

Scriptures Explained; Bread Broken

a sermon preached on

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at

St Luke's in the City, Christchurch

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Lection: Luke 24:13-35

There is a saying that sorrows can be "eased" if we can tell a story about them. The two disciples on the Emmaus Road had a very sad story to tell. The death of Jesus had plunged them into gloom. Their dreams about Him being the long awaited messiah had been reduced to rubble.

As they travelled along the road they looked at his death from every angle, but they couldn't make sense of it. A "humiliated crucified messiah" - unthinkable. Then Jesus joined them. He showed great sensitivity by joining them as a stranger. (There are many times when we feel more comfortable talking to a stranger rather than someone we know well), Jesus opened the conversation with a simple direct question; "what were you discussing with each other as you walked along the road"? A question asked in a kindly manner, which prompted them to open up to Him, and they began to pour out their sad story. Jesus listened patiently, and lovingly, so that all that was welled up inside of them was released.

What Jesus did was to meet them at a stage of their journey when they needed someone to walk a little of life's' road alongside them. Whatever age, or whatever stage of life's' journey we are at, we too need someone to walk alongside us, and in so doing, communion is gradually built up, and mutual trust and a desire for the truth increase over a period of time. At certain stages of our journey it can be very difficult for us to accept the truth, or to face reality. There fore it is essential to select the right time to walk alongside someone in need and to be able to listen.

It was only when the disciples finished speaking that Jesus began to talk. He took up the story where they left off. He opened up their minds to a new way of looking at the scriptures. He showed them how the prophets had foretold that the messiah would suffer, die and rise again.

So the death of Jesus, far from being the end of a dream, was the way in which it had been realised. However it was not until Jesus spoke to them that they began to understand a little of what was happening to them.

Isn't this how it is in reality? Many times we never know what is happening to us. We have no perspective, no understanding, we have enough to do just to be able to cope with every day life. It is only later perhaps much later that our eyes will be opened and we begin to understand the experience. This brings home to the importance of reflecting on all life's' experiences, and eventually we may be grateful for the dark and sad times on our journey, and feel more positive for having been through them.

As we reflect on this Gospel Story, we begin to understand the message of Jesus' death and resurrection. We don't expect to find God through pain. We expect to find him in joy. This was the great discovery that the disciples made on the Emmaus Road. It gave a meaning to suffering.

The climax of this encounter with the Risen Christ occurred when He accepted the disciples' invitation to stay with them. While they were sitting at the table, He took the bread, "Blessed it - Broke it - Gave it them and then departed". This was the moment when their eyes were opened and they recognised Him, and they said to each other "did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us.

By the time Luke wrote his Gospel a good 50 years had gone by since Christ's death and resurrection. So it is possible that we might look back with envy at those disciples who were fortunate to see the Risen Jesus with

their own eyes. However Luke makes the point that those who were in that enviable position did not really know Jesus until the scriptures were explained and the bread was broken.

The story of the Risen Lord and the disciples on the Emmaus Road contains three necessary elements for Eucharist: The assembly of the people; The lesson of the word; The sharing of the meal. May our hearts also burn with knowledge of the scriptures, and may we celebrate with joy as we recognise the Risen Christ when the bread is broken at the table.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

References: Luke 24: 13-35, F McCarthy, S O'Flynn

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