



*The Road to Emmaus* by Daniel Bonnell

*“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel...” (Luke 23:21)*

One of my favorite Easter stories is that of the two very disappointed followers of Jesus who can't get the picture of their dead friend out of their heads. Sure, the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee are the first to tell of Jesus' resurrection early that morning, but it is Cleopas and his unnamed companion, later in the day who find themselves unknowingly walking in Jesus' presence. These two folks are so ordinary that we never even hear of them again. They are like us, ordinary people struggling to keep faith alive.

Unlike Cleopas and his companion who walk in fear and doubt, the Book of Acts tells of Peter, a post-resurrection superhero of the faith, who stands with bold Easter certitude calling all to repentance and baptizing 3,000 people. So who would you want as your pastor? Peter the bold-hearted with thousands of adoring fans or Cleopas the sometimes doubting, confused and fearful one? The choice seems obvious to me.

What congregation wouldn't snatch Pastor Peter up in a heartbeat with those kinds of statistics under his tunic? I mean, come on 3,000 baptized in one day? So what do we know about that other guy Cleopas? Very little. We know that he and his nameless companion are confused, fearful, and full of doubt. Their hearts have been broken by the sting of death. Their world has shattered all around them and they stand in need of healing.

We also know what happens next. Incognito Jesus engages them in conversation for hours and finally at the end of the day breaks bread with them, suddenly revealing that he is alive and well! Only then do these two companions make haste to get back to the other disciples, eagerly proclaiming this healing news of resurrection! They just can't help it. This news is too great to keep to themselves!

Both Peter and Cleopas convey good news of resurrection but in very different ways. Yet when push comes to shove, I will hang out with Cleopas over Peter any day. Cleopas has doubts about faith. He has fears about life. He gets confused easily and doesn't appear to have all the answers. I have those days and I bet you do too. As with Cleopas, in the midst of my own doubts and fears, God gently joins me where I am, on the journey of faith.

On my walk of faith, I don't want some hot shot super-pastor placating me with clichés about how God is awesome. I want someone to walk with me who knows something about fear and doubt. I want someone to walk with me who admits that they too don't have all the answers. I want someone to walk with me who acknowledges that sometimes life just sucks. Because you know what? Sometimes it does. Despite the struggles, Jesus still sidles up beside us doubting and confused people that we are, breaking bread, opening eyes and making all things new.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! Even for a doubter like me! Alleluia!

Pastor Doug