

Acts 2: 14a,36-41 Luke 24: 13-35

All of us are on a journey of faith. Sometimes we move quickly along the road; sometimes we slow up, or even get stuck in a rut. A lot depends on life's circumstances and how we respond to them.

In many ways the journey to Emmaus reflects our own journey as Christians, so it is helpful to look at what happened to Cleopas and his companion on the road. It is possible that Cleopas was Joseph's younger brother. I have always assumed his companion was another man, but it may well have been his wife – another Mary; and maybe they were returning to their home in Emmaus.

They were troubled and deep in discussion about what had happened in Jerusalem. Events had been totally different to what they had been hoping for. Doesn't that too reflect our own lives? We have hopes which are dashed. We can become depressed and puzzled, downcast. We don't realize that Jesus is in fact walking alongside us, wanting to engage in conversation. Jesus often wants us to voice our concerns to him even though he already knows what they are. It is helpful to still voice our worries and problems.

In the story Jesus asks Cleopas and his companion what they are talking about. Now is not the time to reveal who he really is. They are surprised that this stranger doesn't appear to know what has happened in Jerusalem, but on being asked 'what things?' they proceed to relate what is really puzzling them. People who are worried need to speak and, like Jesus, it can be helpful if we ask them for greater clarity. It is one way of giving support.

These two on the road to Emmaus are only too willing to talk. Like many others, they had hoped that Jesus was somehow going to free Israel from Roman occupation, but instead he had been crucified. Their hopes were dashed, and now there was this strange story of Jesus still being alive. They couldn't understand what was going on.

I imagine Jesus' comment on how foolish they were and slow to believe what the prophets had said, was not said in a nasty way. It is interesting that they had referred to Jesus as a prophet of God, but now Jesus speaks of the Messiah, not prophet, who had to suffer all these things and then enter into his glory, and he begins to explain the scriptures to them. Since his resurrection Jesus was still doing his father's work. His followers had to truly understand how all Jewish scripture had been pointing towards himself and all he had to go through.

Their hearts were warmed as Jesus spoke. Christians are always in need of having scripture explained, but the Bible is a living book, the living word of God; and God himself, like Jesus on the road to Emmaus, can also speak directly to us through the Holy Spirit as we read the Bible for ourselves.

These two companions on the road, like many of us, had hoped for a miracle in their lives. They had wanted to be free FROM suffering, but now they were being told that redemption

would be THROUGH suffering instead, as Jesus hung on the cross. The Resurrection would follow as the true miracle.

Finally, they arrive at Emmaus and Jesus is asked to stay with them. Suddenly, in the breaking of bread, their eyes are opened, and they see who Jesus really is. He disappears but they have seen and now understand what Jesus has revealed to them.

If we ourselves look at the beginning of scripture we see that Adam and Eve too had had their eyes opened, but for them it had been to a perception of their own sin as they had eaten the forbidden fruit. Now, in the breaking of bread, the two at Emmaus have had their eyes opened to the fact that Jesus' own body had been given, so sin could be dealt with and eternal life restored.

On our own journey along the road of faith we too can fail to see Jesus alongside us, and we can fall down the proverbial potholes as our own expectations and hopes are dashed; but then a new revelation of scripture and the meeting of Christ in the breaking of bread, may fill us afresh with hope and excitement. Then, like the two at Emmaus, we want to rush out and tell others what we have experienced.

In our first reading Peter too explained scripture to the crowds; Jesus, whom they had crucified, was both Lord and Messiah. The crowds were cut to the heart, by the realization of what they had done, and cried out to Peter and the other apostles, asking what they must now do. The answer was to repent and be baptised, in Jesus' name. Forgiveness would be given, along with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise was not only for them, but is a continued promise to all of us – centuries later. It is our journey, and a message to others who are willing to hear the Good News we have to offer, and then to travel along the road themselves.