

Jesus Meets Us

Today, we have the familiar Easter story of the disciples meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus. This is a very rich story, one that has many preach-able themes in this passage. One could spend a lot of time trying to cover all these points and tie it all up at the end in a nice neat package. However, if that is done, then our minds will drift off somewhere after the third theme and thoughts of Sunday dinners and other things will creep into our minds. My goal is not to preach until everyone has a glaze over their eyes.

When we carefully look at all the different themes in this Gospel passage, we see that they actually do relate to each other and they all point toward the same conclusion. However, before we get to that conclusion, let's first look at some of these themes. The first thing we see in this passage is that we see the disciples are trying to make sense of what happened, not just the last week, or the past 3 days; but more specifically, that day itself. Remember, they were traveling to Emmaus on that first Easter Sunday. They had heard the reports of the empty tomb; they experienced the disappointment of thinking that Jesus would be the expected Messiah. Maybe they were hoping that when Jesus was backed into a corner, He would finally show the power of the Messiah and defeat all of Israel's enemies. But Jesus fell short of these expectations. The news of the empty tomb would seem to indicate to them that maybe the story wasn't over yet. Maybe there is something more to it, though having women of all people to be the first witnesses didn't make sense, either. Women (so the thinking went in those days) were not reliable witnesses in legal matters. All the hopes and dreams they had because of Jesus were seemingly now dashed, crushed just the way the Romans liked to do it, forcefully and emphatically, leaving no doubt as to the outcome. But then, this

stranger comes along, someone they don't recognize, who gets their hearts burning again, in the same way that Jesus often did when He preached and taught them. Still, they didn't recognize it until much later.

When is it that we find ourselves on a 'road to Emmaus?' A road that began with hope, but quickly went down the road of despair, dissipating all the hope that we had at the beginning. **Perhaps** it was in a job, where when we started, we thought we would be fast-tracked to the top, quickly advancing before others, easily getting the promotions that others work hard to get. But, then after a few years, we see that we are stuck in the same job, always with the threat of being laid off hanging over our heads; all dreams and hopes of any promotion long gone. **Perhaps** it was in a relationship, one that we hoped would last a lifetime, one that others would look at and want to have the kind of relationship that only gets stronger with time; but we find ourselves on a dusty road of lies and betrayal after betrayal, the hopes of raising an exemplary family laying behind us obscured by not having the family of our dreams or our children not turning out to be the angels we hoped for. **Perhaps** our road to Emmaus took us down a road littered with empty liquor bottles alongside our broken dreams for the 'good life.' Dreams fueled by the belief that if we were just good enough, if we believed hard enough in the right things, then we would get all those things that would make our life comfortable and easy. These dreams of the 'good life' having been shattered, becoming a nightmare, wondering when we will get 'our turn' to have those things we so richly deserve. **Perhaps** it is a feeling of not having any control over our lives, where all decisions about us are made for us, without any consideration for what we want or need or think. **Perhaps** it is something else, something that only you know about and struggle with - something that seems to be taking the life right out of you.

But then, Jesus does come and walks beside us, meeting us on that dusty road that seems to never end. A road where we carefully go around the bend, fearful of what may be there lying in wait for us. But He is there with us. Most times, we don't see it right away, maybe we just think it's someone who is giving us a helping hand; someone who wished to mentor us in that job; someone who restores the hopes and dreams that we had; someone who asks what we want or think; someone who somehow takes the hurt away. We don't really see that it was Jesus walking beside us until later, until our eyes are opened in the ordinary.

Jesus showed Himself to Cleopas and his companion in the breaking of ordinary bread. He showed Himself in the ordinary. But then, we shouldn't be too surprised that Jesus does this. After all, when we look at the Gospel testimony, we would see that there are more experiences with Jesus in the ordinary aspects of living than there are of the 'mountaintop experience' variety. Even if we count the miracles such as walking on water, the feeding of the 5000 as mountaintop experiences, there would still be more encounters with Jesus in the ordinary: such as the meetings with Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman at the well, meeting the man born blind, the many lepers, and we could go on and on. The point is, we see Jesus more in the ordinary than in the lofty experiences. In the comic strip *BC*, they sometimes have a character climbing a mountain in order to ask a question of a guru who is sitting on the top of the mountain waiting for people to come & ask him something. In the Gospels, we see that Jesus isn't like that at all. Jesus comes to us, comes to us where we are, regardless of the situation, regardless if we see Jesus in the situation or not. As this Gospel story shows us, Jesus provides us with the things we need at the moment to get us through whatever 'road to Emmaus' we are on. At the right time, however, our eyes get

opened and we see that Jesus had not abandoned us at all, that He was there all the time, helping us, guiding us, taking us along that dusty road to the destination where we really need to go. In so doing, it is the presence of Jesus that makes the ordinary become special - makes the blessing, breaking and sharing of ordinary bread special for us, bringing us closer to Him, closer to God. Will we be like those disciples, who despite the dangers of traveling at night went to proclaim what Jesus did for them; or will we prefer to stay on that dusty road to Emmaus, seeking answers for questions that only Jesus can answer, but not necessarily looking to Jesus for those answers?

YouTube links:

Gospel and Sermon: <https://youtu.be/iYhyQFRDA7w>

Service: <https://youtu.be/AwcxFsvCXpo>