

Holy Trinity Sunningdale
Sunday, April 17, 2022 – Easter Day
Readings – Acts 10:34-43 & Luke 24:13-35

He is risen! He is risen indeed, Hallelujah! Happy Easter everyone!

The 24th chapter of Luke tells about two people who are walking from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. We know there were two of them and that one of them was named "Cleopas." but we're not sure whether they were two men, or a man and a woman.

Paula Gooder, imaginatively identified the second person as Mary, the wife of Cleopas. They're completely disheartened, all their hopes and dreams were shattered. That week they had been with Jesus. They had followed him. It had been a glorious week - until Jesus had been arrested, tried and crucified.

That morning they heard some rumours about an empty tomb. Some of the women said that they had been to the tomb and that Jesus had appeared to them. Peter and John went to the tomb and confirmed that it was empty. Confused and disheartened, they left Jerusalem and were traveling back home to Emmaus. As they are walking along, Jesus joined them.

Vs. 16 says, they were kept from recognizing him. Every time I read that verse, it disturbs me because I wonder how it would be possible to meet Jesus and not know him? What if Jesus came here this morning in the flesh? What if he came to worship with us? What if as he walked out the door, he shook my hand and said, "Fair sermon?" How would I react? How awful would I feel if I actually looked into his eyes and shook his hand and didn't recognize him?

I wonder how many of us would recognize the risen Christ if we see him. And how could we? Oftentimes we aren't looking for him or we aren't expecting him. I mean, we don't even have a picture to go by. Cleopas and Mary were his followers. But in his resurrected state, they didn't recognize him. The two disciples thought the resurrected Jesus was "a stranger."

In vs. 17 Jesus asked, "What are you discussing?" "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 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 who was going to redeem Israel."

Their hope was that Jesus would redeem Israel. Now what did he do when he went to the cross and died? He not only redeemed Israel, he redeemed the whole world. He redeemed the world from sin and death. Sin and death? They had hoped that he would redeem Israel from Rome! They had hoped that he would redeem them from human misery, from poverty, from hunger, from disease. But he came to redeem us from sin and death.

We haven't changed much, have we? We still want the same things. We want a Saviour who will make life a bed of roses, who will take away all our problems and worries. We want resurrection without death, victory without defeat.

So Jesus responds to them in vs. 25. "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?" There is no way to have a resurrection without death.

What Jesus is saying is, "I had to go through this. You have to go through it, too. I'm not going to take this road away from you. But I'll walk it with you, even though you may not recognize me, I will walk it with you, empowering you every step of the way."

In vs. 28, as they approached the village, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. I like that verse. It tells me 2 things. First, that Jesus never invades our privacy. The second, that it doesn't take much to get Jesus to stay. All we have to do is invite him. Open the door, for he's knocking and he'll be more than happy to come and stay.

Vs. 30 says, "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." After he left, they asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They couldn't wait to get back to Jerusalem, anxious to tell their story. But when the door opened, the apostles spoke before these two could speak. The apostles were saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." These two were also saying "Yes, we know that it is true. He met us on the way and we talked with him and we recognized him when he broke the bread." What a time of excitement and rejoicing it must have been!

We're all traveling on that road to Emmaus each day of our lives. Sometimes our dreams are shattered. Sometimes we laugh. Sometimes we cry. Jesus said, "I didn't come to take the road away. I just came to walk with you. I'm going to walk with you until we're home. In the meantime, open the Word so that your eyes can be opened and your heart warmed."

This is the invitation of Jesus to all of us this Easter 2022. When we respond, then we can say, "He walks with me, and talks with me, and tells me I am his own."

Let us pray:

O, Lord, wake us up, give us eyes that see and hearts that burn. Give us souls that yearn to serve and to tell the world that our Lord is alive. Amen

Dolapo Ogunbawo, 17 April 2022