

May I speak in the name of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

As many of you know, our readings on a Sunday are taken from what's called the lectionary. It's a set of readings that we share with churches all over the world, so on any given Sunday, churches all over the world are reading the same passages of the Bible, except today we're not. I need to confess something to you, that today we're not following the lectionary readings. I looked at the readings on Monday as I started to prepare the sermon, and I was disappointed to see that there were no resurrection stories amongst the readings chosen for the day. I want to be talking about the resurrection in this Easter season, so I hope you'll forgive me, and understand that I've picked a resurrection story to talk about today in this Easter season, and I've picked my favorite resurrection story. There were lots of them in the ... They're not lots, but there's several stories of the resurrection in the gospels, and they're all different.

Each gospel writer has their own collection of resurrection stories, and none of them overlap across the different gospels, but they all have a similar feel. They all sound similar, and they're all, for instance, wonderfully enigmatic. But as I say, I think this story of Jesus meeting these two followers on the road to Emmaus is my favorite. These two people were not sure really of the agendas. Only one is named, Cleopas. They're walking away from Jerusalem on what we call Easter Day, but they had no sense it was Easter Day, Easter and the resurrection seem to have passed them by. They were talking and reflecting on what had happened in Jerusalem. They were talking about how Jesus had been handed over to the chief priests, and condemned to death, and was crucified, and that for them was the end of the story. They were sad. They said, "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

"We had hoped." Their hope had died, and of course they were having this discussion with a stranger who turned out to be Jesus, but amazingly, they didn't recognize him. It was at the very moment of recognition that he vanished from their sight. As I say, it's an enigmatic story that seems to raise as many questions as it answers. How come Cleopas and his friend didn't recognize Jesus? Why is only one of them named? Why does Jesus appear to these sort of two minor disciples and followers of Jesus? What did Jesus say when he

explained the scriptures to them? That's the one that preachers always want to know the answer to. Why weren't the words recorded? Why did Jesus disappear when they recognized him? So many questions, so many questions left unanswered, actually, but I want to focus on a little phrase that these two followers of Jesus say to one another at the end of the story.

After Jesus has left, they turned to each other and said, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road?" It's that little phrase that captured my attention as I read this story again this week. It speaks to me of the process of coming to faith, and the difference between the head and the heart. As the friends were walking along the road, they were using their heads, their minds to try and figure everything out. They were trying to fit all the pieces together to make sense of things, and they were failing. The whole Jesus business just didn't make sense. They couldn't think themselves to an understanding of the resurrection and interestingly, Jesus says to them, "How slow of hearts you are to believe." Then later, they make reference to what was going on in their hearts as they walked along the road to Emmaus. "Our hearts were burning within us," they said. In other words, their heads were saying one thing and their hearts were saying another.

Do you know that feeling? I'm sure we all do. I think sometimes our thinking, what goes on in our head, holds us back. That's why sometimes we're encouraged to listen to your heart or follow your heart, do something that doesn't quite make sense, and I think coming to faith involves listening to our hearts. Coming to faith isn't just about deciding to believe. I don't think people come to faith simply as a result of an intellectual exercise, and before I go any further, I don't want to be heard to be saying that I'm anti-intellectual or saying that reason doesn't matter. I spent nine years studying theology full-time, and I don't think a day of it was wasted. I think it's important that our faith is coherent and reasonable, but that's not the same as saying that we can work our way to God by the sheer application of logic.

Coming to faith is more like getting a joke. The penny drops. Suddenly you think, oh, of course, I get it, and they're getting it when it comes to faith. It involves God's spirit moving and working in our hearts. You may have heard of John Wesley, the great 18th century English preacher who inspired Methodism. He'd been

ordained for some years, but found himself full of unbelief, and a friend encouraged him to attend the meeting in Aldersgate in London, and he wrote this in his diary about the meeting: "Someone read from Luther's preface to the Romans. About 8:45 p.m., while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

That's the same experience Cleopas had on the road to Emmaus, but it's expressed in Wesley's understated English way. Cleopas's heart was burning. Wesley's heart was strangely warmed, but it was the same experience. They were talking about the same thing. Their heart was telling them it's true. Jesus is alive and Jesus is close by. I want to read a couple of verses from the New Testament from Saint Paul's letter to the book of Ephesians, that Rebecca read to us at the formation class on Wednesday. It's these verses: "I pray that according to the riches of God's glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith as you are being rooted and grounded in love." Paul reminds us there that faith is amongst other things, an affair of the heart. The spirit of Jesus dwells in our inner being. Paul says in our hearts, and as the spirit fills us, so we are rooted and grounded in love.

The Wednesday classes that Rebecca has been running have been great. A group of us have gathered and opened up our hearts, and we Episcopalians don't often do that. We treasure reason, and we need to learn to become bilingual, so that we don't only speak the language of the head but also the language of the heart. There are several ways of learning that language. One way is centering prayer, which happens every Monday here, which is about finding the stillness, which allows us to listen to our hearts, to be attentive to the God who dwells within us. I've already mentioned the Wednesday formation classes where we've been talking about our experience of God, what it feels like to know the presence of God in our lives. This week, we're thinking specifically about what it means to engage with the Holy Spirit. Come along and find out more. My prayer for all of us is that Christ will dwell in our hearts, and that we will know what it is to have our hearts burning within us. Amen.