

Two men on the Emmaus Road

Bishop Tom Wright - wrote this in his book called Hope...which is an exploration of the resurrection... “This is our greatest festival. Take Christmas away and in biblical terms you lose 2 chapters at the beginning of Matthew and Luke; nothing else. Take Easter away and you certainly won't have a NT; you won't have a Christianity; as Paul says you will still be in your sins. ...This is our greatest day; you should put the flags out!

What did this first Easter day mean to the two people on the Emmaus road?

It begins with them being heartbroken.... Their dreams had been smashed and they were walking home from Jerusalem to Jericho – defeated and haunted by the past few days – The one they called Jesus, the hope of Israel had been crucified. They walk into the sunset and their dreams had slipped away. But in the midst of their sadness, a stranger joins them and walks with them into their sunset. Their eyes are so grief stricken that they don't even recognise the Stranger. We do because we know the story but they didn't they walk and speak and listen to the stranger.

The stranger listens to their pain and then he slowly opens to them the reason why the Messiah had to die and he takes them on a journey though the OT.

This stranger opens their eyes to God's word and bit by bit, things began to make sense.

When we invite Jesus into our lives, into our situations, bit by bit things come together. We begin to see a bigger plan, God's plan and we see life from an eternal perspective and not just from our own little world. Perhaps today, we need to invite the Lord, once again into our lives, to help us see things from his perspective and not just from ours.

But we learn today also that Jesus never pushes himself upon us. He is gentle and his burden is light. He walks and listens and he invites us to enter into relationship. He never forces himself upon everyone. He has given us free will and the choice is always there for us to make – whether we receive him or not.

As the two strangers arrive at Emmaus, that small village some 7 miles from Jerusalem, they invite him into their house. They've enjoyed the stranger's company; he has helped them deal with their grief and now they want to extend to him further fellowship. They want him to stay for supper and he does so and in the breaking of bread, their eyes were opened to who the stranger was. It was the Christ. It was the crucified Lord and now the resurrected Lord. Something in the breaking of bread helped them to see Jesus; it's a beautiful faith encounter.

What was it that made us believe? When our eyes were first opened to the truth about Jesus, what was it that opened them? In this moment, they came to faith and they came to see that the one who walked with them was indeed Jesus and they said to each other, didn't our hearts burn within us as he walked with us on the way.

We are told that the next thing that these men did was to return to Jerusalem – the same road they slowly walked from would have been a road that became a sprint back. The difference Christ can make to our lives is incredible. When we come to see Jesus as the resurrected Christ, then all other things are not so important. All we want to do is go back and tell others. Prof. Willie Barklay “The Christian message is never fully ours until we have shared it with someone else”. Who have we shared the message of Easter with? Do our hearts want to tell others that Jesus is alive and that he has defeated death and that he has opened the kingdom of God to all who believe?

Then when they arrived back in Jerusalem, they enjoyed fellowship with the disciples. They recounted all that happened to them on the road and that their eyes were opened in the breaking of bread. Christian fellowship is a great blessing; unfortunately this might be curtailed at the moment because of the virus; but we will make up for it, when this soon passes and we will embrace each other in a new and appreciative way and not take granted for granted the privileges that we enjoy.

So, there we have it, one of the first encounters of the resurrection and it resulted in a changed life.

What about us this morning?

Well, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever and he still walks those lonely roads of Emmaus. Perhaps you are on that Emmaus road this morning, a road of suffering; a road of grief, a road of loneliness, a road of isolation... Can I encourage you that Jesus is walking on that road with you. He is there right beside you. He is listening to your painful soul. He knows your fears. He is helping you work through it right now. What can we do? We can trust that he is with us; we can turn to his Word, as he turned the two people on the Emmaus road to his word and opened the scriptures to him; we can stay in fellowship through the breaking of bread and communion and we can share his good news with others.

Bishop Wright in his book speaks about what we have given up for lent over 40 days and he then encourages Christians to make the most of Easter, not just one day tacked onto the end of lent but to make Easter season a time of celebration;

a time of exuberance and joy; a time of walking from the shadows into the light and not to be frightened to sing our Alleluias.

On this Resurrection Sunday, may you know the blessing of God Almighty and may the God of the Emmaus road be the God of your heart and soul.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen