

Travelling Companions 4-26-20

When we travel, we usually think of it in family units. Travelling is not usually a treat, and if you fly, it can be annoying at times with all the precautions that are needed today for our safety. We wait in long airport lines for check in, baggage checks and body scans. If travelling abroad, we have customs when we come back and forms to fill out while still in the air. Somehow it makes the times of travel we read about in the scriptures as more desirable although it was much longer and more tedious without the comforts we also have flying or travelling by train or automobile today. The people we travel with are usually our friends or family, but the people we meet along the way are the interesting aspects of our journey. I have no idea why, but 90% of the flights I have taken, I sit in the middle or window seat allowing my husband to have his aisle seat and I sit next to a stranger. Sometimes we get to talking, usually that's the case is my husband slept through most flights. Again 90% of those strangers are police officers. Some are retired, some are going on a leg of my journey, their complete journey to a conference. It never took long for me to ask, you're on the job, right? It must be the mannerisms they put off that I quickly recognized. I have never run into any of these men, and they were always men, again. Often when we travel, we meet people we will never see again in a lifetime. Why do we meet them? Sometimes it is for direction, like the time Randy Quaid the actor told us how to get to the Washington Arch in New York City as my husband had stopped him on the sidewalk for direction and I sat inside the car with the window down like a dog taking it all in, wondering if he knew whom he was talking to, he did. Other times we meet people who need something from us, a handout perhaps, to ask a question of a foreigner, or sometimes another tourist more lost than we ourselves.

In the story from Luke today, well crafted as it is, we have a drama playing out. It has sorrow, suspense, puzzlement, the gradual dawning of light and then the next

part which includes unexpected actions, astonished recognition, and a flurry of excitement and activity and before you know it the end of the drama is at hand and it ends abruptly. Whenever I read this story before, and maybe you have thought the same, we think of the two travelers on the road to Emmaus as men. Perhaps we think that because some versions say two disciples were walking, but let us realize disciple means follower, not just the twelve we have by name. In my commentary that I used for Luke today, it is said the couple may have been Cleopas and his wife Mary mentioned in John 19:25 there named Cleopas, his wife Mary and Mary Magdalene and the mother of Jesus all standing at the cross during the crucifixion. So, it kind of changes the view of the story as it unfolds. When you read it again, only the one man speaks so it is very likely the companion was his wife. Cleopas is the name later given in the text to the man, but again no name is given of the second traveler and no indication if it is a man but I think many assume it was two men walking to Emmaus that day. This is resurrection day, so news is about that Jesus rose from the grave. The story of Mary Magdalene finding an angel at the tomb is out there, so you can see even then news could travel swiftly.

We don't know why, but it is made clear, that the travelers' eyes were prevented from recognizing Jesus when he joined them on the journey. It was a seven mile walk from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus or a three hour walk with a regular stride. So, there were no doubt many more words exchanged during the journey not recorded in Luke. If someone recently passes, we don't expect to run into them at Wawa in a couple of days. It also has been said, they did not recognize Jesus for this reason, but it is more likely God intervened and did not want the recognition just yet. You see, as the conversation goes it is unraveled that as people always expected the Savior to have redeemed the people and not die. They were not reading the signs correctly, because he was always meant to redeem the people by way of the resurrection. Sometimes, we

miss the signs on the road. We take a wrong turn even when the GPS tells us differently. At times, which I have noticed around here, the next right is really the next right not a block or half a block away, but a turn to another turn and if you miss it, you go out of the way maybe a mile or more to get back on the path.

People had missed the signs. They expected the Messiah to be this mighty warrior who would destroy the Roman government, not allow it to kill him. They were not understanding yet that his resurrection was the road to redemption, and that it all had to happen like that for people to understand the true magnificence of the event. How often do we miss those signs? Ever run through a stop sign and your heart jumps, because one you're alive and no one hit you; and two, because you realize so quickly that although not intentional, you made a big mistake. We miss the signs still today. People warn us about rough areas to not go to alone at night, but sometimes we still go there. We warn others about potential hazards if we don't change our ways, but we like our old comfortable ways and don't make any effort to change. Jesus' death on the cross was all about the change it meant for the people. Just asking for forgiveness of sins got a whole lot easier. Sadly, the Jewish people, God's chosen people, did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. They are still waiting for him. Odd how Jesus comes for his people, the Jewish people, and the Gentiles understand him better than they do. The unbelievers who now believe are more accepting of the miracles Jesus performed, the words he spoke, the simple parables he told. Jesus was clear, he came for the sinners.

So back to the travelling. Finally, Emmaus is at hand and it's been a long walk, and everyone must be hungry. The couple are gracious and invite the stranger who just walked with them several miles to eat with them and spend the night. It is unclear if it was discussed where he was going to, but it was time to take a break. Breaking of the bread as we do in communion was nothing new to the people. However, Jesus

incorporated that symbolic breaking of a loaf of bread and passing it to others as his body being broken on the cross for us. He did it for his disciples before the crucifixion during the last supper as he laid it out for them to repeat. So, this act of breaking the bread by Jesus at the supper table was just a natural way to eat a meal. Yet, he does it and disappears. Nothing natural about your guest vanishing. Only as he took that bread and broke it, they were able to see him for who he was, not just a stranger on the road to the Emmaus.

We will meet many people as we travel. We may even have many travelling companions during our stay on earth. It is said, be aware of those you meet as they may be angels travelling in disguise. How we conduct ourselves around strangers is important. It shows our true selves to others who don't know what we are like, what we know, how much we know, how intuitive we are. Some of us still will miss the signs. We will continue to look through the telescope using the wrong end as many did who were following the scriptures readying themselves for the appearance of the Messiah, the Jewish people still waiting for him, not believing Jesus could be the Messiah because he died. Yet, he was resurrected, he returned to flesh and blood and moved about the earth, eating and drinking, proving he was not a ghost, although he could disappear at will. We can't vanish, not like that, so make your appearances to others worthy. Don't hide in the shadows when amongst strangers. Try to be welcoming, outgoing and respond to the needs of others. You really never know when the person next to you on the plane is just the angel in charge of your flight today. Don't sleep through it all, keep your eyes wide open and one day Jesus will reveal himself to you, but you need to recognize him first. Amen.