



THE NEW SHOFAR

Church is where the faithful gather with Christ

Discipleship means following the Way of Christ

EMMAUS

And they could not see him

This is a wonderful and very important story. Luke has no account of the Resurrection. Just an empty tomb. How then were people to believe in a resurrection when no one was there to witness the event? Here is the answer – by “seeing” him alongside of them on the journey.

For the disciples, Jesus was just one more dusty pilgrim returning home after the festivities in Jerusalem. They did not recognise that it was Jesus because their eyes were spiritually blind. While his body had been transformed in the resurrection, it was still the same Jesus. But he was not that different. This “blindness” is a key part of the message because it is impossible to experience the reality of the Risen Christ without eyes of faith. Those disciples needed new eyes, a new way of looking at the world. The world they knew had gone and with the rising of the Christ, a new creation had begun.

Why could they not “see” him?

The Greek verb is passive – *they were prevented from recognising him*. Who prevented them? The answer in biblical terms is: *God prevented them*. What God was demanding was faith, a faith that was built on a willingness to open themselves to the Way of God. They had their own predetermined understanding of Jesus. They were yet to see in Jesus of Nazareth the Christ of God. Their expectations were not aligned with the saving plan of God. They had to repent, turn around and head off in a new life direction. **Note** the hint of a warning: it is possible to see Jesus but a Jesus who is not the Real Jesus.

Having challenged their view, God has not set the stage for Jesus to instruct them on the full meaning of the Scriptures. It is only through a divine intervention that they can see *spiritually*, which is the only way to discover Christ. It is also the only way we can look at the new world, to what is happening in the world around us and to understand the realities of who we are and why we are here on earth. God does to us and in us what we can never achieve on our own.

If we do not listen to God, we will not find the Christ

God uses our inadequate or limited understandings to blind us so that God might give us a new vision of God’s ways in the world with its related understanding of scripture. That is the biblical story and it is one repeated throughout both Testaments – Moses, Abraham, Gideon...). Remember how too Saul was a very devout and committed believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob before he was blinded by the light of Jesus. His deeply held Jewish beliefs

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kept him from seeing the risen Jesus? The same situation holds for us as well. Our own deeply held beliefs can leave us in the same situation – we can end up holding the cloaks of the men stoning Stephen because we have convinced ourselves it is what God wants. Faith came to Paul as an invitation from God, an invitation to which he needed to reply with a radical change to his life. and recognize that our faith comes as a gift that we can only humbly accept.

What happens when you are heading the wrong way?

One of the great things about this story is how these disciples are heading away from Jerusalem, away from the city where the Saviour had died. Fleeing because they were afraid of the same people who had crucified the Christ. That was not the Jesus way. The prophets had spoken of the way... *repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. God's way* was back in Jerusalem. *Their way* was in Emmaus. That says it all. Men of goodwill who had given all to follow this Jesus and yet, after three years, they still knew nothing.

Of course, Jesus knew all of that. These were the very people with whom Jesus himself had spent so much time. The sinners, the outcasts, those whose lives were filled with mistakes of their own. These were the people to whom Jesus had been sent. He does not judge them. He joins them. He reveals to them the mystery of salvation, the answers for which he had been sent as the answer. What he does for them is take them back through the scriptures, leading them to discover for themselves the Good News of Salvation.

Come and stay with us!

This Christ-in-their-midst spoke to them in such a way they confessed...*Were not our hearts burning within us.* Peter and the others had all of the facts about what Jesus had done – they were there with him. But they could not put it all together. Being with Christ; listening to him; walking with him along *the Way* was what enlightened them to the truth, what made their hearts burn within them. This comprises the most significant response anyone could make to the Lord of all – *come and stay with us!* That is the faith response that opens their eyes. It is precisely that response that leads them to the all-important step two: *They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem.* To Jerusalem, the city they feared, back to the people from whom they had only just escaped. Fear gone they turned and headed in a new direction – *repented.*

They knew him in the breaking of the bread

What a perfect way to complete this story! They shared the bread broken and the wine poured out as they had been commanded to do at the Last Supper. This was not the Eucharist as we know it, for the Risen Christ was with them in his resurrected Body. But they were fed. It is as they are being nourished by Christ they become the kind of disciples needed if they are to collaborate with God's mission in the world and take the Good News *to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* This is the story of the Church, the story of our own parishes and our own story. It is the story to which our response needs to be: Lord Jesus, *come and stay with us.*

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