
From Isaiah 25

⁶ On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines.
⁷ On this mountain He will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations; ⁸ He will swallow up death for ever.

From Luke 24

³⁰ When He was at the table with them, He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² 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?’

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Today as we gather to celebrate the most important day in the church year, and indeed in the history of the world, we do so knowing that for many people this day means something all together different – this is part of nice long weekend! And what will they talk about at this time of year..? Indeed, also, what will you talk about at this time of year...?

When we come to the account of two disciples making a walk from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus (a journey of some 12 kilometres) these two disciples are walking along a road, talking together (as people are want to do to pass time, and share friendship and fellowship). Within Luke’s Gospel account, this narrative follows the account of the resurrection, which leaves us with Peter going home and marvelling at all that had happened after finding the empty tomb. The next part in Luke’s Gospel account (Luke 24:verse 13) begins with a very special word, one designed to catch our attention. Though some Bibles do not translate it, this section begins with the word “behold.” This word is here to focus our attention on an important lesson to be gleaned from what follows in the actions of the two disciples in retreat and the arrival of the risen Saviour who came along side to minister to them.

Rather than proclaiming a message of a victorious and risen Saviour, we find these two disciples in retreat, leaving Jerusalem, scared, dejected, and perplexed. Here was a walk of sadness and gloom, of frustration and doubt; a walk filled with deliberation and discussion, but without answers and understanding, and thereby, without comfort; going, but without sense of mission and purpose.

“They were conversing”. The tense of this verb is descriptive (an ‘imperfect tense’) highlighting an ongoing conversation between these two men as they walked along.

But the interesting point is what were they discussing. The text tells us they were conversing “about all that had taken place.” Their conversation was centred around the death, burial, and reports of the resurrection of Christ, a very wonderful topic of conversation and one which should have brought joy, hope, a sense of victory, and purpose. But instead, it brought sadness, retreat, and a sense of loss.

But let’s note a couple of things because this is so much like all of us.

1. Their conversation was woefully inadequate.
2. Aren’t we often just like this? We can get together and reason and discuss, but just being together to talk, share our experiences and ideas for the purpose of comforting one another cannot truly answer the main problems and questions of life or give us peace.
3. We need something more, much more.

What then was their need? Fellowship with the living Christ. So what happens next? Someone graciously and lovingly enters the scene. Jesus Himself comes along side. Isn’t this most incredible, and something that is many ways beyond our comprehension – for the so often the ‘sounds’ of ‘this world’ and the ‘sounds’ of our own ‘minds’ and ‘experiences’ drown out the sight of what is actually around us! How often are we like this...?

“And it came about that while they were conversing” introduces us to a significant time element which shows us that right in the middle of their plight of perplexity, the Lord Himself came on the scene. The pronoun “Himself” is an intensive pronoun which meant it is emphatic drawing our attention to His personal involvement in their need. This fact plus the word, “approached,” the Greek “to draw near,” brings out the personal interest, availability and ministry that the Lord Himself always has in our lives.

But we hear that “Their eyes were prevented (Lit. “were held back, restrained, hindered”) from recognising Him (vs. 16). Their problem was one of perception: But what is perception? It is the ability to see below the surface and to understand what is not evident to the average mind. It means the ability to realize what is true. Even though He was standing in their presence, they were unable to perceive His presence.

But there is a deeper problem and cause for their lack of perception. The Lord now speaks as the great and loving counsellor. He asks, “What are these words . . .” This forms a mild rebuke and was a question designed to cause them and us to think about the nature of our speech, which so often reveals troubled hearts.

Like a lot of people, they were probably proud of their opinions and they were exchanging ideas, experiences, feelings, fears, and probably doing some grumbling as well. Their words simply could not comfort them and in essence, they were pooling their ignorance. As a result, "... they stood still, looking sad, or lit., "with sad, sullen or gloomy faces (or expressions)." The content of their conversation is given in verses 18-24.

As we walk along the road of life, are we experiencing the Lord Jesus as our companion and fellow traveller? And are we allowing Him to come into our homes as the very real, though unseen Host who lives to lead and minister to our life? Or are we, like these two disciples on the road to Emmaus who know the news of the Saviour, but are still walking in retreat without mission and purpose, with a sad and gloomy countenance, as those who are not really living in the reality of the Risen Christ?

We have a risen and an ascended Saviour and, unlike the founders of the religions of the world, He has not left us with merely a moral code of ethics by which we are to try to live by the futility of our own weakness. Nor has He left us with a mystical philosophy through which we try to transcend this material world through meditation or some form of mysticism. Instead, the appearances of Jesus Christ, the conqueror of death, sin and Satan, teach us we have a risen Saviour, one who personally: walks with us in our daily path; talks with us through His Word and with whom we can talk through prayer; opens our minds to understand and respond to His Word; is with us and concerned about us and our every step; provides for us regardless of what life may bring, and who has left us here to, in the power of His gift, the Holy Spirit, so that we may live confidently as His people in the world.

Have you ever felt like you just had to get away? Or felt like life had given you more than you could handle? Have you ever run away from life? Have you ever been deeply disappointed? Have you lived with unmet expectations? When have you felt lost, as if your world had been turned upside down? Have you ever wrestled with those big questions: "Who am I now? What's next? Where do I go? What do I do?" Can you remember a time when you did everything right and life still didn't work out the way you planned or wanted? Have you grieved the death of a loved one, a dream, an identity, a future? Has your life ever been shattered? If so, then you know what it's like to be Cleopas and his companion.

Despite how it feels, our brokenness is not an ending. There is more to it than we often see or know. It is not just brokenness, a shattering, it is a breaking open to new life, to new seeing, to new recognition, to community, welcome, hospitality, and love. Isn't that why we gather around the table every Sunday?

And Jesus fed them not just with bread but with himself: with his body, his life, his love, his compassion, his strength, his forgiveness, his hope, with all that

he is and all that he has. Their life was being restored in their being broken open.

Shattered lives, broken bread, restored lives. Jerusalem, Emmaus, Jerusalem. That seems to be the pattern. It's never, however, as simple or easy as it sounds. It's one thing to name the pattern but another to live it. It takes time and effort. It's not easy and it's painful. It means trusting that somehow the shards of our lives will become the pieces for a new life, a new seeing, a new way of living. Where do you see this pattern in your life? How have you experienced it? Can you find yourself in this story? Because this is what we are to do.

here's the amazing and wonderful promise of the gospel: on your road of loneliness and despair, you are not alone. Oh, you may think you're alone, but you're not. That one who joins you along the way, the one who hears your disappointment and your heartache, the one you complain to about Jesus letting you down—yes, that's Jesus.

Jesus became known to them in the breaking of the bread. Often in our spiritual discouragement we abandon the old for something new, or for nothing at all. But Jesus has not left the Communion Table. The Lord is everywhere, but he is always present in the breaking of the bread.

If you sometimes wonder if Jesus is real, if you've doubted that God is there, if your faith has let you down or if you've ever run out of hope, here's the promise of the gospel: when you think you're all alone, you're not. Jesus is the companion along the way. It may not seem like much--a piece of bread, an open Bible, a stranger on the way. It may not be much, but here's what it is--it's Jesus. He's with you all the way. Amen.