

## ***The Road to Emmaus***

It has been said that in order to know where you are going you must first know where you have come from. I have been interested in genealogy for as long as I can remember and I would like to share a little of that with you if I could. Growing up I heard many stories of my ancestors where they were from, what they did and so forth. As children often do I asked many questions. One that I can remember asking was, "Where did they go to church?" The answer was, "Oh, they were Church of England." Like I was supposed to know what that was. I just tucked it away. Many years later I would discover what that meant as I was on my own "Road to Emmaus."

It's a sure thing!...Have you ever banked on a "sure thing" so much so that the possibility that it would not happen had completely left your mind? Sometimes we only hear what we want to hear and those words that were not even spoken are now reality. Sometimes we take these thoughts on this "sure thing" and we begin playing out the different scenarios of how things will turn out.

In the gospel passage appointed for today it shows us two of Jesus' disciples who represent that basic state of mind in which most of the disciples found themselves on the day of the resurrection. They were utterly discouraged. That, "sure thing" just didn't happen. They asked each other what happened? He was to be the "New King of the Jews", and we were to rule with Him by His side. People would look up to us because of our new authority.

No one's career and message had ever been so thoroughly defeated and discredited in the public eye as had that of Jesus. Even his disciples and closest friends had left him and fled; indeed, he had been betrayed into the hands of the ecclesiastical and civil officials by one of his closest friends. The hopes of his disciples were in shreds. " a sure thing...."

It is clear from this text that the hopes of these two disciples were not in accord with the message that Jesus had been trying to communicate during his lifetime. One of the things they said when he asked for an explanation of their sadness was, "We were hoping that he was the one who would set Israel free." In other words, these disciples--and this may have been Judas' problem as well--had preconceived ideas about who the Messiah was to be and what he was to do. One of their expectations was that he would deliver Israel from the domination of the Roman Empire. In other words, they wanted a Messiah who would fit into the nationalistic aspirations of the

Jewish people of that time. Although Jesus had made it clear that he would have nothing to do with political programs, he could not get this idea out of the heads of his disciples. Consequently, when he predicted well in advance that he would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles and put to death; they did not hear what he said.

Our emotional programming is such that we rarely hear what we do not wish to hear. The disciples envisaged the reign of God as a political triumph, not as the mystery of God's intervention in their personal lives.

The two disciples had heard reports about women going to the tomb and not finding the body of Jesus. It does not seem to have occurred to them that if the women's report about the empty tomb were true, their report that Jesus had risen from the dead might also be true.

The confused and disgruntled disciples were paralyzed by utter disappointment and grief.

Totally absorbed by their grief, they failed to recognize Jesus, as fellow-traveler along the road, and asked, "Friends, what are you talking about, and why do you look so sad?" Obviously, Cleopas said, he must be a stranger if he hadn't heard of the recent happening in Jerusalem. His friendly and courteous manner opened them up to dialogue, and they poured out all the reasons for their distress. Cleopas and his companion, had trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel and we were to have an important place in the new Kingdom.

Notice that the disciples were heading away from Jerusalem. They had evidently decided, despite what the women were reported to have said, that their part in the community of Jesus' disciples was over.

Jesus' response to their sad tale was, "How little sense you have! How slow you are to believe all that the prophets have announced!" Then, opening the Holy Scriptures to them, he began to put into perspective the true meaning of the Messiah. As they approached the outskirts of Emmaus, Jesus indicated that he was going further; he probably would have gone on if they had not urged him to stay with them.

He went in to the inn with them and sat down at a table. It was now evening, the time of the evening sacrifice and the time that the Last Supper had been eaten. He took bread, pronounced the blessing and broke the bread. Then he distributed it to them just as they had seen him do several days before and many times at common meals.

Later the disciples acknowledged to each other that their hearts were burning as Jesus explained the scriptures to them. This "burning" brought them to a high level of concentration and attentiveness. Suddenly, as Jesus broke the bread, the data of their external senses and their interior alertness connected. The intuition of faith saw through the outward appearance of the stranger to the Reality. In front of them was the risen Christ! As soon as they recognized him, He vanished from their eyes.

"They immediately turned around and went back to Jerusalem." There they learned that Jesus had also appeared to Peter. During the course of the day, the apostles had come to accept the fact of the resurrection, either because they had been to the empty tomb or because Peter had seen the Lord. More importantly, they were beginning to experience interiorly the grace of the resurrection. The risen Christ was awakening within them, enabling them to see the events of the past few days.... with the eyes of faith.

Like the disciples of Emmaus, we, too, have our own ideas of Jesus Christ, his message and his church. We, too, are conditioned by our upbringing, early education, culture and life experience. The disciples could not recognize Jesus as long as their mindsets about who He was and what He was to do were in place. When Jesus demolished their blindness with his explanation of the scriptures, their vision of him began to assume a more realistic tone. The price of recognizing Jesus is always the same: our idea of Him, of the Church, of the spiritual journey, of God himself has to be shattered. To see with the eyes of faith we must be free of our culturally-conditioned mindsets.

When I was wondering along that road, wondering, where was I going and why. My memory was triggered back to my youthful inquisitiveness I started researching my ancestors and the heritage that they left me.

John Spotswood, the Archbishop of Glasgow and Saint Andrews, was chancellor of Scotland responsible for the passage of the five Articles of Perth

confirming the Episcopal government. In 1638, he was deposed and excommunicated by the Glasgow General Assembly.

Five Articles of Perth 1. The sacrament of the body and blood of Christ should be received kneeling 2. It might be administered in private to the sick 3. When infants could not conveniently be baptized in church they might be baptized at home. 4. Children being eight years old, and after being instructed in the Lord's Prayer, Creed, Ten Commandments, and Catechism, should be brought to the bishop on his visitation, to be examined in the religious knowledge, and to receive his blessing. 5. The days commemorative of Christ's birth, passion, resurrection, ascension, and the sending down of the Holy Ghost should be kept in devout observance.

Like the two disciples on the Road that day reflecting back on things that they heard, witnessed and felt sparked their realization of Christ and the clarity of His promises. It was those early conversations I had as a child about my ancestors, the Five Articles of Perth, that drew me to the Episcopal Church and gave me the realization that I am home, I am where I came from.

When we let go of our private and limited vision, He who has been hidden from us by our pre-packaged values and pre-conceived ideas causes the scales to fall from our eyes. He was there all the time. Now at last we perceive his Presence. With the transformed vision of faith, we return to the humdrum routines and duties of daily life, but now, like Mary Magdalene, we recognize God giving himself to us in everyone and in everything.

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask, or imagine: Glory to him from generations in the Church, and in Christ Jesus forever and ever. Amen.

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