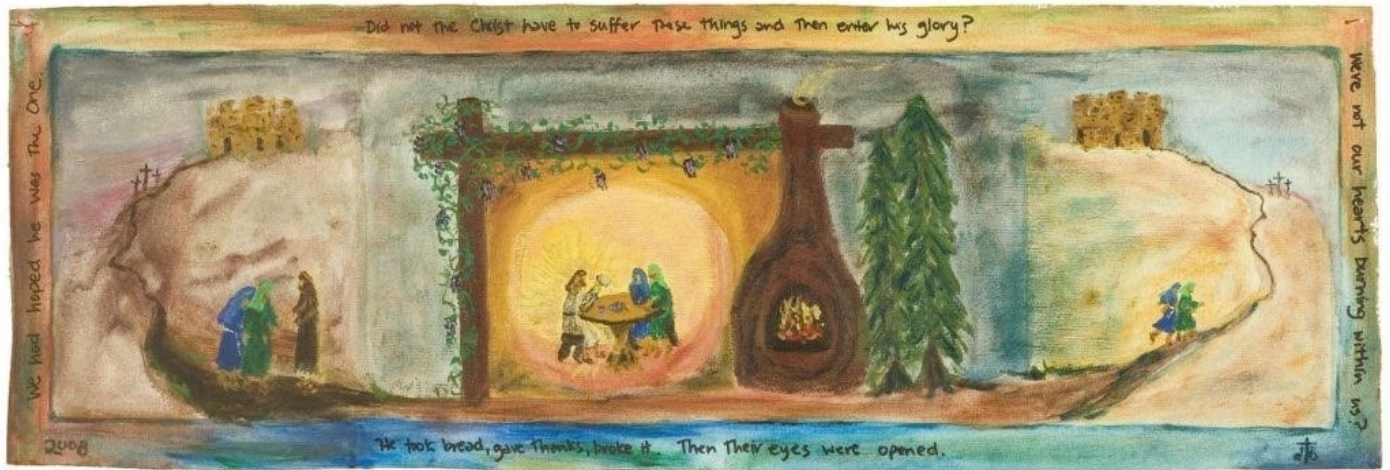


On the road and at the table with Jesus

2021-04-11 by Major Deborah Coles



Hello Friends,

1. [Please read Luke 24. 15 – 36.](#)
2. Some material is borrowed and/or adapted. I give references.
3. I learn from stories and pictures. I hope you will find some blessing or useful thought in the following story, comments, and collection of pictures.
4. In French, a group of men is 'ils'. A group of women is 'elles'. A group of men AND women is 'ils'. When a translation says, "two of them," many readers and commentators assumed that it was two men. The NASB translates verse 25 as "You foolish men...". (Most other translations use "foolish ones.") However, there is some evidence that it could be a man and wife on the road to Emmaus. This makes sense to me. As well, Luke often highlights women, and often recounts Jesus telling stories that pair women and men.
5. So, this retelling of the walk to Emmaus pictures a husband, Cleopas, with his wife, Mary. I use The English Standard version and The Message translations of the Bible.

The couple on the road is exhausted. Their eyes feel like hot, dry holes in their faces.

They are talking, trying to make sense of everything. Nobody in their group had expected Jesus to die, despite what He had told them. What they had expected was that He would save them from the harsh rule of the Romans.

The conversation is occasionally interrupted by hiccupping sobs as Mary remembers the hours she had spent near the Cross with the “other Mary’s” - Mary, Jesus’ mother, and Mary Magdalene.

She is flooded with grief - desert-like, tearless grief. Cleopas and Mary rehearse the details of the worst days of their lives, beginning with Jesus’ arrest, then the blatantly illegal trials and beatings He’d endured. Then the Cross.

When Jesus had committed His spirit into His Father’s hands, it was almost time for Sabbath to begin. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea had done their best for Him after they took Him down from the Cross. But they had to hurry. The cleaning and wrapping of his precious body had to be done before Sabbath began at sunset.

