

Easter 2, 2007
KI Evensong
15 April 2007

Psalm 16. Preserve me O God. Fair ground.
Isaiah 52:13-53:12. Awake, etc. Zion etc. Despised etc. All the Messiah stuff.
Luke 24:13-35. Emmaus road.

This morning was Thomas, and now Emmaus.

Recognising Christ and being receptive to his instruction.

Gloomy disciples. Talking to a stranger. Letting the stranger explain to them.
Still not recognising.

Desolation of Emmaus

Jesus did not escape, we cannot escape.

We crucify ourselves by doing things that were done to Jesus: we deny the truth like Peter, we pass the buck like Pilate, we side with the majority in choosing evil like the crowd. We crucify Jesus and we crucify ourselves, that divine core within. And when the enormity and seriousness of what we've done strikes home, we are sick in the stomach.

It is at such moments that we're in the empty tomb, we are the empty tomb. We know the desolation of Mary Magdalene when she says 'they have taken away my Lord.' This is the true Mary speaking, completely open, completely vulnerable. It is at these empty-tomb moments that we too are at our most open and most vulnerable. We lose the outer crust of self, just as at the resurrection, Jesus' left the outer crust of earthly body.

Present in our darkest moments

Footprints in the sand

The Lord appeared to the disciples at a time of great turmoil and confusion in their lives. He taught them truths that were appropriate to their particular states, and when they received those truths, and made them their own, He appeared to them, replacing their confusion with deep understanding, and their sorrow with joy.

Unsure of where we are going, or how.
One foot in front of another.
He walks with us for a while in our journey through life.

Open-ness to the unfamiliar

The disciples could have remained wrapped up in their own conversation and ignored the stranger who traveled with them, but they did not, they sought His opinion.

Certainly, that is a temptation that we face in our journey through life. The combination of extremely attractive forms of home entertainment, and a growing sense of fear and mistrust of strangers tends to keep us at home in our leisure time.

Recognised by doing not necessarily speaking

Breaking of bread

It may not be in what you say that people recognise God
You never know who it is next to you
You can predict what effect an action will have
Medical students visiting me

As soon as we recognise him, he vanishes

Light bulb moments
Temptations about showing off
Crucifixion being about what we do to ourselves
Peace and forgiveness are the same thing

Invitation

The disciples invited Jesus to stay with them. So must we. If we don't, He will continue on His way. We have to consciously invite Him in to eat with us, that is, we must appropriate good to ourselves.

What happens?

In the garden, the risen Jesus asks the desolate Mary what troubles her, but through her tears she doesn't recognize him. Not unreasonably, she supposes him to be the gardener.

AND SO HE IS.

He weeds out whatsoever is unclean or unsavoury, sows and plants them with true roots and seeds of righteousness, waters them with the dew of His grace, and makes them bring forth fruit to eternal life.

In the desolation of our vulnerable and unprotected selves at empty-tomb moments, renewal begins. Christ couldn't escape the horror of crucifixion, and neither can we escape the pain of losing self; it's a necessary prerequisite for healing, salvation.

In the freshly weeded garden, new life sprouts. The young saplings are watered by Mary's tears, by our tears. Our empty vessels are filled to overflowing by the river of life from Christ's pierced side. *See, the stream of living waters, springing from eternal love, well supply thy sons and daughters, And all fear of want remove. Who can faint while such a river ever flows?*

Just sit there and be filled, and be freed from the cocoon of ego, freed to seek the delightful. Be freed to change course and lose the attachments that tether us to ego and closed-mindedness, the cause of all the diseases of humanity.

And this new growth happens every day.

- The joy that we find in work and that transforms its tears and sweat into happiness and delight.
- The wonder and curiosity that welcomes what's new and regards it not as threatening but enriching.
- The confidence that lets us abandon the shelter of our disguises and defences, and open the doors of our personality so that others can enter, both we and they richer for the contact.
- The conviction that in spite of all the suffering we witness or undergo, the cosmos is on our side, and works not for our destruction but for our fulfilment.

All this is resurrection, all this is Easter, all this is Christ Jesus the gardener at work. All this is GOOD NEWS. All this is PEACE, reconciliation.