26th April 2020

Luke 24. 13-35


# Walking at The Speed of Love

Only Luke reports it; this sad road to Emmaus.

It’s been something of a theme for him, all this going up and coming down from Jerusalem. But this journey was different and went deeper. It starts off with desperate disciples barely hanging on to faith. Yet ends with ones who return to the city convinced they had encountered resurrection.

Cleopas and his friend (we don’t know his name – and might it intriguingly have been a ‘she?!) were followers of this Jesus from Nazareth. Although not part of the inner team of twelve they were still disciples, still believers, still followers.

It’s the evening of Easter Sunday and they are confused. It’s been a seven-day roller coaster ride. The Jesus they cheered and welcomed with palm branches has been set up, by Judas – one of his most trusted friends – betrayed for twenty pieces of silver.

Jesus has died on a cross between two criminals – even then he was still changing peoples’ lives as one of them crucified beside him believes.

Yet it felt so much like the end. And so, as Jesus breathed his last it was as if their dreams died with him.

So, they walk. They walk to clear their heads. They walk so they can talk. They walk to go home. Whatever the reason it was a journey into the sunset, to a village, 7 miles from Jerusalem, called Emmaus.

Slowly, even as the light fades, it becomes clear to them they are not alone but have been joined by a stranger with whom they now start chatting.

I read a comment on the story that chimes with me. The idea that the stranger beside the Emmaus disciples walked at the ‘*speed of love’*. Isn’t that a great phrase! He doesn’t walk in front of them, he isn’t too fast for them – instead God always walks at the speed of the slowest.

For some of us, over recent weeks, the daily walk has been a much-valued part of our routine. On those walks, which have seemed at one and the same time so normal, yet so different, we too might have talked, or taken time out to think. If unable to leave the house I guess we’ve all spent time thinking about our life journey, and maybe there have been moments when we too have wondered if we are walking towards, or away from faith.

At this time, still in the glow of Easter yet conscious of so much that seems out of kilter in our world right now, I believe that God comes alongside us, walking at the ‘speed of love’.

Today’s lectionary passage reminds us all that at those times when we might think God is absent, as Cleopas and his friend must have felt initially on their walk to Emmaus, at such a time God draws alongside us to share the journey, just as described in this story from sunset on Easter Day.

I suspect the reality of this story, the dawning realisation that God isn’t absent from our journeys but is our constant companion on them, means that Emmaus happens to us not once but often. Sometimes we are, as it were, at the beginning of that journey, having only just left Jerusalem still full of questions and feeling isolated in faith. Other times we are well on the way, beginning to sense a presence alongside that is beginning to warm our hearts and giving us fresh courage to go on. And sometimes, thank God, there are moments too when it’s as if we are at table, knowing the presence of Jesus as bread is broken and hope restored.

This Sunday, in my minds eye, I’ll be taking a journey, as I sometimes do, to one of my favourite places, St Martin in the Fields by Trafalgar Square for a lunchtime concert or a service. I’ll have travelled in by tube and probably written a blog for our church website En route! Before the concert I’ll pop into the National Gallery to look at just one picture. I’ve seen it dozens of times, yet it never fails to move me and warm my heart. By Caravaggio, it’s called *Supper at Emmaus*. Jesus is breaking bread and the two disciples are so thrilled to be reunited with the one they love and serve that you get the impression they are just about to jump out of their seats in thrilled amazement.

I look forward to seeing that picture again, but until I do, I know that God, in his great faithfulness will walk every step beside me, at the ‘speed of love’.

May it be so on your journey too.