

And so today we have one of my favourite resurrection stories: the story of the Emmaus road where Jesus comes and walks with two of his disciples as they travel from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Initially Luke describes this pair as ‘conversing’; but later in the passage the word he uses means ‘debating’ or ‘disputing’. And when Jesus arrives to walk with them, the word **he** uses when he asks them “What are you **discussing** with each other while you walk along?’ is the Greek word ‘antiballo’ which means to throw – and was used in Greek literature to describe people throwing things at each other or at a target in the gymnasium or games. So it sounds like he’s come upon them in a full blown argument.

And we aren’t told exactly who they are - but the clues suggest they might be husband and wife. They live in the same house in Emmaus for instance. One we know is called Cleopas (which may be the Greek version of the name Clopas) and we know that Mary, wife of Clopas was one of the women standing near the cross when Jesus was crucified. So maybe these are Clopas and his wife Mary.

Then again, it seems strange that they’re travelling **away** from Jerusalem. Surely, they’d want to stay to check out the story of Jesus’ resurrection which is maybe what they’re arguing about. Should they have stayed? Could they have done things differently so that Jesus would still be alive? They’d been certain he was the Messiah, so how come he ended up on the cross? And Jesus comes and asks why they’re arguing ... and the phrase used to describe their response is that they ‘stand gloomily, sullenly’ as they explain what has happened.

And Jesus walks with them and reminds them of the scriptures underpinning these events. And, strange as it may seem, they don’t recognise him immediately. But then grief does strange things to you.

But when they reach home and Jesus makes to walk on, they come out of themselves and offer him hospitality. This is significant, I think, because if they hadn't invited him in, I'm not sure they'd have discovered his identity.

So what about this 'hospitality'? One of the roots of this word is the Latin word 'hospes' which is related to the word for *stranger* – and that was what ancient hospitality was all about: the act of welcoming the stranger into the home, caring for them, feeding them, providing a bed for the night and then sending them on their way in the morning, refreshed and ready to go. Indeed tradition had it that it was essential to welcome strangers in case they were angels in disguise. (**Hebrews 13:2** says “**Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it**”).

But in most stories about welcoming angels, the *stranger* is welcomed, and once he's been shown hospitality, he reveals something to the host that the host didn't know before. Here all that is turned on its head. The revelation takes place first as Jesus explains the scriptures to them as they walk. Only when they reach home, do they offer him hospitality and *then* Jesus takes over as host (which is unheard of in Judaism) and only when he breaks and blesses the bread do they recognise him.

What is Luke trying to convey in this resurrection story? Here the risen Christ steps into the heart of their argument, transforming this couple from their sullen grief to such excitement that they can't wait to get back to Jerusalem to tell the others.

Just so, does Jesus *long* to step into *our* lives, *our* sorrows and grief, *our* arguments and conflicts. Jesus longs to change *our* feelings from despair to joy, misery to harmony. And maybe, like on the Emmaus

road, it's only when we offer Jesus **hospitality** that he's able to step in and help us.

But how exactly **can** we offer hospitality to Jesus in these C19 times when we're not allowed to offer hospitality to **anyone** in the biblical sense of welcoming someone into our home? Well, we **can** open our **hearts** to him. We're told:

“Knock and the door will be opened, seek and you will find, ask and you will receive”

And there's that wonderful Holman Hunt picture of Jesus waiting with his lantern outside the door of a house....

And this is exactly how Jesus waits outside '**the door of our hearts**' for us to welcome him. He never gives up on us, waiting so patiently for us to seek him, to open our hearts and let him in. And to welcome him in is to '**let go**' of the tight control we try to have on our lives and to **trust** that Jesus will not let us down if we let **him** take control instead.

And I spoke briefly about this on Wednesday. Richard Rohr describes **suffering** as happening when we find ourselves **not** in control of our lives. I've found that a very powerful and accurate image when I look back on my own life. For the suffering **I've** experienced has happened when things occur that I **don't want** to happen or when things **don't occur** that I'd been counting on happening. And **only** when I'm willing to **let go of wanting my own way** and willing to **accept what is actually happening**, that I'm able to recognise that **God is** in control and that's okay because God always knows better than me what is best for me. And that is where trust comes in because, sometimes, I find I want to control things because the truth is I don't trust God enough to think that He might know better. And, for me, it is the work of my entire life time to let go and let God. If we can practice smaller letting

go-es during our life time, if we can find calm acceptance for all that happens to us, knowing God has us safely in his arms, then that final surrender - which happens when we die - will be a place of complete peace and total trust in the resurrection that Jesus promises us. And in this we will show ourselves to be **true** disciples – following in Jesus' footsteps, through death to resurrection.