



May the Spirit of God's Love lead us into truth

The Road to Emmaus

The Gospel reading this morning is one of my favourites. It's the story of everyman – and every woman.

I suspect that we have all found ourselves travelling a similar ' Road to Emmaus', pondering and ruminating over and over a nightmare experience.

So Emmaus is not just a small town in Palestine, each of us have our own Emmaus - because Emmaus is the place we go when there is nowhere else left to go.

Emmaus is the place of lost hopes, shattered dreams, and heavy hearts.

Emmaus is the place we retreat to when we are bone-tired, beaten down, and broken by the tragedies and disappointments of life.

Emmaus may be a village, but it is also a state of mind, a state of mind where hope has gone.

Emmaus may also be the place of unspoken anger... - for Cleopas and his friend (some say his wife) you can hear the anger in their words - anger that it was *our* authorities that handed over the man who was to overthrow the Roman oppressors.

And may be there was anger at Jesus – who had given up without even putting up a fight. “We had hoped that he would have been the one to redeem Israel,”—the implication being, “but now all is lost.” Maybe there was anger because of embarrassment at having been taken in; ashamed of their gullibility in thinking that hope could be carried by this Nazarene called Jesus.

These two people slowly plodding toward Emmaus, heads hung low, were basically unknown and undistinguished people. They may have known the apostles well, but they were ordinary people among the larger company of the disciples.

Like others they had been attracted to Jesus and had placed their hopes in him.



Maybe on that previous Sunday they had been among the crowd casting down their garments in front of Jesus of Nazareth, waving their palm branches in celebration, shouting and singing, But then the week wore on, their Palm Sunday's enthusiasm was transformed into the bleak despair of Good Friday.

So scared, angry, panicked, these two 'elders' decide to get out of Jerusalem – maybe the authorities would come for them next... best get back home... cover their tracks – get over it... try and save face. Defeat is worse than Death; You have to live with Defeat!!

I suspect that the conversation that would have been taking place on that seven mile walk to Emmaus would have been a conversation that would be familiar to us all. It would have been the type of conversation that we all indulge in when we are pre-occupied with survival (or entrapped by ambition).

When we perceive perils and are hyper alert to possible danger(or just possibility), then we continually assess both friend and foe,

- we ruminate on how best we might be 'well defended',
- we sharpen up our know-how about how to accumulate resources and
- corroborate with each other how the life – especially other people aren't to be trusted.

And then this chap interrupts them, intrudes almost. "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel," they told the stranger who joined them on the road.

And he challenges them and tells them that the show goes on, the final act is still to come – there is more to come, because the messiah has to suffer... Don't they know their Jewish history and religious teaching? And this stranger cites chapter and verse that speak of just this pattern of events – that the Messiah must give up his life – and so must his followers – and through this will come eternal life.

This chap who intrudes on their ruminating gives them a different perspective on the world – and their place in it. He helps them to re-arrange the meaning of what had gone on in Jerusalem.

(That is precisely what Jesus does for each of us – he helps us to re-arrange the meaning of our lives, challenging us when we fall into the well defended habit of trying to accumulate wealth, and power and status.)



For Cleopas and his friend (or wife), the resurrected Jesus moves them from a mindset pre-occupied with survival; he helps them leave behind their 'calculations' – and cynicism. He helps them to move away from the tactics of survival and threat - and renews not just hope – but the rooted realism that owns the possibility of hope.

Just a few down to earth words about hope ... and cynicism

- Hope, like wealth has never trickled down, hope always springs up. We have to discover hope for ourselves and test it against our day to day reality.

And a few words about cynicism:

- Cynicism is the denial of hope, but may be a cynic is a passionate person who does not want to be disappointed again

Cleopas and his friend were on the brink of giving-up their hope, but more than this, they were on the brink of giving up their struggle – and giving up on the struggle is the sin against the Holy Spirit. ..

It is not just hope that is at the heart of our understanding of the nature of our God, so too is struggle. Paul, writing to the Romans uses the analogy of a woman crying out with the pain of child birth to describe the struggle which is part of our world (Romans 8 v22, 23).

Commitment to struggle is an essential part of the Christian story. The worst state of humankind is not our sinfulness, because a central tenet of our faith is that sins can be forgiven – rather it is the avoidance or quitting from 'struggle' – because to quit from struggle is to reject or deny the creation process in which God calls us to participate.¹

So in this powerful Gospel story - this story of each of us, we find Jesus walking along the road with Cleopas and his friend, at 3 miles per hour. Jesus walking with everyone – everyman and every woman - at 3 miles an hour.

Emmanuel, "God with Us," is often associated with the Christmas season and the joys of birth and incarnation. But it has been my experience that it is in the darker seasons of life that Emmanuel truly makes his presence known. It is

¹ William Bouwsma 'Christian Adulthood' in E. Erikson (ed) *Adulthood*; New York: Norton 1976
c/ Horaci, 38; 08022 Barcelona · tel: 93 417 88 67 · fax: 93 212 84 33
stgeorgeschurch@telefonica.net · www.st-georges-church.com · http://drewtweedy.blogspot.com



St George's Church
BARCELONA

in our troubled times (not our successful moments) that we find Jesus walking alongside us at 3 miles an hour.

Ask ten people when God seemed the most real and most present to them and nine of them will say that it was when the illness was diagnosed, when the spouse walked out, when the promotion never came, when the loved one died.

At the speed of love, - at walking pace, Jesus unfolds re-assurance, and renewed confidence in a hope that can sustain the struggle, just as he did for Cleopas and his companion.

Just as he enabled them to leave behind their cynicism and their calculating selves Jesus also enables us to embrace his perspective of a world of possibility and renewal.

To the one true God be all Love, glory and honour. Amen