

Easter 3A Luke 24/Emmaus Road

The story of Cleopas and the other disciple, making their way to Emmaus, is one of the great Resurrection stories, for the church.

It speaks to Word and Sacrament, to disappointment and confusion, to renewed hope and greater faith. It is depicted in three scenes on the walls of our Emmaus Hall,

the room where we gather to break bread and hope that the Lord Jesus is revealed around those tables. Around those tables, we gather for conversation and discussion.

It is the scene of Vestry meetings and Annual Meetings, for the series we've had about controversial matters in the life of the church,

for regular tussles about matters theological and occasionally political.

Tables are places we eat; but also places we discuss; negotiate and even argue.

That is what I notice about Cleopas and the other disciple as I read their story this year, that they were doing a lot of discussing along the road.

Under the English word discuss are a couple of different Greek verbs that have connotations of extra energy and emotion in the conversation.

It is as though I said; Elizabeth and I had another DISCUSSION recently about getting a puppy. A little more energy in the conversation than one about what to have for dinner.

Diplomats often seem to say that their discussion were "frank", to signify a similar energy.

These two were walking along retelling the story of Jesus' last days and the conversation was filled with emotion.

Did they argue about some of the details, as they sought to understand the blur of painful event? No, that was Caiaphas, not Pilate, perhaps one said.

Did he say that at the supper or was it in the garden?

Maybe they disagreed about who to blame for this great tragedy; a favorite argument of our tribe.

Perhaps they argued about whether or not the women's tale of Resurrection was idle;

maybe Cleopas was more inclined to believe.

So have you ever had a discussion/argument going that blinded you to the presence of others, to possibilities, to ways out of the argument and into some new realm?

I think it happens all the time, that some binary tension gets established that leaves two people or parties blind to another way, in a tunnel of argumentative darkness.

We might think of the political parties in Washington, locked in a struggle that seems to yield few results.

Or a marriage that cycles through the same issue over and over and loses love every time.

Or the fruitless arguments between Catholics and Protestants in the Reformation, that have been declared healed in recent years.

How many roads not taken go unseen and thus untaken when defensive people, lost in argument, lose track of the possibilities around them?

Cleopas and the other disciple were stuck in a place like that.

Their reaction to the mysterious stranger who proved to be Jesus suggests such blindness.

Are you the only one who hasn't heard about these things, they demanded of Jesus as they walked along the road.

A testy question, that reflected the emotional energy of their own conversation.

Jesus replied in kind; how slow you are to believe and how hard of heart!

But that was the beginning of new insight.

The Lord drew them out of their arguing, out of their excessive focus on each other.

He gave them a new horizon, a wider perspective.

Like a prophet, a therapist, or a sage, he opened their eyes to something other than their discussion.

Indeed, Jesus Christ has done that for all of us;
in his Resurrection he has disrupted the old rules and arguments,
the fruitless divisions that we are inclined to fall into.

If life ends at death, for instance, a human being will imagine one set of possibilities.

Get all you can, fight as much as you have to.

Everything will be mine or yours and the clock is always ticking in a struggle against each other.

But if there is an eternity beyond the grave,

if there is a God-ordered restoration to come,

if there is a resurrection,

then it is not you and me in a desperate struggle to make the most of limited time and resources.

Indeed, we might be here to show the world that different way,

revealed and required by the Resurrection of Christ.

The Resurrected Jesus, then, interrupted the two men walking on the road,
broke open their argument and revealed new possibilities.

God, in the Resurrection of Jesus, has interrupted and disrupted the old ways of seeing and not seeing in the world.

God moved the finish line, shifted the boundaries, and opened up the possibility of a new creation.

We do well to consider what lifeless arguments we are stuck in,
what blindness to new possibility and to Christ may beset us.

We know the things that happened in Jerusalem have changed the arc of the universe;
let us not be slow to believe or hard of heart.

Let us raise our eyes from the dusty road and see where the Lord leads.