

Luke 24: 36b-48
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The road to Emmaus. That long, dusty, dry, sad walk. Ever been there? Not literally on that road that runs between the two cities but rather, have you ever been on the road between the events of Jerusalem and Emmaus? I'm sure you have in your own way. We can all relate to the journey between the worst thing that could have happened to us, when we were sure we were on our own, no Jesus, no God and then the realisation even years later that Jesus was there with us all along.

Perhaps we are ahead of ourselves. Lets back up just a bit, Easter for us has come and gone and many of you were here or in some other church building and you sang the hallelujah's and you heard the message of the risen Christ but I'm wondering if there are any of you who missed it. Not the physical being at church, I am talking about not feeling the love, not feeling the risen Christ; did any of you miss Easter by not feeling the presence of the risen Christ in your heart even though you were in the very room you expected to feel it? Right in God's house, right in the church?

The first disciples all missed Easter; at least Easter as we celebrate it today. Easter has ended and the people on the fringes are going home, or at least to Emmaus about 7 miles from Jerusalem. The ones who had shouted Hosanna, when Jesus entered Jerusalem laying their palm branches and cloaks on the road to honour him; the ones who in their fear had said "crucify him" but didn't really mean it. They thought he would fight his way out; his heavenly army would appear and stop it all; but that isn't what happened. Even the eleven disciples went back to their hiding place.

The fringes and the inner circle have hung their heads in defeat, assuming Jesus wasn't the Messiah after all; their hopes dashed, hung on a cross, without any kind of a fight. You see, to them Jesus was dead even though reports from the inner circle of disciples, those who lived with him and travelled with him said he was alive but still he had disappeared, it was all a scam. So what was the use, the one they had pinned all their hope on had abandoned them. Nothing left to do but go back to life as before, empty, hopeless; living under the oppression of those who rule.

Perhaps this was how Easter was for you. Go back to life as before. The minister says he is alive but you can't see him, you can't feel him, what's the use; empty, hopeless. O sure we smile at our neighbour, we go through the motions of being part of the community but our hearts are broken, our hopes are dashed. Another Easter come and gone; another year Jesus eluded you.

If this is your experience here is the good news, Jesus listened. That's right he listened to these men on the road to Emmaus. He listened to their story of how it was for them; their words, their thoughts and only after they told their story did Jesus tell them the truth. And even when told the truth by Jesus himself they did not clue in, they were so

lost in their story. It wasn't until Jesus took the bread and broke it that their eyes were opened and they recognised Jesus.

It was then that they got up and returned to Jerusalem and told the eleven what they had seen and heard.

Now you may be saying to yourself this is not the scripture for today. Our scripture today starts with Jesus appearing to the eleven not to the fellows on the road; and of course you would be right but here's the thing, before Jesus returns to the disciples he shows himself to the fringes, the people outside the inner circle, the everyday folks. Don't you find that odd and amazing at the same time? Jesus is always doing something odd and amazing at the same time.

And it is important that all of us on the fringes, us everyday folks, those of us who come looking for our Messiah, looking for our lives to change, looking for the hope that we have been told Jesus will give, understand and know that Jesus listens and understands, even before he appears to the inner circle; before he appears to the ones who know him best. Jesus appears to each and every one of you, where you are, on your road. He is in the office, the kitchen, at your work, on the bus, at the train station, in the grocery store, at the school, on the farm, in the playground, at the arena, in your car. Listening, watching, understanding.

Every time Jesus appears after his death he does so without any kind of fanfare; he is simply there, as a gardener, as a fellow traveller on the road, walking on the beach as his disciples go back to their fishing. In fact I had a Jesus sighting on Friday night in the form of a folk singer in Kingston who sang a song that touched me so deeply that I have not been able to get it out of my mind. It was just what I needed to hear on just the day I needed to hear it and in that moment of connection I felt the risen Christ, I heard Jesus say to me, I understand.

So if you could not, or did not, feel the risen Christ on Easter, Christ understands. If you missed Easter, Christ understands. When Jesus appears to the disciples he does not say, you bunch of dopes you missed it! Instead he says, Peace be with you. We could never grasp the capacity Jesus has to understand. Jesus is the one who opens us to dream beyond our wildest dreams and at the same time ministers to those of us who's dreams have been crushed and shattered. Jesus brings a message of peace to all people but does not shy away from conflict and chaos. Jesus taught us to pray to a God we cannot comprehend and understands and accepts us even when we cannot pray or accept him.

When you have sunk to the deepest part of your being, in your despair. When you have opened your heart and cried out "why...God! Where are you God?" "What is happening in my life, I don't understand, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus listens and understands because Jesus has been there, on the cross, asking the same question, why have you forsaken me? The answer from God...I am here with you.

It is because of this that it is ok if you missed Easter. It is ok if you cannot shout Hallelujah. You do not have to hang your head in defeat and walk to Emmaus. You do not have to be part of the "inner circle" to hear and know the good news - that Jesus hears, Jesus listens, Jesus understands.

Once you have that firmly in your grasp you can move to the next part of the scripture. That part that tells of how the disciples react to the risen Jesus. Their doubts and fears; their need to see his hands and feet before believing. Their need to see him eat before them. Then he opens their minds to understand the scriptures and they finally realize that what had been written in the Hebrew scriptures was true, the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead and that repentance and forgiveness is to be proclaimed in his name. You are witnesses to these things.

Once we have seen and witnessed the risen Christ we will know that it is ok to doubt, it is ok to ask for proof and to be afraid; Jesus understands and stays with us and loves us anyway.

The time of Easter is that time between Jerusalem and Emmaus; that time of hiding out in fear, that time between great sorrow and great joy; that time between the ministry of Jesus and the beginning of the Christian Church. It is a time for us to shed ourselves of our tombs and to move freely in our world; free of fear, free of doubt, free of shame, free to be all that God wants us to be.

If you missed Easter don't worry, Jesus understands; and one of these days you will see him clearly in the face of a stranger on a road somewhere between Jerusalem and Emmaus. You are witnesses of these things.

Amen