



gospel

Lk 24:13-35

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.'

Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself.

When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?'

They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

reflection

One of the remarkable things about the Risen Jesus is that his friends and followers almost always fail to recognise him at first. In the instance on the road to Emmaus, two of the disciples are walking the road feeling sorry for themselves when Jesus joins them. It is, perhaps, an experience that is not unfamiliar in our own lives: so absorbed by what is happening to us that we fail to recognise the presence of Christ walking the journey with us - in spirit or in the guise of someone around us. Jesus allows the disciples to share their woes and their grief and then he slowly but surely relates all of what had happened to the scriptures and demonstrates to the disciples that the events of the previous few days were all part of God's plan. The disciples felt that their hopes and beliefs had been misplaced in Jesus; he hadn't delivered all that they had dreamed. But the Risen Jesus makes them realise that their hopes were not misplaced; they were right to trust and hope in Jesus and that belief will still bear fruit.

It is not until Jesus re-enacts the Last Supper breaking of bread that the disciples suddenly recognise him, but at that moment of recognition, Jesus vanishes from their midst. It must have been tantalising and frustrating for the two disciples - when they finally realised who they had been talking with and they could celebrate his presence Jesus disappeared. But the truth of what they had realised didn't abandon them. They reminded one another of the passion they had felt: "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road?" They are saying to each other, how stupid must we have been not to recognise Jesus? Only he could make us feel like that!

Living the gospel

Living the journey

The story of the road to Emmaus is a perfect model for our Christian life. It reminds us first of all that none of us walk the journey alone. Even when we don't recognise his presence, Jesus joins us in the everyday realities of life. The breaking open and interpretation of scripture is essential to making sense of our life experiences and through the celebration of Eucharist and table fellowship we are nourished to not only continue the journey but to share the good news with others. Where do you find yourself in the events of this story?

gospel focus

Hearts on Fire

The disciples recognised Jesus in the breaking of the bread and at that moment he disappeared. The immediate reaction of the disciples might have been to dismiss the notion that Jesus had been with them as wishful thinking. However, they remind each other that their hearts had been set on fire by Jesus as he spoke to them along the road. It is an extraordinarily powerful image; to set hearts on fire. Yet, that experience is not locked in the pages of the gospel; Jesus continues to set hearts of fire, inspiring everyday people to do extraordinary things.

- Q What is significant about the two disciples walking away from Jerusalem to Emmaus?
- Q What did they do once they realised they had seen the Risen Jesus?
- Q What might have prevented the disciples from recognising Jesus on the road?
- Q Why might the act of breaking bread have been the catalyst for them to recognise Jesus?
- Q How is it possible to become more aware of the presence of Jesus in your own life?