

Sunday 23rd April 2023: Easter 3, Benefice HC Oswaldkirk

Think of the first meal in the Bible. The woman took some fruit and ate it, then gave some to her husband and he ate it, then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew they were naked, and for the first time, humankind experienced shame. This became the tragedy, the beginning of the woes of humankind, separation from God, our true state ruptured and corrupted. Sin and death had entered Eden and the whole creation had become subject to decay, futility, and sorrow. Human eyes, hearts and minds became shut to God. Only the loneliness and the yearning remained.

But, in our Gospel today Luke echoes the story and describes the first meal of the new creation, 'then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him'. This couple who had walked with a compelling and comforting stranger along the Emmaus Road, who had been captivated by him and his presence, had invited him in to stay with them, had now realized that the long curse had been broken. Death itself had been defeated, God's new creation brimming with life and joy had burst upon the world. Jesus had risen from the dead, had gone through death and into a new world, a redeemed creation, still physical but now transformed. Rescue was here.

Luke invites us too to study the Scriptures, to experience the same sense of our hearts burning within us as fresh truth comes out of old pages. We as a church sometimes forget that true study of the Bible is not just for the head or the intellect, it is to bring head and heart together, and set our hearts and minds on fire.

As it is in Word of Scripture it is also in sacrament and we are invited to know Jesus in the breaking of the bread, what started as a simple act which was to become and still

is the central action of believers in God's church. Scripture and sacrament, word and meal are joined together in communion. Take Scripture away, and the sacrament becomes a piece of ritual. Take the sacrament away, and scripture becomes an intellectual exercise, detached from real life and experience. Bring them together, completeness is achieved; head, heart and spirit come together and find joy.

Luke describes for us the new Exodus that Jesus accomplishes. His victory over sin and death leads God's people out of slavery and into a new existence. The Emmaus Road was just the beginning. Hearing the voice of Jesus in the Scriptures, knowing him in the breaking of bread, has become for us the way to salvation and eternal life.

Why? Because there is no place we can go where Jesus will not find us. On our road to Emmaus, whatever form it takes, by faith we know that Jesus meets us, walks with us, talks with us. He reminds us, He reassures us, He helps us make sense of things, or at least make peace with them. He tells us where there is fear, he is resurrecting faith, where there is suffering, he is resurrecting love, where there is hopelessness, he is resurrecting hope.

Alleluia He is Risen, He is Risen indeed, alleluia. Amen.