

Discovering Jesus on the Road to Emmaus

Good morning. I hope you are well. Today I have the opportunity to share with you the wonderful story of the road to Emmaus. This is a story well known to many and thought by some to be the world's biggest practical joke! Of Jesus hiding his identity from his friends before finally giving the game away...

I mean how many of us could talk to our friends without pretty early on giving the game away that it was indeed us. If you're anything like how Amy plays hide and seek, you've given the game away before daddy has finished counting! "I'm here!" "It's me – come and find me!"

This is a truly wonderful passage that illustrates the radical transformation that occurs in the hearts and minds of the travellers as they encounter Jesus on the Road to Emmaus. As with a caterpillar to a butterfly, we get a look inside the chrysalis of their minds and see God at work in changing their world view and transforming their lives.

In a moment let's read the passage and find out what happened. As we know, in the preceding passage Mary and the others have just found the stone rolled away, the tomb empty, angels appearing to them, rushing back to tell all the others and Peter rushing to the tomb to see for himself. We join the journey at verse 13...

Luke 24; 13-35

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

Greatest Practical joke..... ever!

Do you see what I mean by the greatest practical joke – ever! I think I would have given in here. Well, yes I am the only one visiting here in a new resurrected body. Check it out! But no, he bit his tongue and went with their questions.

Carrying on....

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."

1. Discovering that Jesus wasn't what they thought he was! Our freedom-fighter? But....

If we can imagine for one second what was going through Cleopas and the other person's minds, it might go something like this. We, the Jewish people, are under Roman authority and rule. We are looking for and hoping for a freedom-fighter – someone to lead us into the rebellion against Roman rule and redeem or purchase our God-given right to freedom. But the guy we thought was going to do this has just died on us! The guy we thought was going to gather an army, increase in authority and take back our land and free us from suffering has just been completely humiliated. He has actually suffered the most undignified death someone could suffer under Roman rule. He died on the cross – crucified and died along with our hopes for a redeemer! Let's carry on the story....

²¹And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place."

In Luke 18;33-34 Jesus says,

²³they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again."²⁴The disciples did not understand any of this."

Just may be they are now beginning to understand. You can see there is a glimmer of hope and a large dollop of bewilderment. It is just starting to dawn on them what Jesus was trying to tell them!

²²In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

2. Discovering Jesus brought Freedom NOT from suffering - - - - - BUT Freedom in suffering.

Ok, have you still not got it? Can you imagine being rebuked/challenged by Jesus! Life is so easy with hindsight! It all adds up easily to us, but for these guys, their worldview was being turned upside down. They had been plowing headlong into the idea that Jesus had come to free them from suffering, free them from Roman rule, free them to live in a utopia of an Israelite state again.

And yet, what was happening did not add up – Jesus was explaining to them through the old testament passages about himself and how he was meant to suffer – this was part of the plan. That he was freeing them through suffering – through his death on the cross. And perhaps, they were being called to do the same?

Freeing them to live life differently. Freeing them where they were, surrounded by the governments, their friends, living in the same houses, going about their usual business. To be radically transformed from the inside out, within the chrysalis of their hearts and minds, even if their external circumstances remained the same.

I think we can go easy on ourselves when we find ourselves in a place of doubt or confusion about what God is doing in our lives. It can be hard, if not impossible to see what is happening. But maybe God is freeing us not from our current circumstances but to find freedom in the midst of them.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going,”

3. Discovering Jesus calls us NOT to run from the storm BUT stand in the eye of the storm....

The village they were going to was called Emmaus, was about 7 miles outside of Jerusalem and was thought to mean “bath” or “hot springs”. No one knows quite why they were going there – whether it was just somewhere not Jerusalem, possibly they were going home or perhaps they were visiting friends there.

It makes you wonder whether, after all the comings and goings of the previous 3 days, these guys simply wanted to get away. Go somewhere that had a hot spring, or somewhere that was a bit quieter – somewhere they could find comfort and peace in.

