

Road to Emmaus

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him (Lk 24:31)



The Emmaus Story

An Emmaus experience involves seeing things with new eyes or in a different way. There is a feeling of excitement and urgency to tell others or be more involved.

Luke 24:13-35

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Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognising him. ¹⁷And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' ¹⁹He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were

with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him'.

²⁵Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over'. So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he had appeared to Simon!' ³⁵Then they told what has happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Commentary

Adapted from the International Bible Commentary pp 1435 – 1437.

On the road to Emmaus Jesus appears to two disciples. This is the longest single post-resurrection narrative in the gospels. Just prior to this encounter, Jesus appears to Mary of Magdala in John. Luke's account of Jesus' appearance in the afternoon is unique. Alfred Plummer (Plummer, Commentary, 552) believes that Luke received the narrative from an eye-witness account and that the narrator was Cleopas. Jesus appears mysteriously to the depressed and disillusioned disciples on the road to Emmaus on the afternoon of his Resurrection. This road is approximately 11 kilometres from Jerusalem. The disciples think that Jesus is a pilgrim who must have witnessed Jesus' Death. During the walk Jesus remains ignorant about the events of the past few days. He listens intently to their discussion. The disciples tell him of their shattered hopes and dreams for Jesus, the prophet, who through his great and mighty works and preaching would redeem Israel. The concept of redemption for these disciples and for many other Jews meant that a conquering, all-powerful Messiah would come and lead them to freedom. Their idea of redemption had been decimated by the death of Jesus. They also believed that the women's story of Jesus' Resurrection was simply an idle tale.

Jesus, still the stranger to the disciples, proceeds to explain through scriptures that fulfilment of the expectation of the People of God for a Messiah had been accomplished through the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

Upon arriving at Emmaus the disciples welcome the stranger, who has now become the companion on the journey, to stay and prepare to spend the night with them. Jesus remains and takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it and gives it to them. It is at this moment, as the scriptures have been explained to them that their hearts burn, they are transformed and they realise their companion is the Risen Jesus. It is the message of faith nourished by Jesus, the living bread that many believers take from this narrative. Believers are sustained by faith in Jesus that burns within their hearts.

Another universal message for believers is that death does not put an end to one's life. However, the essence of this passage is that the Messiah must suffer and die before he enters glory (24:26). This explains that the death of Jesus, the Messiah was in keeping with God's purpose.

Reflection

1. **Reflect on and/or share an Emmaus experience that you have experienced, read or heard about.**
2. **Reflect on and/or share an experience of when you have met a person who inspired you and whose impact has stayed with you.**
3. **Reflect on the ways you have tried to be like somebody who has been an inspiration to you in your life.**
4. **How is the Emmaus story reflected in the celebration of Mass today?**
5. **Where might we see Jesus Christ in the world today?**
6. **What would you like Jesus to help you understand?**

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