Sabbath was an eerily quiet day, when the women quietly put together what resources they had so they could properly prepare Jesus’ body for burial.

The women spent the long, sad hours of the Sabbath arranging to go and finish anointing Jesus body the next day. Even when they hear rumours of a great stone placed at the entrance of the cave, they know they have to try.

Then, very early on Sunday morning, their world turns upside down again. His body is missing! Missing? The tomb is empty! Empty? Where had they put His body?

Everything is confusing – women disciples race back and forth from the tomb to the house where the disciples were mourning together – men disciples race from the house to the tomb, finding it empty just as Mary Magdalene and the other women had claimed. There are stories of angels appearing and sightings of Jesus, but WHERE IS HE? It is all too much to comprehend.

The shock and sorrow of the past few days, and the uncertainty of this day, are almost unbearable. Cleopas decides to take his wife home to Emmaus to get some rest.

In the midst of their weary walk and confused conversation, a Stranger joins them.

It is not uncommon for people who are traveling to attach themselves to a group. Walking alone wasn't always safe. And so Jesus Himself draws near.

But Cleopas and Mary are so wrapped up in grief, that they don't recognize him. "They are kept from recognizing Him," Luke tells us in v.16. What would 'keep' them from recognizing Him? Is it their unbelief? Is He somehow changed? Some commentators believe that Cleopas is the brother of Jesus' earthly father, Joseph. That would make Cleopas and Mary were His uncle and aunt! How could they not recognize him?

The Stranger asks, "Why are you so sad?"

Cleopas responds, "Can you be the only one traveling from Jerusalem that doesn't know what's going on?"

"Tell me", says the Stranger, "What has happened?"

Their answer is a list of all that they don't understand.

They say, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."

The Stranger is patient. He LISTENS. He meets them where they are. He hears their hearts.

When their words run out, He speaks: “Oh, foolish ones.” It is a mild scolding. “So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can’t you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don’t you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?”

Then he starts at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and goes on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that refer to Him.

Now, this couple knows these Scriptures. They are familiar with the texts, but it is the Stranger who puts it all together for them. He makes the connections between the Messianic prophecies and the things they had seen in Jesus.

For example, maybe He reminded them that He would be the offspring of the woman, who would crush the head of the serpent. (Genesis 3:15) He might have reminded them of the promise to Abraham in Genesis 22 that God would provide the lamb for sacrifice; He probably pointed out that He was the Passover Lamb that was prescribed to deliver them from death in Exodus 12; that He was the scapegoat of Leviticus 16 that was offered for the atonement of the people; and that He was the brazen serpent that was lifted up on a pole in Numbers 21.

When He had reviewed the books of Moses with them, He moved to the Prophets. He showed how He was the suffering servant in Isaiah 50; and how He was the one ‘ripped and torn and crushed’ by our sins in Isaiah 53.

Amazing!

The conversation – or history lesson - is kindling their curiosity as they arrive at home. It is partly due to their culture of hospitality that they press Him to stay. It’s understood that you don’t send a guest away at suppertime.

But also, they are eager to hear more. Something has set their hearts aflame. The numbness and grief and weariness are subsiding.

It seems natural that the Stranger becomes the host at their simple supper. He takes, blesses, breaks, and gives them the bread.

Suddenly, memories erupt. **Jesus** had fed the crowds just like this! “He took the five loaves and two fish, lifted his face to heaven in prayer, blessed, broke, and gave the bread and fish to the disciples to hand out to the crowd. After the

people had all eaten their fill, twelve baskets of leftovers were gathered up.”
(Luke 9.15-17)

A flash of insight: sitting right here is Jesus! Did they recognize the scars in His wrists as His sleeves fell back while He took and blessed the bread?

And just as they grasp the reality of His identity... He's gone!

