

SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:13-35

I'm sure you agree with me that this year's Easter experience was one of a kind. All celebrations were just within our four walls, with family members, if you're so fortunate, but for many of us it was a solitary occasion. Perhaps you felt uneasy, puzzled and in uncharted territory as far as Easter weekend was concerned.

In our Passage Luke tells us the story of the two disciples walking home on that first Easter Day who felt even more puzzled than us. In fact they felt anything *but* Easter joy. They walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus, which is about seven miles away. They had been in Jerusalem for the Passover, but it had been a terrible time. Those disciples of Jesus were still in shock from the things they'd experienced. Jesus, their Teacher whom they'd followed for the past three years, had been crucified, was dead and buried. They could hardly believe it! On top of this unbelievable injustice done to their Master they heard rumours of the tomb being empty! They were discussing those things as they went along — trying to make sense out of nonsense. Why would anyone kill Jesus? What had gone wrong? Why would that tomb now be empty? What had happened? Would the authorities hunt down the disciples next? These two disciples must have wondered if *their* lives were in danger too.

And then a stranger joined them —
a stranger who seemed to know *nothing* about Jesus.
That was nonsense too!
How could *anyone* know nothing about Jesus?

So they began to tell him about Jesus —
how he was "a mighty prophet in deed and word" —
how the chief priests and leaders handed Jesus over to be crucified
- how the disciples had hoped that Jesus would be the Messiah,
for whom all of Israel has been waiting for hundreds of years.
But their hopes had been dashed by the crucifixion.
They also told him about the women's report that the tomb was empty.
But then the stranger interrupted them.

Let me quote the text from "The Message" translation:

Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said?

Don't you see that these things **had** to happen?

That the Messiah had to suffer and only **then** enter into his glory?"

This stranger did not mince his words, did he?

He went on to teach them the scriptures —

scriptures that they had studied since they were children.

He taught them things that they had never heard before.

I really envy those two. Can you imagine?

Jesus giving a Bible study, starting with Moses!

As they arrived in Emmaus, and the sun was beginning to set, these two disciples invited their travelling companion to stay for the night. They still didn't understand that they were talking to Jesus, (which was probably part of Jesus' plan rather than them suffering from acute shortsightedness). And as was the custom in those days, Jesus refused their invitation first, and they insisted and urged him to stay, so Jesus joined them for dinner. Another custom in the Jewish home is, that the *host*, the man of the house would take the bread and break it and bless it and pass it around the table. But this night, *Jesus* did that. That really must have got their attention! (here is a picture by Caravaggio that shows this moment of them realizing what happened)



He was the guest in this house, but he acted as the host.

Luke says: "When (Jesus) was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them."

Those words are familiar to us, because they are very much like the words we use to observe the Lord's Supper.

They describe what Jesus did at the first Lord's Supper.

And that was the moment when those Disciples'

"eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

" And then Jesus vanished from their sight.

Their reaction after that, is proof that they really *have* seen the risen Lord:

Throwing all precaution to the wind, they sprint back to Jerusalem to the 11 Disciples, to tell them what they've experienced.

Gone was the fear and the sadness, their hearts were on fire!

They found the apostles and the other disciples and were greeted with:

"The Lord is risen! Peter saw him!"

and they replied "We know! He's risen indeed!"

And then Luke concludes the story with these words.

He says: "Then (the two disciples) told what had happened on the road, and how (Jesus) had been made known to them in the breaking of bread."

"Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of bread"

— just as Jesus is made known to *us* in the breaking of bread.

One of the things that stood out for me in this story was,

that Jesus picked two Minor Players for a role in his Major Story.

As we know one of them is called Cleopas but that's it, nothing more;

and as for his companion we know not even a name.

Were they friends? Were they husband and wife? Nobody knows!

But in this Gospel, we are told that Cleopas and his companion were two of the first three people to see the risen Lord — Peter being the third (24:35).

The women at the tomb didn't see Jesus, according to Luke, they saw only angels.

Later that evening, Jesus would appear to all the disciples, but Jesus chose Peter, the leader of the disciples — and these two nobodies — for the honour of the first sightings.

I don't think that happened by accident.

I think that Jesus chose to reveal himself

to Cleopas and the unnamed disciple for a good reason.

Jesus did that to encourage the rest of us “*nobody*” disciples.

Most of us are unknown Christians, and much of the work that we do for Jesus seems pretty minor.

We go through our churchly routines. We conduct worship.

We teach our children about Jesus. We have youth groups.

We have Bible study groups. We help people in need.

In short, I think that we here in this church are doing what a church *should* be doing.

Yet we are *ordinary* Christians doing ordinary things.

But it was to people like *us* that Jesus chose to reveal himself that first Easter afternoon, to Cleopas and the other disciple with no name.

Perhaps Jesus did that as a way of showing us

that he would do most of his work on earth through ordinary disciples

— people of ordinary means, with ordinary jobs;

people not very well known —people like you and me.

And, that is exactly what has happened during the past twenty centuries.

Of course, there have been big names in the church like Charles Wesley, Calvin, Martin Luther, Billy Graham to name just a few, just like there were two or three big names among the apostles. But for every big-name Christian there have been a million no-name Christians, and most of the church's work has been done by these no-name Christians. That has been true over the centuries, and it is still true today. It is important therefore to know that it was PEOPLE LIKE US whom Jesus chose as his first disciples. It was PEOPLE LIKE US to whom the risen Christ *revealed* himself. It was PEOPLE LIKE US who kept the church going ever since. Like these two disciples, our lives have been greatly disturbed, and it can be pretty scary. But Jesus is alive, and as he spoke into their hearts until they were on fire, so he speaks to us. We might be prompted to do things we have never done before. But that is what discipleship is all about, learning to serve Jesus as we travel on strange paths as well as familiar ones. And we need to remember that the Holy Spirit multiplies the small acts of service that we do in Christ's name. It is my belief that God will reveal to us one day in eternity the blessings that derived from our faithful but ordinary service. So, ask yourself what you do, or could be doing, for Jesus. Then do it, in the assurance that God will bless your work, and that he will bless you too, as you give of yourself. Give a blessing and receive a blessing. That's the way the kingdom of God works. Amen.