



Daily Reflections

April 30, 2017

Scripture

Luke 24: 13-35

That very day, the first day of the week,
two of Jesus' disciples were going
to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus,
and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.
And it happened that while they were conversing and debating,
Jesus himself drew near and walked with them,
but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

He asked them,

"What are you discussing as you walk along?"

They stopped, looking downcast.

One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply,

"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem

who does not know of the things

that have taken place there in these days?"

And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"

They said to him,
"The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene,
who was a prophet mighty in deed and word
before God and all the people,
how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over
to a sentence of death and crucified him.
But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel;
and besides all this,
it is now the third day since this took place.
Some women from our group, however, have astounded us:
they were at the tomb early in the morning
and did not find his body;
they came back and reported
that they had indeed seen a vision of angels
who announced that he was alive.
Then some of those with us went to the tomb
and found things just as the women had described,
but him they did not see."
And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are!
How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!
Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things
and enter into his glory?"
Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interpreted to them what referred to him
in all the Scriptures.
As they approached the village to which they were going,
he gave the impression that he was going on farther.
But they urged him, "Stay with us,
for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over."
So he went in to stay with them.
And it happened that, while he was with them at table,
he took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them.
With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him,
but he vanished from their sight.
Then they said to each other,

"Were not our hearts burning within us
while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?"
So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem
where they found gathered together
the eleven and those with them who were saying,
"The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"
Then the two recounted
what had taken place on the way
and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Our Scripture Reflection

Luke makes one very important point in this beautiful Easter story: If you wish to encounter Jesus, do what He did. Jesus broke the Bread and the disciples recognized Him. There are many other ways for you to encounter Him that are found in Matthew 25: 35-36: Each time you care for the needs of others, Jesus is there!

Food for your Journey

There have been many artistic renderings of the Emmaus story, but one of the most famous is "Supper at Emmaus" by Caravaggio. There's no mistaking the fact that Jesus dominates the painting. All the geometric lines in the painting's design point to him. Caravaggio captures the dramatic high point of the story -- the moment, after Jesus has broken the bread, when "their eyes were opened and they recognized him." There is surprise in the posture of the two disciples: one has thrown his arms open in astonishment, and the other is pushing his chair back from the table, abruptly standing up.

Trace a line from the eyes of the two disciples, and the sight-lines direct you to Jesus' hands, to the very place where the scars of the nails would have been visible. But they're not visible. Two fingers on Jesus' right hand are discreetly folded back, covering up the wound. The man to the right can see it, but we can't. As for Jesus' other hand, it's angled away and swathed in shadow. The other man appears to be looking directly at it, but again, we can't see the scar from our perspective.

There's an empty place at the table, at the foreground. It's almost as though there's another chair, just out of the frame of the picture. There's another place at the table. Whose is it?

The place is ours. The artist is inviting us right into the painting, to take our place at the supper-table and share the disciples' astonishment. A fruit basket at the front of the table is balanced precariously on the edge. It's a silent invitation: Come and eat.

But remember this: unlike the two disciples in the painting, we can't see Jesus' wounds. We are not firsthand witnesses to the resurrection, and never can be. Yet the artist invites us to take our place at the table, all the same.

The painting may be viewed here: wikimedia.org. Retrieved October 20, 2016.

A Prayer from the Heart

Precious Lord, Fill my heart with Your love so that I may serve the needs of others, especially the least in Your Kingdom. May I see Your Presence as I do. Amen.