

“Recognizing Jesus Amidst the Turmoil of Life”

Raw Doubt & Newness of Life

Over the month since our last writing, as the COVID - 19 pandemic spreads across the world creating grief from all the multiple deaths, as well as fear, doubt, confusion, & an occasional thread of hope about what might be coming next, we have observed the season of new life, commonly known as Easter. The days which we are currently in following the crucifixion & resurrection, are known as



the season of Eastertide. One would think that the followers of Jesus, though obviously shaken from His death, would be joyfully rejoicing upon hearing that He had overcome death & had risen & I am certain they were at the moment they heard that good news. However, the reality is that at the time of that first Resurrection day, the days after Christ had risen were tumultuous to say the least. Like the tides of the ocean, we read that the thoughts & feelings of the followers ebbed & flowed between grief, honest raw doubt, fear, cautious hope, & pure joy of the possibility of life overcoming death.

Undoubtedly, these feelings mingled together for the followers as the gardener by the tomb told them Jesus had overcome death & had risen. Before His death, Jesus had preached to them many times that he would not be with them much longer but that he would not leave them orphaned & would leave the indwelling Holy Spirit with them to guide them. They had to wonder what this all meant. And so with hearts full of despair, confusion & hope, we read that they left the empty tomb & went for a walk together to the village of Emmaus to sort it all out.

Emmaus is a little known geographically insignificant town. It could have been anywhere. Frederick Bucchner, a well-known theologian, interprets Emmaus as the place we go in order to escape. It is where we go when we feel like throwing up our hands saying: “Just forget it all. It makes no sense & it makes no difference.” Emmaus is wherever we go to make ourselves forget that the world holds nothing sacred, that even the wisest, the bravest & the loveliest, decay & die. It is a place where we are in despair & nothing makes sense. I am fairly certain most of us have felt that way & walked on our own Emmaus road from time to time. Thankfully, when we are on our own Emmaus road in the ordinary places & experiences of our lives & in the places to which we retreat when life is too much for us, our Risen Lord promises to meet us & walk with us in one way or another. The question today is, will we recognize God’s Son when he comes to meet us, or will we hold onto our fear & raw doubt & step away from him? We read that the first disciples were so caught up in their pain, grief & raw doubt that they did not recognize the Risen Christ at

first when he joined them on their Emmaus walk. Jesus does not impose himself on us as we walk. He peacefully joins us. It is up to us whether we recognize & receive him or not. Gradually, the first disciples did eventually recognize Jesus as the Risen Christ as He re-told the experiences of His shared walk with them & as they broke bread together. As they recognized & received Him, their brokenness was healed & their fear & doubt turned into faith, hope filled rejoicing & eventually into service.

Recognizing and Reflecting God when He Comes to Us

Unlike the followers that first Eastertide day, we hold a retrospective view of the resurrection, so we know that Jesus joins us when we are on our Emmaus walks. As promised, he does not leave us orphaned. He is always with us & continues to bless us with the indwelling Holy Spirit so that we are empowered to serve as His voice, hands & feet spreading His word & feeding His people.



The question for us, not only as we journey through the grief, fear, doubt, confusion & cautious hope of these tumultuous pandemic days, but throughout all of our days is; do we recognize & receive the gift of the Living Christ when He comes to us & then empowered by our faith & the indwelling Holy Spirit; do we reflect His love outward? It is in the receiving & reflecting of the living Christ that our own healing lies.

In this season of new life, we are blessed with many reminders of our Creator's presence: through the written Word of God, through gifts of creation & through the multiple gifts of love extended to one another in particular in these fear laden days of the pandemic. There are signs of His Holy presence all around us: in the trees coming back to life, in the flowers, & the nesting & singing of the birds. In soaring hawks & eagles, in the caterpillars transformed into butterflies, & in the increased light of day. God is present in all of life. Additionally, amidst all the death, fear & despair of this pandemic, God's presence has been reflected to us through all the many people who have stepped forward to reach out to one another in the caring, compassionate ways of our Living Lord, risking their own lives to help others in their suffering & their healing. It is in the recognition, receiving & reflecting of the living Christ that our faith, hope & healing lies. The Easter story invites each of us to live in the sure & certain hope of the Resurrection. As tumultuous as life can be at times, as we recognize & receive the gift of Jesus walking among us, we can never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. It is in that reality that God's peace & healing lies.

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