I have often opted for this route of coping with stress in my life. When the storms hit, the temptation is to get away, go to a peaceful place and hope God will remove our stresses and storms. But God has been challenging me in recent years to stand. To stand in the eye of storm and experience a new peace. If you can imagine a hurricane or tornado – when you’re in one of these, the calmest place can be right in the middle. Wikipedia describes the eye of the storm like this;

“The eye is a region of mostly calm weather at the centre of strong [tropical cyclones](#)... It is surrounded by the eyewall, a ring of towering [thunderstorms](#) where the most severe weather occurs.... In strong tropical cyclones, the eye is characterized by light winds and clear skies...”

When I was growing up, I would often look for comfort and distraction from my anxiety in watching TV and spending time away from others. At the height of TV watching, I would return from school switch on the TV and watch from 4.30 through to 7-8pm! Short land street (kiwi sitcom), neighbours, home and away followed by other random programmes and then moving onto Emmerdale or whatever else was on! An exciting life I was leading eh?! But of course, I soon found that that was no comfort at all and ended up leading to healthier habits and ever-increasing anxiety. I found no comfort in this venture.

But Jesus began showing me how loved I was, and even more than that how I could have peace and wholeness as I stepped out into the life he had for me. It wasn't a life free from feeling anxious, free from loss or mistakes or storms. It would involve – many ups and downs within relationships, medicine, church and family. It would involve standing! Not running away, not hiding, but standing in the life God had given me.

It was a life with him, it is a life walked together. A life lived in the eye of the storm. Why not allow God to help you stand in the eye of the storm AND then move with the storm – not trying to escape, but allowing God to use the storms in your life to bring about change in you.

David says in Psalm 23,

"...He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me..."

Can I ask you, are you on the road to Emmaus? Looking for peace in your surroundings? Or are you beginning to see the hope you can have in Jesus in amidst all the storms of life?

Let's continue...

"Jesus continued on as if he were going farther.²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

Has it really not dawned on them yet??

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

4. Discovering that with Jesus, You'll never walk alone....

Ahhhhhhh! Yes that makes sense! His job is done.

God has been showing himself to us ever since this fateful day 2000 years ago and before this. For whatever reason, life can put the blinkers on our sight and we forget the ways God has revealed himself to us – what evidence has he provided you that he is with you – that you will never walk alone?

Take a moment now to remind yourself of the times when your hearts burned within you. The times when you knew God was there, God was speaking. May be he has healed you in some way, maybe he has given you a word of knowledge for someone which has made a big difference to that person, may be a prophetic word about the future which has come true, may be it is reading the accounts of Jesus and understanding who he is or through the immense complexities and majesty of creation. However he is speaking to you, God is reminding you that he is with you – you will never walk alone. And finally...

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread."

5. Discovering Jesus' shalom in your life!

And so we come to the finale. The moment they recognised their encounter with Jesus, they were off like a shot! They had a story to tell. And they knew where they needed to go. They headed to the eye of the storm, to the place that means wholeness, that means deep peace. Jerusalem.

The word originates from a word that means foundation of shalem, being the name of a local god. The Hebrews retained the name as it sounded an awful lot like one of their words shalom. Shalom is a difficult word to explain as it better describes a state of being. Shalom is what happens when we are complete, when we are whole. It is the deepest sense of peace and wholeness that you could possibly imagine and then some!

The process of shalom is more akin to the energetic, pressured, explosive process of fusion – of fusing two atoms into one new atom. The final state is stable and peaceful, but the process is far from peaceful. The tension each one of us has inside – do I live for my own glory or for God's, do I chose to put others before myself or do I do as I please?

There is going to be a bumpy ride but the good news is that Jesus will be there in our suffering, our stresses and our storms, in our doubts, in our decisions and in our every day. Bringing us through to a place of peace and wholeness.

Looking at your life now, have you discovered that Jesus is your freedom fighter, but not as you thought he might be – that he is freeing you not from your circumstances but in

your circumstances? That Jesus is calling you to stand in the eye of the storm of your life? That he is with you, you will never walk alone. And that Jesus is bringing about radical transformation in your life through these storms, changing you from the inside out – implanting in you his wholeness, his peace, his shalom?

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