

Third Sunday after Easter 30 April 2017

[Acts 2: 14a, 36-41; Psalm 116: 1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1: 13-25; Luke 24:13-35](#)

Vanderbilt

[Easter 3 A April 30 2017](#) Textweek

Peter announces with certainty that Jesus is "Lord and Messiah"; it sounds like an important announcement and so perhaps we might explore what it means. In the same text, Peter tells his audience that they will "*receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*"; and we might ponder that as well as we're moving with expectation toward Pentecost in five weeks' time.

And that clash of dates, regarding receiving the Holy Spirit, tells us once again that these readings are not descriptive of actual events, rather they illuminate 'process', the mechanics of life's unfolding toward enlightenment.

The Jewish people, the people of Israel, based on their Old Testament understanding, expected and awaited the coming of a Messiah; and clearly, from the New Testament, we can see that disciples found in Jesus that expectation fulfilled.

However, when we read the very same texts without prejudice, and without our Jewish DNA, we see that Jesus actually reveals a leap forward into a much fuller appreciation of life for the whole of humanity.

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." [Galatians 3:28]

And so although Peter is speaking from his Jewish DNA, to a Jewish audience about an expected development within the Jewish faith tradition; the real understanding to be teased out from the text is found when we seek that which Christ has revealed to all people; and it is there in the text.

The question for all following Easter is "*what should we do?*"

And the answer given in the text also has universal application; "*Repent... be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*"

And just in case we are tempted by that voice that says 'why bother'; Peter continues speaking and "*exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."*

Roughly translated, and in answer to the "*what should we do?*"; Peter encourages his audience to save humanity from the corrupted course of life's unfolding that they are currently pursuing.

That same process is being illustrated again in the second reading

"do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. 15 Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct".

These are exhortations to the emerging Church; however that same emerging Church also brought forward with it an understanding of the Messiah and Saviour, and so rather than responding to the "*what should we do*" it settled for a tradition that says, we need do nothing for Jesus has done it all for us.

Perhaps we should think again, and more fully contemplate the reality of Christ's revelation that "*You shall be holy, for I am holy.*"

Today's gospel provides the familiar 'Road to Emmaus' narrative; and that has obviously been included by the writer of Luke to further underline the reality of resurrection; and for that initial audience of 'simple folk' it was probably one of those 'wow' stories.

Without access to Facebook or Instagram and with no live reporters in the field we can be clear that this story was not captured 'live' and as it happened. Rather, Luke's author wrote this account some 80-100 years after the event; and so it is a story most likely with a deliberate intent to underline the reality of resurrection. And even now after more than 2000 years we are hardly any more aware of that reality than those early gospel writers.

Maybe later today you might pause and consider how you would describe, explain and illustrate 'resurrection' to a complete stranger, especially one without any prior knowledge of the whole New Testament and Church traditions.

When we read again Luke's 'Road to Emmaus' story with a critical or discerning eye then it's overall integrity seems to crumble away.

Imagine, the two travellers at the centre of the story; according to the story they were there, earlier that same morning, when some women announced to the group the 'empty tomb'; and although they say they were astounded, they obviously were not astounded enough to hang around for they set off that same day for a walk to Emmaus.

In her book, **Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age**; Sallie McFague asks the question: "*What if we were to understand the resurrection and ascension not as the bodily translation of some individuals to another world -- a mythology no longer credible to us -- but as the promise of God to be permanently present, 'bodily 'present to us, in all places and times of our world?*"

The heretical utterance of Sally's question "*a mythology no longer credible to us*" is one we might also seek the courage to confront.

Much of the Church maintains the very same mindset that we see night after night in the News reports about ISIS; we have the answer, the right answer and the only answer, an attitude usually followed by "as it is written" and then a series of quotes from Scriptures.

Hopefully we can see the tragic folly in such a mindset in others; but can we also glimpse the same in and for ourselves?

Once we have considered "*a mythology no longer credible to us*" and owned this as a reality for ourselves, then we can read the Bible and the scriptures from other traditions with an attitude that seeks wisdom, an attitude that seeks understanding and that offers us both a life direction and perhaps even introduces us to the reality of resurrection.

Going back to the post Easter question we just looked at and asking for ourselves "*what should we do?*" will very much bring into question our own understanding of the whole Easter mystery.

If we can glimpse that Resurrection is a present time reality, and that Christ reveals both God with us, and God alive in us then we will have to let go of the One who previously resided in Heaven and looked after us.

If we leave behind the whole overlay of Christ as Messiah, seeing this as a past tradition of an ancient peoples, "*a mythology no longer credible to us*"; then we can encounter Christ as one who was "holy" in the true sense of Holiness; and more than that we can hear for ourselves that "*You shall be holy, for I am holy.*"

Again we come back to the question: "*what should we do?*"

And as we decide on the Emmaus road that we will now take; we can either walk the path we have always walked, and if so we should not complain at the unfolding of the world as it is.

Or, we can "repent", translated from the Greek word *Metanoia*, and a helpful description of that word :

"In this compound word the preposition combines the two meanings of time and change, which may be denoted by 'after' and 'different'; so that the whole compound means: 'to think differently after'. **Metanoia** is therefore primarily an after-thought, different from the former thought; a change of mind and change of conduct, "change of mind and heart", or, "change of consciousness"

And that action will take us by another road, perhaps into the reality of resurrection.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Robert Frost (1874–1963).