

Resurrection Remembrances
Meditations on Fear and Confusion
Luke 24:13-35
April 18, 2021

1. A Disciple Like Us

We had not been expecting him...and yet we had. We were frightened, because he had been killed and they might be looking for us. Then when some of the women said that they had seen him, we were more frightened than ever. We had denied him, abandoned him, watched him die at a distance, and kept quiet about our previous association. What would he do with us now?

We sat huddled in an upstairs room, locked away from the world, afraid of 'them', afraid of him, sitting silently with the lock on the door. But he came and unlocked every door with his unexpected words, "Peace...Peace be with you. I am sending you out..."

Reflection

In his book, **Lifesigns**, the late Henri Nouwen spoke of us living in the house of fear rather than the house of love. He saw that fear had invaded every corner of our lives. Fear, Nouwen claims, victimizes and controls many of us. It can drive many to despair, depression and even suicide. He goes on to the bold claim that, "most of us people of the twentieth century live in the house of fear most of the time." Fear can be created by persons: a domineering father, spouse, sibling, boss, or by some authority figure, even God. Our news media are stocked full of items that generate fear in us. Yet, often fear is simply manufactured by our worrying dispositions; these keep us awake at night and keep us on edge during our days. It's all those 'what if's' that haunt our lives that cripple us. Fear prevents us from developing intimacy. It disables us from coming together and sharing our lives. How do we move out of this house of fear into the house of love?

These followers of Jesus had a good reason to be afraid. Their lives were threatened by association with this pretend Messiah. They might be next for the ax. Many of them were Galileans and were a

dead giveaway by their rough accents. There was nowhere to run.

What are your fears this morning? Wasn't old Job who said troubles come as naturally as sparks fly upwards. If life goes along too smoothly, we become suspicious and wonder to ourselves when the next load of trouble will be deposited at our door. Most of our fears result, I suspect, from our worry. Probably a high percentage of our fears never materialize. We like to worry about tomorrow. Jesus once said that it was pointless to worry about tomorrow, for today's troubles are more than enough to keep us occupied.

Where does faith play in this tangled, dark underworld of our psyche's? Is it possible for Jesus to unlock all the entrances into our protective selves and speak peace to us? Is it possible for us to carve out space in our faith community for an honest sharing with our brothers and sisters? Do our small groups provide a level of trust, love and spiritual sensitivity for us to learn to share our burdens with one another? If not, why not?

Jesus stood in their midst. It was in community that Jesus spoke peace to them. Jesus doesn't stand 'over' them or against them. He stands among them showing that he is one with them. He first shows them his wounds, pointing out that he is involved in the burden and cost of being human. He stands with them and goes with them. And so he does with us.

Jesus speaks peace and stands among them and us. Don't be afraid, he tells them and us, I've got a job for you to do. After breathing on them the Spirit, he sends them out. The world outside that they moments ago feared, now becomes their mission field. So, we too must ask, where is the Lord in this situation we face? At home, at work, at our board meeting, at our committee meeting, where is our Lord? By asking the question we open ourselves to Christ's presence.

2. Cleopas & Companion

There were two of us, walking together, walking away from it all; wailing and talking, no... more than talking...arguing, arguing and almost falling out. Is this just your usual couple disagreement? We

agreed on what had happened, we knew what had happened, we were there. But what did it mean? The kind of revolution we wanted was not what we were given. And if he had set Israel free, why was he not around to proclaim its liberation? So, it was good to have the company of a stranger, who was as interested in current affairs as ourselves. It was good to have somebody make sense of our confusion, draw together the loose threads we had forgotten. Though it wasn't until we sat down to share a meal, that our confusion really ended. It was the breaking of the bread and the wine and the giving thanks that opened our eyes. That's when we knew it was him. You cannot imagine just how overwhelming this was for us. It was like a dream!

Reflection

As most of us know by experience, confusion seems to have a powerful influence on us today. Perhaps it's the result of the information explosion. Perhaps it's the result of the loss of social cohesion which we once enjoyed a generation ago where uniformity and community were staples of our lives. Now we are no longer rooted in a single vision of life. In this multi-cultural society there is no longer a common set of ideas that guide us. We grope to find clear answers amid a diversity of opinion and religions. There seems to be no centre anymore.

In the midst of this shifting, increasingly individualistic society, we find ourselves burdened by confusion. How are we to live? What will be our guide? The ones we make up around our dinner tables, or ones that have universal application? And if universal, which ones? What to believe? Even in church we find confusion about basic questions of faith and life.

To do this we need to listen again to the conversation between the couple on the road to Emmaus and the stranger who met them. If we listen closely, we will hear that Jesus must be understood as part of a much bigger story. We have to locate him within the Jewish scriptures and their faith traditions. It is the story that Jesus himself learned at his mother's knee and in the synagogue in Nazareth.

Let's remind ourselves afresh what this story is about. It is a story of

God choosing the family of Abraham through whom the world would be blessed. But it doesn't seem like a very successful story. Israel loses its way and end up in exile, a captivity that extends into Jesus' time: the empires of Assyria, Persia, Greece and finally Rome ruled Israel's lives and conquered their beloved Jerusalem. Into this political and social world of Roman power stepped a young peasant from Galilee proclaiming that the kingdom of God had arrived.

But he was dead! The stranger responds to their disenchantment. Their hope had died with Jesus' crucifixion. The stranger responds to their disillusionment: ***Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. (Luke 24:25ff)***

Finally, it was in the breaking of bread, a prayer, a presence, that confusion lifted. It was in their recognition of him that the fog dissipated. On the journey Jesus had opened up to them the meaning of his life and death from the Old Testament Scriptures. But it took a sitting around a table, a prayer and a presence for this to finally sink in. It was from this unfolding of God's plan that confusion was swept away.

So it shall ever be for us. In the Word, the living presence of God by the Spirit, Jesus makes himself known. In community, around a table where words are spoken, symbols shared, prayers offered, in these actions of communion, does clarity and life-giving words attend. Amid all the words we hear each day, the continuous babel of words by the latest experts on life, amid all these words comes this one word from God. And in the reception of this word by faith comes clarity and meaning. We no longer need to ask what the meaning of it all is. Finally, we know. We are part of this long, long story of God and Israel, of the prophets and Jesus. This is the story we can hang our lives on because it is true. Jesus is alive!

Amen