

**'The Living Presence of Jesus'
by Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday April 23, 2023**

Luke 24:13-35

Do you ever wonder at God? Does God ever surprise you?

Do you ever have your breath taken away as you read and reflect on the scriptures? I am so often surprised by God.

So often I am left with my mouth hanging open amazed at how God works.

At Christmas we sing:

*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So, God imparts to human hearts the blessings born of heaven.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.*

What Christmas carol is that verse from? (*O Little town of Bethlehem*)

Easter is filled with these wondrously quiet scenes.

Consider that the most remarkable gift is given, Jesus was raised from death to life and who knew? There were no wise men, or shepherds, no star proclaimed his resurrection. The angels did not proclaim it on the hill side.

Jesus was raised in the dark, sometime before the Sabbath light.
Silently, silently, the wondrous gift was given.
An angel told a few women, the tomb was empty.
Jesus did not light up the sky or put the message on a mountain top.
He didn't send a memo to all his followers.

Picture the scene as Luke describes it. Two disciples were leaving town. Whatever they had hoped was dashed, whatever they had planned was no longer possible. Their dreams, their faith had died with Jesus, and was buried in the cold, dark tomb.

Jesus was dead, of that there was no doubt.
They had seen him crucified, disgraced, condemned, killed.
They were leaving Jerusalem, leaving the others, getting out of town, sad, uncertain. This was not a leaving to go to something else, it was a leaving to leave the past behind.

Their conversation was not about their future plans, what they were going towards, but all that they left behind.

And the first wonder of the text is that Jesus came to them.
The two were deserting Jesus's cause again, and yet Jesus came along side of them. The resurrected Lord took time to be near and teach two disciples.

For those 7 miles they walked, Jesus first listened to them.
He let them tell him their whole sad story, their confusion, their pain, their questions, and then he spoke into their story, giving them hope.

He taught them, the two of them, two that were already hitting the road and moving on.

Don't you think Jesus might have had something better to do?
And yet he walked with them, 7 dusty miles at night.
After the disciples recognized Jesus, they said:
"Were our hearts not burning within us as he taught us?!"

Jesus, the Rabbi, returned to teach.
After they reflected on that walk, I imagine they felt like it was old times again, Jesus teaching, their hearts on fire as he spoke and their minds and hearts were opened with understanding.

Jesus, our resurrected Saviour walked a road, talked to a couple of disciples, stopped to have a meal with them.

In a day of mass media, face books, chat rooms, virtual games, bigger, faster, stronger mentality, is it not a wondrous thing that the risen Lord spent an

evening walking and talking and teaching and sharing a meal with 2 disciples who were heading the wrong way?

Our God is personal a God.

Jesus didn't send messengers and e-mails.

He personally spent time with his followers.

His disciples, when they were sent out, spent time with others.

Christ's Church is to be about spending time, teaching, walking along side and having meals with people. It's about gathering on Sunday morning, as God's people, meeting together, sharing a cup of coffee and fellowship time.

Logos involves a meal. Our teams begin by having a meal together. It would be easier not to do that.

But there is something about sitting down together, making time to listen to one another, to acknowledge that Jesus is in our midst.

Jesus is the host of all our meals.

Christian ministry is often about serving meals, taking time with folks who are discouraged, worn out, going the wrong way, and giving them opportunity to see our risen Lord, and know that Jesus walks with them.

Jesus' presence is still revealed when we give thanks and break bread together. Eyes are opened, hearts burn with a new flame, passion springs to life, for Jesus is in our midst.

Cleopas and the other disciple urged the stranger to stay with them. Jesus sat down at the table to share a simple meal with them.

When we gather at communion we say, "This is our *Lord's* table, our Saviour invites us to share the feast *he* has prepared."

We bring something to the table, humble gifts. We bring ourselves to the table.

Jesus meets us here. He is waiting.
And in his hands what we bring becomes food for a hungry and hurting world,
a gracious banquet of the kingdom of God.

By giving him our lives, our bread, the little we have to offer and allowing him to bless it, break it and give thanks to God, and give it back to us, by the grace of God, our eyes are opened, and we recognize his living, personal presence in our midst. We are filled, and we are sent out rejoicing, serving, and find that we are part of the gifts God uses to feed our hurting and hungry world.

This the work of our risen Lord. This is the work of his disciples.

Jesus then disappeared from the disciples' sight.
His physical presence was gone from them.
Then that very same hour those same disciples turned right around and danced their way back to Jerusalem.

It was not the end of everything, it was really only the beginning.
The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed.

Jesus walked alongside of others, listening first, then teaching, giving hope again, but more than that, giving his real living presence and revealing himself to them.

Who knows but someone might see Christ revealed as they come into this place, as we share a meal, as we walk side by side, as we take time with one or two weary disciples, even those going the wrong way.

Jesus has appeared to Cleopas, to the other disciple, to Peter, to Mary, to you, and to me. He continues to go before us, to come along side of us, to surprise us and fill us with wonder and joy.

Thanks be to God.