

Week Six

'Walking with Jesus'

Bible Passage

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then 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?' He 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But 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. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and 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. Some 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.' Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They 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?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

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Introduction

Admit it. We all like to eavesdrop into other people's conversations. We might pretend we're not listening, but there's something in us that feels drawn to it. Luke lets us eavesdrop into this fascinating story going on through Chapter 24 of his gospel. It's a story that is familiar, or is it? There are twists and turns, and just when you think you've got a handle on it, it changes again.

Here is a Jesus people knew when he was seen after his resurrection, but apparently not by these two followers. Luke shows an almost playful Jesus as he goes along with them in their story, and seems to be enjoying it, and who acts as if he were going further (when it was clearly never his intention). Here is a Jesus, who speaks when his word is explained, and a Jesus who reveals himself as bread is blessed and broken. And also, here is a Jesus, who just as the penny drops, disappears from their sight. It's better than a film script. All the elements of a great story are here.

God is often pictured as the one who walks with us. Kosuke Koyama, a Japanese theologian shows in his book, 'Three Mile an Hour God' how God teaches people important lessons only at the slow pace of a human walk, three miles an hour. Jesus is on the move! He's still walking today. We too sometimes use the language of our walk with God. So what of us? What has our walk through Lent achieved? How will we go on from here?

Walking with Jesus

- *What are you discussing together as you walk along v24* Where are you coming from? What are your hopes and fears and concerns? It is possible to be walking in the wrong direction (Emmaus) from the one you should be going to (Jerusalem). How can you make sure you're walking with him in the right direction?
- *We had hoped he was the one ... v21* He was standing right in front of them and still they didn't click. How can you make sure your walk is with him rather than about him? How can you be more real, with yourself and with others?
- *Were not our hearts burning within us as he talked v32* How will you make space and time to let him speak to you? What might you need to be ruthless about in your lifestyle that is preventing you from hearing him speak?
- *He took bread, gave thanks ... their eyes were opened and they recognised him v30* And, as he did, he disappeared. There is always something new to find out about him. You cannot box him, though many groups through church history and up to our day think they have. Just when you think you have, he's gone. Eugene Peterson wrote a magnificent book on Christian discipleship with the memorable title, 'A Long Obedience in the Same Direction'. Being a Christian means embarking on a walk, a long walk. What will keep you walking with him in the good and the bad times?

A Prayer

(attributed to Sir Francis Drake)

Disturb us, Lord,
when we are too well pleased with ourselves;
when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little;
when we arrive safely because we sailed too close to the shore.
Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess
we have lost our thirst for the Waters of Life;
having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity;
and in our efforts to build a new earth,
we have allowed our vision of the new heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly -
to venture on wider seas where storms will show your mastery;
where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.
We ask you push back the horizons of our hopes,
and to push us in the future with strength, courage, hope and love. Amen.

The Servant Song

Will you let me be your servant
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant, too

We are pilgrims on a journey
We are travellers on the road
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load

I will hold the Christ light for you
In the night-time of your fear
I will hold my hand out to you
Speak the peace you long to hear

I will weep when you are weeping
When you laugh I'll laugh with you
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through
When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony

Will you let me be your servant
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I may have the grace
To let you be my servant, too

Richard Gillard (born 1953)

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