It's important to note that Jesus 'shows up' in the ordinary: along the way, at a simple supper. And He 'show up' in their hospitality; although He was a stranger to them (as far as they knew) yet they took Him in.

Weariness forgotten and with burning hearts (someone called it 'holy heartburn'!) they race back to Jerusalem to find the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away. Excitement is sparking among the group.

Their friends burst out: "It's true! It's really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!"

This story raises 3 questions.

Question One: Why didn't Cleopas and Mary recognize Jesus? Why did He wait to reveal Himself?

Jon Bloom of Desiring God says, "Now, Jesus fully intended to help them see. But notice the priority of Jesus' revelation: before he opened their physical eyes, he purposed to open their heart-eyes.

Why? Because it was of utmost importance that they "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Jesus knew that between his resurrection and the full establishment of his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven, would be the church age. His ascension was nearing. That meant this couple, all the other witnesses of the resurrection, and every generation of believers to come, would not have his bodily presence for proof or guidance. They would have to rely on his "living and active" (Hebrews 4:12) Word to "light [their] path" (Psalm 119:105). After his Ascension, Jesus would be seen through the inerrant testimony recorded in the Scriptures and the imperfect testimony of followers whose heart-eyes were opened."

How well do we know the Scriptures? When things happen that we don't expect - I'm thinking in particular of COVID and all the fearfulness and suffering and restrictions that come with it - do we lose our faith?

Jesus wanted Cleopas and Mary and all believers to trust first in His word. When He was not with them in way they knew, they needed to remember Scripture.

Question Two: Are we able to recognize Jesus in the everyday matters of our lives? Do we see Him "along the way, and in the breaking of bread?"

Still today Jesus reveals Himself in miraculous ways. But we also need to be aware of Him in ordinary life. We need to be aware of Him along the way (wherever we are) and in the breaking of bread (whatever we are doing).

Question Three: In what ways can we practise hospitality? Hospitality is one of the ways we show Jesus to our world.

Paul says in Romans 12. 13c: Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

These days we're not free to welcome others into our homes. Depending on the level of COVID restrictions, we may not even be able to meet for coffee at Tim's. So, we need to be "inventive in hospitality." How can we make both friends and strangers feel at home with us?

My suggestions are not very "inventive." Phone and email each other, or send cards! If you bake, reach out to your neighbours with a gift of cookies. If you crochet, maybe you can leave a cheery note attached to a dishcloth in someone's mailbox.

The Holy Spirit will spark creativity in us with ideas and the spunk we need to carry them out!

Let's pray. Our Father in Heaven, we thank You for Your perfect ways and perfect timing.

We see Your unchanging goodness through the years of our lives and through Your Word. We know that You can be trusted.

Lord, we long to feel You near to us. Open our ears to hear Your voice, and our eyes to recognize you in our everyday life. Give us eagerness to read Your Word.

Set our hearts on fire for you, so that filled with Your love, we may reach out to others and offer them hospitality.

Songbook: (old) (Listen to Chelmsford Songsters
www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJluW0m3M50)

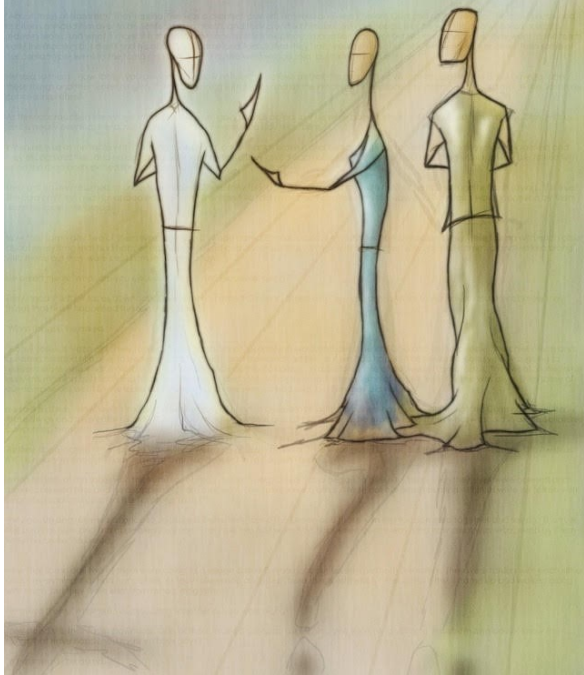
I set out a pilgrim sad at heart To walk a lonely road;
Doubt had marr'd my simple trusting, Doubt a future ill forebode;
And as I pondered o'er my grief, My shattered hopes and unbelief,
A Stranger, to my soul's relief, Drew near and walked with me.

