

## **The Emmaus Road**

**Years ago before I was ordained I worked as a nurse in a Public School. The patients who came in to the medical centre expected to see my colleague or me but because we worked opposite shifts they rarely saw us together. If we were both there they got really confused and stood in the doorway looking from one to the other of us unable to decide which of us to address with their problem. On the other hand if I walk through school with out my white coat on very few people recognise me. In a way this had its advantages, as I was not consulted about some unsavoury ailment just as I was about to embark on my lunch. I am sure there have been times when you have met someone out of context and they have greeted you warmly and you have been left wondering, quite unable to place him or her. What we do or do not expect to see so often influences our perception.**

**Buy a new bright yellow car and suddenly you will become aware of bright yellow cars driving round all over the place. Meet a familiar face walking along the promenade at Brighton and you are left bewildered and wracking your brains as to who they are and where you've seen them before.**

**I believe very firmly that the gospel writers always had a purpose in every thing they wrote. So why did Luke take pains to emphasise that on the walk to Emmaus the disciples failed to recognise Jesus. Was it that they were travelling west at sun set, so the sun was shining in their eyes? Was it that the disciples, on their way home, simply didn't expect to see Jesus? Or did Luke have some other purpose in stressing that "their eyes were kept from recognising him"?**

**Let's look at the story more closely.**

**It was the evening of the first Easter Day. The Passover Festival had finished and the two men were walking home from Jerusalem to Emmaus.**

**They were discussing the incidents of the last few days. All the things that had happened just did not make sense to them.**

**They had been followers of Jesus and full of expectation, particularly after the triumphant entry into Jerusalem.**

**They had hoped that he might be the promised Messiah the one who would finally break the oppression of the foreign occupation and free Israel to be the nation they wanted her to be.**

**But Good Friday had destroyed their hopes and dreams; their expectations had died on a cross in shame and agony.**

**So as they walked they discussed their dashed hopes of a redeemer for Israel and their confusion about the events of the last 12 hours; especially the tales about an empty tomb, visions of angels and reports that Jesus was alive.**

**As they journeyed another man joined them but they did not recognise him.**

**You can imagine the scene, two men talking as they walked along the road and a third falls into step beside them. They have been deep in conversation so the stranger asks them what they are discussing. They are totally incredulous that coming from Jerusalem he is so ignorant of the events, which had taken place there over the previous week.**

**The man asks them to explain to him what had happened. So they tell him the story of the last days and of their disbelief in the reports they had heard that morning. The stranger then takes the information that they have imparted to him as a basis for his teaching. He uses the scriptures, with**

**which they were so familiar to explain that the Messiah had to suffer before he could be glorified.**

**Slowly as they listened things began to fall into place. Eventually still listening to his teaching they arrived at their destination. If they had not invited him in, apparently He would have continued on by himself, but they encouraged him to stay with them. So he accepted their invitation. During the meal the stranger took the bread, gave thanks and broke it. The words He used are similar to those which Jesus used at the feeding of the multitude, and at the Last Supper, and in that moment they recognised it was Jesus who was sitting with them.**

**The disciple's recognition of Jesus depended on two events the interpretation of scripture and the breaking of bread.**

**Throughout Luke's Gospel narrative he emphasises that Jesus is the fulfilment of scripture. On the road to Emmaus Jesus reiterates this in His interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, in doing so he opens their minds, and removes their ignorance.**

**But it is in the breaking of bread that their eyes are opened to recognise that it is Jesus who shares their meal with them. The stranger whom they invited in as a guest at their table becomes the host.**

**This seems to me to explain why they were prevented from recognising who Jesus was earlier in the story. Luke is telling his readers that it is in the breaking of bread that those who walk with Jesus know him as their Risen Lord. Not by looking at him in physical recognition but through the eyes of faith.**

**In that moment the doubt and despondency was dispelled. Suddenly the inconceivable became feasible and the feasible became factual, Jesus was**

**present in His risen power changing dejection and gloom into hope and faith.**

**Once Jesus was recognised He vanished and the disciples return to Jerusalem with the good news.**

**The disciples craved proof of Jesus as a physical reality. What they encountered was not the resuscitated physical body of the crucified Jesus but the resurrected power of their Risen Lord.**

**He came to them as they journeyed full of disappointment and sorrow. He talked to them, first listening to their recent experiences and their confusion and bewilderment. Only after this did he begin to teach them and lead them to understanding.**

**Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus we are often so taken up with our own disappointments and troubles that we fail to recognise God at work with in us and around us. If we stop for a moment in the business and troubles of our daily lives and spend time with Him sharing all that we are and have with Him, we will find that He comes to meet us where we are and gives of Himself to us.**