

Walking Home

Luke 24:13-35

What high hopes they had!

They hoped Jesus was the one.

They hoped Jesus was more than a prophet.

They hoped all the signs and miracles pointed to one thing.

They hoped the sacrifices they'd made to follow him weren't going to be in vain.

They hoped Jesus was going to redeem Israel . . . to rescue Israel . . . to save them!

They'd pinned all their hopes on him . . .

. . . but, now their hopes were dashed . . . destroyed . . . in tatters.

Their chief priests and rulers had handed Jesus over to be sentenced to death.

And, outside the city, they crucified him . . . mocking him as they went . . . mocking the hopes of his disciples along with him! 'The king of the Jews! Ha!'

And, now, this is the third day . . . he's well and truly dead . . . he aint coming back . . . there's no point in staying in Jerusalem . . . there's nothing for them there anymore . . . no wonder their faces were downcast.

What high hopes they had.

Do you know how that is? Having hopes . . . and having them dashed . . .

You hoped retirement would be the best years of your life.

You hoped the treatment would work this time.

You hoped your children and grandchildren would all be sitting in the pew with you.

You hoped this job interview would be the one.

You hoped the new pastor would bring back the glory days.

You hoped for just a few more years with your spouse.

You hoped . . . picking up the pieces of dashed hope is no simple task . . . for what's life without hope? The road to Emmaus is a road of shattered hopes. Isn't that our road too? Even after the resurrection of Jesus! For, don't forget, this is a resurrection story . . . it occurs on the same day as Jesus rose from the grave . . . he makes his resurrection appearance to these two disciples, but he doesn't go: "Ta da! It's all right . . . I'm back and everything's going to be okay"! No, but what he does do is join those disciples on the road . . . that road of shattered hopes . . . and he walks with them . . . their lives aren't miraculously changed by Jesus' resurrected presence with them . . . but, something is different . . . they can't quite put their finger on it at the time, but something is different. So, together they walk . . . two downcast disciples and Jesus . . . and as they walk Jesus gets them to talk . . . to talk about those shattered hopes . . . to talk about the pain . . . the loss . . . the grief . . . to share it all with him.

What a pity they don't recognise Jesus. Or is it? Would they have shared like they did if Jesus had stood before them in resurrected glory? Would they even have walked the same journey? Or would they, in fear and awe, have said nothing . . . said nothing of their disappointment . . . said nothing of their dimwittedness. Is that why Jesus so often comes to us in very ordinary guises . . . his body . . . a communion of saints . . . it sounds grand, but it's really just ordinary people like you and me . . . sharing

each other's journey . . . the pain . . . the struggles . . . the joy . . . sharing it with Jesus . . . incognito . . . unseen, but really present . . . on the road.

No, the pity is not that those disciples failed to recognise Jesus standing in front of them, the real pity is that they failed to recognise Jesus in the Scriptures. For, that's where he points them to . . . how foolish they are . . . can't they see . . . he's right there . . . all along . . . from the beginning. That's where he is for those disciples then, and for all disciples now . . . in the Scriptures . . . in the Word . . . that's where he is for us as we travel our Emmaus journey . . . our road of dashed hopes . . . in the Word . . . look for him there . . . expect to find him there. It's a Word that confronts us . . . that challenges us . . . but, a Word that speaks into our pain . . . our grief . . . our dreams . . . our fears . . . our longings . . . our confusion . . . our doubt . . . our joy . . . our life. It speaks forgiveness to the guilty. It speaks healing to the shamed. It speaks welcome to the outsider. It speaks direction to the lost. It speaks acceptance to the rejected. Through the Word Jesus is present, not offering quick fixes, or easy solutions, but offering . . . always offering . . . new life . . . even on this journey of shattered hopes . . . always offering resurrection life.

But, in case we still don't see . . . in case we still continue to doubt . . . and fear . . . and fret, Jesus also reveals himself to us in the most ordinary, but profound way . . . in the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine. "Here, this is for you . . . here I am for you . . . personally . . . take it in your hand . . . my body . . . my blood . . . this is the new covenant . . . this is new life . . . for you".

When Jesus broke bread with those disciples their eyes were opened and they recognised him at last. Will your eyes be opened when you come to the Lord's Supper? Will you feel any different? Will you be changed? Will the world be a better place? I can't say . . . maybe . . . maybe not . . . maybe this time . . . maybe next time . . . maybe not for a long time . . . but, the road to Emmaus is a long one . . . and Jesus keeps walking it with us . . . he doesn't stop walking with us, no matter where we are on the journey.

All I can say is that when Jesus is present something has changed . . . something is different . . . life is not the same. . . . after their eyes were opened to Jesus' presence those disciples were still on the Emmaus road, but this time they were going the other way . . . back to Jerusalem . . . to share in the good news . . . the good news that Jesus is alive . . . just as he told them . . . just as the Scripture said. Where there once was death, now there is life. And with life comes hope again. For them . . . and for us.

Amen.

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