

What Do You See? St. Luke 24:13-49

When life is crashing around you where do you go to get away? Do you find solace at Starbucks or Joe's bar? Do you run to the river or the mountains? Or do you escape into the latest novel or movie?

In our gospel lesson two walkers are trying to get away. Their planned trip to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover was more than they had expected and they thought they needed to 'get away.' These two were not counted among Jesus' twelve disciples, a week ago they had joined the crowd in laying palm branches at Jesus' feet shouting, "*Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*"

But the situation has gone downhill since Palm Sunday. The religious leaders have hooked up with the civil authorities and are plotting to have Jesus arrested. Jesus is brought before Pilate and Herod and the former is ready to release Jesus, as it is customary to release one prisoner before Passover. It looked to Pilate that things were going to work out after all.

But the crowd turned against Jesus and insisted Barabbas in place of Jesus. Pilate had Jesus beaten and crucified and placed in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. The twelve disciples ran off when things became violent and are hiding in the upper room, shaking in their sandals fearing the authorities are coming for them. Paranoia runs deep.

In St. Luke's gospel, the women came Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' body for burial; but they discovered the stone rolled away and the body had somehow disappeared. They ran back to report that angels had appeared to them, announcing that Jesus had been raised from the dead. But the men (as usual) dismissed their testimony as women's stories driven by grief. Everyone felt the chaos, the disappointment, and walked in circles of confusion. This was certainly not the Messiah they had expected.

Now, these two tired and dismayed men discussed what they had experienced attempting to understand what had just happened. As they walk a stranger joins them and inquires regarding what they are discussing. The two men are astounded that anyone could be unaware of what has happened in Jerusalem, but they bring this stranger up to date. And then, quite miraculously, the stranger interprets for them

everything the prophets said about Jesus.

When these two travelers arrive at their home they invite this stranger into their home and their hospitality. As they sit at table, the guest takes the bread, blesses it, broke it, and gave it to them. Suddenly, unexpectedly, they discover that the stranger is Jesus and at that "ah ha!" moment, Jesus disappears!

Isn't a wonder that when joy floods our life, grief disappears? I like to picture these two jumping up from the table, bumping into each other, rushing out the door, almost getting stuck in the door together, and then running full out back to Jerusalem to report what they had seen and experienced.

"The Lord is risen indeed!" they shouted. They can't finish the telling when Jesus stands among them again. The Disciples are scared stiff but Jesus' first words are *"Peace be with you."* He eats a meal with them to reassure them that it is he in the flesh, he reveals to them what Scripture says about him. *"You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."*

The next time these two travelers leave Jerusalem their journey is purposeful and filled with joy. *"I still cannot believe we were so blind. We thought we were helping a stranger when in reality we did not understand."* The other spoke, *"Yes, we thought Jesus' death was the end of the plans, not a vital part of it. Even after he explained it all to us, we didn't understand."*

"I can't believe we were so blind," one said. *"We thought we were telling Jesus all about what had happened, and in reality, we were the ones who still didn't understand."*

One traveler said, *"I know, we really did not see it. When we arrived home, I was so tired and confused, I only offered him hospitality out of obligation, and I was in no mood for company."*

The journey mate said, *"I think we should have seen him when, at dinner the guest became the host. Through these experiences I have learned some things. Last week we left the city defeated. I've discovered that Jesus meets us where we are, in the middle of our running away, our escape. That Jesus may come to us in unfamiliar ways and means and often when we least expect him."*

If the resurrection of Jesus teaches us anything it is that we can never put God in a box. God is never predictable. God is mysterious, living at the edge of our awareness and expectation. This does not mean that God is not present when you do not see God.

God is always with us. We can see God when we gather to worship, in the food bank, in the Senior Resource Center, the soup kitchen, at home, school, or on the road. We see God wherever good works are done. "Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia. Amen.