

My hubby and I sat at supper recently with year & a half old Axel. He was beside himself with glee as well as spaghetti. Ear to ear with noodles and grins. Our son named it, “He’s so excited you’re at supper with him.” We were excited too. Supper with a totally attentive happy toddler. What could be better!

Today’s Luke 24 story celebrates Supper with the totally attentive risen Christ. The disciples who’d walked the road with this one they’d thought a stranger, finally saw! “What could be better! Jesus! At table with them.

The Emmaus story is so dramatic, I’ve had Easter company act it out. Two people walk as if down the road with Jesus. The 3 arrive at supper. Jesus breaks bread. They finally recognize him.

I have a photo of my friend Tony Avila playing Jesus and in the moment of breaking bread Tony lifts an Easter Bunny cookie cutter – reminding us this is an Easter story. Christ is risen. He is risen, indeed! The risen Christ is here at supper with us – as he is at every supper – if only our hearts are as open as Axel’s was last week with grins and spaghetti.

The Emmaus Story is one of those where, if this was the only Bible story we had, it could be enough to sustain us. Jesus walks with us down our roads of wondering why this hasn’t happened, or that. Jesus walks with us when we too “had hoped” for something different.

Jesus joins us on our roads of regret, that we haven’t gotten our act together yet, or landed our dream job, we haven’t been able to buy a house, or electric car, or at least a better refrigerator.

Some of us had hoped we’d learnt to read the crowd better or discovered how to not yearn so much to be loved back – to love a little more like Jesus. Many of us have hoped we’d have dealt moved past so much racism and sexism and harm to creation. Many of us have hoped for wiser elected leaders. Jesus walks with us as we face our regrets.

The disciples in Luke 24 had hope Jesus would have rescued them not only from personal loss, but had rescued their people, their era, their future. Every era feels itself at risk – because there’s always sin, and selfishness, and fear. Jesus calls it slowness of heart.

Luke 24 is a story for a life-time – because it brings Jesus right into our earthy stories. It even names body parts, like hearts and eyes. And there's a meal – with real food – shared with a stranger – who's no stranger at all.

The Emmaus Story also reminds us of wisdom we find throughout scripture – that in welcoming strangers we entertain angels unawares.

Abraham entertained angels outside his tent and nine months later he and Sarah bear a child who opens their future – and ours. Zechariah & Elizabeth, Mary & Joseph entertain angels unaware how doing so will wildly change things for the good.

We're taught today not to entertain strangers – to be wary of them. We need to be on some level. Safety matters. Yet we're still called to care for the stranger. How do we do that today and get in on this recognition we're entertaining angels in today's world?

When's the last time you exchanged a smile with a stranger? Have you been offered by someone in front of you to go ahead in line when you had the smaller load? You were the cared-for stranger.

When you rejoice to give an offering, though you have your own bills to pay, you're gladly caring for more than your own. There are lots of little 'n large ways to entertain angels today – like the disciples did in welcoming Jesus.

Another incident from our spaghetti supper the other day also reminded me of today's gospel. Four-year-old Mackenzie had just woken from her nap. Grampa was sitting outside at a table using his laptop. His back was to the sliding glass door.

Mackenzie told me later, she didn't know who he was until she saw me sitting nearby on a couch, smiling at her. Seeing my face, she knew that big guy with his back to her was Grampa.

Isn't this how we recognize who others really are? Not strangers, but ones also who God loves, for whom Christ died. Jesus came to help us see each other as brothers and sisters by water and word; bread and wine.

Jesus came to feed us at this welcoming table, satisfying the hungry heart.

There's talk today of being a now post-pandemic world. There are also ponderings about how to now be Christ's church. Is our mission changed in a world of changed habits and priorities? But here's the thing – what's constant across time is the heart's yearning for what truly satisfies.

No matter how much we accomplish, how much we have, there's still a gnawing within until our hearts are warmed; until we know ourselves as spiritual people on a human path – however young or old.

We're created from birth for purposes shaped by loving relationships with God and neighbor that begin now and are brought to perfection in the life to come.

Cleopas and friend spoke of their hearts “burning within them” as Jesus spoke with them. Providing opportunity for people to discover this “warming of the heart” is the work of Christ's church.

We're entrusted with the treasure of the gospel – the life-changing news of God with us on our roads, at all our tables, caring for strangers who open our eyes.

Every supper, each opportunity is charged with God. What we receive at this Table is given that it may reshape our seeing. What we see here opens our eyes to what's out there. As poet Hopkins says, “*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.*” May we so see!

Amen.

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