



DAILY READINGS
MAY 20 - 24

the road to

EMMAUS

Day 1 – A Deepening Understanding

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Luke 24:25-26

Sometimes you just have to experience something for yourself in order to truly understand it and take it on board. Sometimes, in order for this understanding to develop, the experience itself is not pleasant and is not one that you would have elected to undergo had the choice been yours. For these two disciples, the loss of Jesus and the shattering of their hopes and dreams of a new way of life was just such an experience. Jesus had talked about his impending death (and resurrection) numerous times, and had tried to prepare his followers for it, but they simply hadn't understood what he was talking about; how either death (but the Messiah doesn't die!) or resurrection (so why would he need resurrection?) could possibly apply to Jesus.

But now, with further instruction from Jesus, they were beginning to understand because they were now actually experiencing it for themselves. The rhythm of death, burial and resurrection that is such a central and necessary part of the spiritual journey was suddenly beginning to make sense to them as they found themselves in the midst of this rhythm – only now, with Jesus beside them, were they able to start making sense of it. He was showing how his journey from life to death and back again was the true nature of the spiritual life. We must 'die' if we are to be raised to new life in Christ, casting away all that will stop us from following Jesus. All we stand to lose are the things we don't truly need anyway.

Question to Consider

When has direct experience given you a deeper understanding of the ways and character of God?

Prayer

Loving Lord, thank you that the experiences of my life can also be times when I encounter you in ways I have not known before. Thank you for walking with me always and being with me in all I do. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 2 – Suffering on the Journey

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – 1 Peter 4:1

Nobody likes suffering. It seems as if much of our Western society is geared towards the elimination of any and all pain and suffering – or at least towards the denial of its existence: convenience and ease designed as a shield against having to acknowledge that suffering is a part of life. This is not to deny the absolute necessity of working with God to alleviate the unnecessary suffering that so many of the world's poorest and most marginalised people experience. We need to be walking alongside people who are suffering, offering them love and companionship. So much suffering in this world is evil, destructive, and unnecessary, and is to be fought against with all the love that God has put at our disposal. It is because this love is what we are called to show that we will, as we enter into spaces and places where suffering abounds, suffer too.

Suffering is part of the journey of following Jesus, because if we are faithfully following him, we will enter into those times of anguish and pain that are necessary in order for our illusions and our blind spots – and our sin – to be stripped away. There is a type of death that is necessary for the followers of Jesus to accept as a normal, expected part of the journey with him: the putting to death of our fears and desires and selfish ways of living and thinking, the denial of ourselves as we embrace the cross of Christ – a cross given new meaning on the road to Emmaus by the one who suffered and died upon it.

Question to Consider

How is the cycle of death, burial and resurrection manifesting in your life?

Prayer

Lord God, teach me through suffering. Reveal yourself in my life's moments of pain and anguish so that I may see your light in the midst of darkness and know that you are working the circumstances of my life for good. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 3 – Hidden in Christ

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Colossians 3:1-3

When our fears and illusions and sins are stripped away, and we give ourselves wholly over to the merciful power of God, we change. We start to become new people. The thing that we must realise, but that we often do not, is that we do not construct these new selves. The process of becoming our true selves is not one that we control, is not one that we can hasten with the latest tools of psychological self-analysis or with an updated course of personal spiritual self-improvement. Our new selves are a gracious gift from God, one that he lovingly gives us as we seek after him. If we seek and struggle and strive to attain our new self, we will fail. If we seek God, then, through his love, we will find our new, true selves.

It is through abandoning ourselves to Jesus' death on the cross that our true selves, hidden in Christ, will begin to emerge and grow. Christ reveals who we truly are, but it is only as we undergo the rhythm of death, burial and resurrection, submitting ourselves to God and the transforming power of his Spirit, that our old selves begin to fall away and our new being in Christ emerges. This is part of the new perspective that Jesus opened up for the two disciples on the Emmaus road. The rhythm of death, burial and resurrection will be painful, but only as we embrace this same path that Jesus walked will we begin the journey towards wholeness and towards finding our true selves in God.

Questions to Consider

Where do you see yourself on the journey to Christ-likeness? What continues to propel you forward on this journey?

Prayer

Almighty Father, keep me on the road to Christ-likeness. Keep pushing me forward, keep changing me and transforming me. I submit myself and my being to you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 4 – Within the Larger Story

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – Luke 24:27

“[F]inding our place in the context of the larger redemption story is an important point of integration as we find ourselves named, revealed and known in the pages of Scripture. We discover that God authors the biblical story – the written record of his ongoing presence and action in the world – and he authors the story of our lives as well...

Helping them find themselves in the story is exactly what Jesus did for the disciples on the Emmaus road, and it was, indeed, transformative. They had been completely hunkered down in their trauma, and it had been pretty consuming. But there was something bigger going on...[Jesus] was locating their personal experience within the larger story of what God was doing in the world. He drew attention to the fact that the traumatic events that had felt so random and personal up to that point had actually been predicted long ago as part of a much more encompassing plan. *“Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in the scriptures.”*

Now, rather, than seeing themselves as mere victims of forces beyond their control, the disciples became valued participants in His-story – the greatest story ever told. They began to find meaning in the events they had endured rather than dismissing them as senseless acts of violence that left them feeling traumatized and empty. This was more than just a history lesson; they encountered Jesus’ transforming presence in and through the biblical story *and* in their own story, and it changed them utterly.

Ruth Haley Barton, *Life Together in Christ: Experiencing Transformation in Community*, pp.114, 117.

Questions to Consider

Where in scripture do you find your story being told? Among which biblical characters do find yourself recognised, named, accepted and understood?

Prayer

Lord God, help me remember that my story is always part of a larger biblical story, and that you are in the events of my life and in my world just as much as you are in the Bible. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Day 5 – Revealing the Heart of the Story

Silence, Stillness and Centering before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading – 2 Peter 3:15-16

Some people don't know what to do with the Old Testament. The God portrayed therein seems so far removed from the Jesus we meet in the Gospels and from the concerns Paul addresses in his letters. Some, like Marcion in the 2nd century, rejected the Old Testament and Israel's God as entirely incompatible with the God revealed in Jesus in the New Testament. But this is to reject the very interpretation of the scriptures that Jesus himself explained to the disciples on the Emmaus Road.

"[The] classical Christian understanding of the Old Testament originates in the New Testament's insistence that what takes place in Jesus takes place 'according to the scriptures' – in accordance with a prior script, and outline or pattern laid down in advance so that the Christ-event should be rightly interpreted. Even on Easter Day, the risen Jesus is not recognised by the disciples on the road to Emmaus until he has 'interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke 24:27); and Christian theology must similarly practise an Old Testament interpretation in the light of what has occurred in Jesus, for the sake of a more adequate understanding and acknowledgement of that occurrence – which is, as we must not forget, the event in which nothing less than the deity of the triune God is both disclosed and constituted. Such an event needs the broadest of interpretive horizons, encompassing creation itself; and early Christian preaching finds the interpretive framework it needs in 'the scriptures', whose previously concealed orientation towards this event is now brought into the clear light of day.

Francis Watson, 'The Bible', in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, John Webster (ed.), p63.

Question to Consider

What is your attitude towards the Old Testament? How does Jesus help you interpret it in a way that transforms you and your life?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, speak to me through scripture. Reveal yourself as I pray, read and study your word, so that I may know you and your will more. Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Saturday/Sunday Notes



*“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us
on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*

-LUKE 24:32

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