



The Supper at Emmaus - Rembrandt

When they came to Emmaus, he acted as if he was going on ahead. But they urged him, saying, "Stay with us. It's nearly evening, and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. After he took his seat at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. (Luke 24: 28-31)

"Emmaus never happened. Emmaus always happens." (John Dominic Crossan)

The Road to Emmaus story is one of my favorite New Testament passages. It is right up there with The Good Samaritan and Paul's closing chapter of his epistle to the Philippians. I love the imagery of the story. Cleopas and his unnamed companion are seemingly traveling toward their home in Emmaus. Who is the 2nd disciple? Is she/he someone we should know? It is conceivable – at least in the beginning of Luke Chapter 12 - that the two were in the room when Mary Magadele and two other women reported that "two men in gleaming bright clothing" informed them that Jesus had been raised (verse 6) ¹ These two disciples – maybe as members of the "all of the group" (Luke 24: 8) heard the women's report about Christ's Resurrection. Here's a shock – nobody in the room believed the women (verse 11).

One way or another, during Good Friday's terror and grief, Holy Saturday's silence, and the hopefully unbelievable news of Easter morning, Cleopas and his traveling companion were striving to make sense of their experiences with Jesus before his entry Jerusalem and the preceding days' shocking and irrational events.

It is then, in the crucible of faithful confusion, resilient aspiration, and impending despair when Jesus appears – at first unrecognizably. God's incarnate presence walks alongside of them. He teaches them along The Way on Easter Day just as he sought to do months before in Galilee. At day's end and as darkness approaches, he joins them for a sacred meal. He breaks and blesses bread and them before departing in many ways as he appeared to them – hours and months before. They depart with haste and return to Jerusalem to validate the women at the tomb's witness and the reality of Christ's resurrection!

¹ The Greek term used for resurrection here is *egeirō* - to arouse as if from sleep – awake as well as to recall the dead to life.



I learned something about ancient Jewish rituals as I was writing this article. The people of Israel celebrated their Sabbath with priests ritually consuming shewbread or “the bread of the arrangement.” (Lotha, 2011) The bakers prepared this “Bread of Presence” to offer a symbolic reality of God’s presence, material sustenance and abundance. The priests placed the bread on a uniquely designed table that was in the Tabernacle or Temple. They

temple priests consumed the bread that had been on the table for a week. They then replaced it with newly prepared bread for the coming week. (Kamiker, 2019). Early “Christ-believers” most likely reformed this tradition, and the bread became “The Bread of Life” as known in Christ’s presence in their midst. I appreciate this hypothesis because it honors God’s presence among God’s people as well as Jesus’ and his disciples’ Jewish ancestry. It likewise is sacramentally “real” when we commune with one another.

I have another idea that I can’t objectively prove. I read this text with an assumption that The Gospel of Luke’s author(s) invites the gospel’s readers to consider themselves to be the unnamed disciple. There are many assumptions about who [Cleopas](#) was, as well as the identity of the other traveler. We don’t have a video recording of this incident, even if it did occur. Let’s look at it in a different manner. It is quite important for us as contemporary Christians, especially during Eastertide, to capture, reflect, and act upon how God is showing up for us in (un)seen ways. What experiences in your life – especially the ones involving suffering, loss, and grief have given you a sense of rebirth, renewed joy, and resilient optimism. Victor Perton writes:

“At its core, optimism provides a framework that enables resilience, fostering an attitude that looks beyond immediate difficulties towards a brighter, more hopeful future. ... Optimism is not just about having a positive outlook; it is about fostering a mindset that views challenges as opportunities for growth.” (Perton, 2023)

Easter, beyond its significant salvific meanings, offers observable, “springtime” delights. The tree in the parish garden suddenly has newborn life. Forsythia is all over the place throughout Pennsylvania and Delaware. Lambs are being born all over Adams County’s farms Very Cool!

I'll close with a [Gerard Manley Hopkins](#) poem that I treasure. He was only 21 when he composed this piece It lyrically offers his sense of our travels from Lent into Easter, from Golgotha to Emmaus, and manifestations of joy for us to travel with now.

Easter Communion



Pure fasted faces draw unto this feast:
God comes all sweetness to your Lenten lips.
You striped in secret with breath-taking whips,
Those crooked rough-scored chequers may be pieced
To crosses meant for Jesu's; you whom the East
With draught of thin and pursuant cold so nips
Breathe Easter now; you serged fellowships,
You vigil-keepers with low flames decreased,

God shall o'er-brim the measures you have spent
With oil of gladness, for sackcloth and frieze
And the ever-fretting shirt of punishment
Give myrrhy-threaded golden folds of ease.
Your scarce-sheathed bones are weary of being bent:
Lo, God shall strengthen all the feeble knees.

Blessings along The Way, Jim+