I deign'd not to raise my drooping eyes, Nor sought to learn His name,
Tho' His voice, like heav'nly music Set this heart of mine aflame.
He seemed to read my every thought, To know the pain my fears had wrought.
And with His gentle words He brought An atmosphere of peace.

The shadows of evening fell apace, New dangers lay ahead;
But, with my Companion walking, I no longer felt their dread.
I begged Him ne'er to quit my side, With me to constantly abide;
In gracious tones my Lord replied, 'My peace I leave with thee.'

Jesus himself drew near,
When alone on the road,
Oppress'd by my load,
Jesus himself drew near and walked with me.

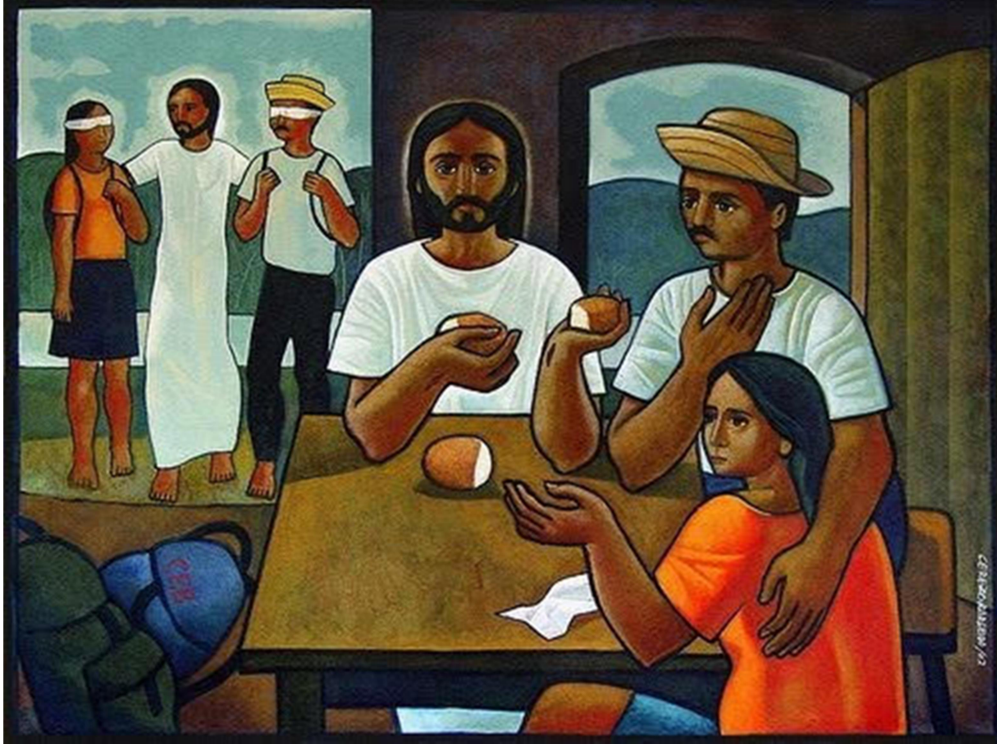
Picture gallery: (which ones of the 5 do you like?)



“Stay with us; it’s nearly evening...”



“And their eyes were opened....”



“On the way, and at the table with Jesus...”



“Did not our hearts burn within us?”