our journey - and how, in the breaking of bread he comes to be known to us.

That we recognize God, and that we commune with God, that we fellowship with God, in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

I believe that this story is telling us that we too come to recognize Christ whenever we gather together; whenever we meet with and share with another person our joy and our grief; and whenever we offer prayer over the bread we break or the cup that we share with each other

Jesus said - that where two or three gather in his name there he would be.

When we gather in moments of sharing our life story. When we share the greatest gifts that we can share with one another: our homes - our tables - our bread and wine - Christ comes among us.

Emmaus is wherever you are in your life journey, as you are waiting along the way, either at church or at home, in a nursing home or at the family table, in your sorrows or in your joys, where the risen Christ meets you and Easter comes to camp in you, and we discover again the promise of Christmas ... "Emmanuel" – God with us!