

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹ He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. ²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. Luke 24:13-35 NRSV

If I were to pick "favorite lessons" from scripture this would be one of them. It starts out with feelings of grief, disappointment, confusion, as well as bewilderment over Jesus death and the startling account that he was alive. What is even more interesting are the two men in the story; they don't seem to be part of the twelve, but part of a larger group following Jesus. Sometimes I think with our great celebration of Easter, we forget that for those who were there it wasn't quite evident. Indeed we are reminded of that each year when we hear the skepticism of Thomas who was one of the twelve on the first Sunday after Easter.

The thing I find most striking is how many different ways in this story Jesus is present, and they don't respond. First he starts walking with them, and in their grief and disillusionment they even fail to ask him who his name. Secondly he starts pointing to scriptures to show that what had taken place was necessary for the messiah. While they seem to be eager listeners, they still don't seem to want to "connect the dots" to Jesus resurrection. Finally it takes Jesus "breaking the bread" and they finally recognize him. Not only do they believe the resurrection, they are so excited they travel seven miles back to Jerusalem to share their good news with the other disciples.

I can identify with those two on the road to Emmaus. To be a person of faith in this world, I am always challenged by doubts, disappointments, events or sin. Essentially I wind up questioning God or my faithfulness to God in the process. God never lets me down in those times. God might respond through the Bible, and I have experienced such a response and affirmation a number of times. Other times, it hasn't been through the Bible, but through beholding something beautiful in nature affirming God's presence. Then there are the times music has brought hope either through the singing of a hymn, or a piece of music is played that connects with what I'm going through at the time.

The other is when I partake in the body and blood of our Lord. When Jesus gives himself to me his love for me is affirmed. I cannot say I might even get an answer to what I'm going through when I come to communion. But when I leave the table I know God is with me and experience something of what Jesus meant when he said "my peace I give you", not as the world gives, I give to you".

So are you troubled, are you in doubt, has your faith been stretched, are you convinced you've wandered far from God? God's love will not let you go. Jesus will not abandon you. God will find a way to communicate God's love to you. Just ask the two followers of Jesus who walked with him for seven miles in grief and disillusionment unmoved, heard him explain his plight from the scriptures continuing to be unmoved in grief and disillusionment. It finally changed when he broke the bread for them.

You never know, don't be surprised the method or the means, God loves you and will always get through to you one way or another.

Pr. John Van Haneghan