

Sunday 26th April.

Reflection on Luke 24:13-35

Their eyes were opened to recognise Jesus

Because this reading falls in the lectionary sequence to be read two weeks after Easter, it's easy to lose sight of the setting in which the encounter on the Emmaus road takes place. The first words of the reading are 'Now on that same day...' Looking back to the beginning of the chapter, we find that it takes place on that first Easter Sunday, beginning in the afternoon and going on into the early evening. We read this passage today in the knowledge that Jesus is risen from the dead but for the two disciples it was still a day full of confusion about what had happened with the empty tomb. As they walk along with this stranger they have yet to realise is Jesus, he explains to them how the events they have witnessed are all part of God's bigger plan.

Yet they still haven't understood that the person they are talking about is the same person they are talking to. It is only when they are breaking bread together that Luke tells us "their eyes were opened and they recognised him".

When Luke uses that phrase "their eyes were opened" he is reminding us of another occasion when the same words were used. In Genesis chapter three, when Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit that God had forbidden, the bible tells us that "their eyes were opened" to the knowledge of good and evil and from that point onwards creation is marred. But now the disciples eyes are opened to the new creation made possible by Jesus' death and resurrection. The moment of recognition is brought about when Jesus "took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them". Luke is deliberately taking us back to the Last Supper.

For many of us today, the Lord's Supper, Communion, Eucharist – however we refer to it – is a very special and holy encounter where we meet the risen Lord in a way that we can never fully understand or explain. I have been told very similar stories by more than one person about being in a Communion service at a time when they did not believe; of nevertheless feeling compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to the altar rail to receive the bread and wine and of having a life changing experience of meeting Jesus "in the breaking of bread".

In the current circumstances, when we are unable to meet together and share Communion, where are the other places that we can recognise and meet the risen Lord? We don't have to look very far to see some of the extraordinary acts of kindness that are taking place. There are people shopping for vulnerable friends and neighbours, some leaving gifts on neighbours doorsteps, an amazing outpouring of support for the NHS and other key workers shown in the weekly clapping and in the astonishing response to Captain Tom Moore's fundraising. It is also seen in people finding new ways to stay in touch, like friends who phone to say they are walking past your house so you are able to open your windows and say hello across the front garden. I could go on. There are so many different ways in which

we are able to meet Jesus in one another and hopefully discover also that others have been able to meet him in us.

I look forward to the day when we are able to be together and to meet Jesus in the breaking of bread but in the meantime I pray that you will recognise him today and every day, as you meet him in the kindness of others.

God bless and stay safe.