

preaching and beautiful music, somehow forget to urge their flocks to look for Jesus, to listen to Him, to *experience* Him among them. But does that mean He isn't there? No.

The two disciples didn't recognize Jesus among them, but He was there, wasn't He? Mary Magdalene didn't recognize Jesus in the Garden outside His tomb, but He was there, nonetheless. And He promised, through His Word, faithfully recorded in the Bible, that "*where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.*" [Mt 18.20] So Jesus is here, at S. James, Georgina, just as He is present in every other house of Christian worship across the land and around the world.

Easter is about new life. But it is also about *experience*... the experience of the risen Christ. I believe we need to do everything possible to encourage people to experience Jesus among them. We need to *share* our experiences—great or small—just as the Apostles and the early church shared their experiences. And we need to remember that, just because we might not *expect* the Lord to appear in our midst, doesn't mean that He won't be there.

The early Church caught on fire for the Lord because they had experienced Him. More than ever, today's Church needs to experience the Lord, and our world needs to experience Him.

Learn everything you can from the Biblical word. *Encounter* Jesus in the sacramental breaking of bread. *Listen* for His voice when you pray. *Look* for the answers to your prayers. *Share* your experiences with one another in a spirit of awe and of thanksgiving. *Expect* to meet up with Jesus and indeed you will.

Χάρις τῷ θεῷ, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Ἀμήν

LECTIONS:

Acts 2.14a, 36-41; Ps 116.1-3, 10-17; 1Peter 1.17-23; Luke 24.13-35

EASTER 3

2014-05-04

Parish of Georgina—S. James' Church, Sutton

The first few weeks of Easter recall some of the more dramatic events associated with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Easter Day saw the resurrection itself. Last week, we remembered Easter night, as Jesus mysteriously appeared bodily to the Apostles, despite their having closed and locked the doors to the house. It would be another week before Thomas would see the Lord for himself, and when he did, Thomas received Jesus as Lord and God.

This morning's Gospel reading is one of my favourites. I like it, because it tells of the risen Lord Jesus, my Saviour and yours. It tells of the importance of Scripture and how it witnesses to God's plan. It reveals Christ in and through the sacrament of His Body and Blood. But most of all, it shares an *experience* of Jesus in a way we can understand.

Let's look at some of the details.

It is the afternoon of Easter Day. Two disciples are returning to Emmaus after having spent some time with Jesus in Jerusalem. While they were in Jerusalem, the whole situation suddenly seemed to go so wrong: Jesus had been arrested, tried and convicted. They had seen Him die an agonizing death on the cross, and they knew He had been buried. Then, to add to the confusion, some of the women came back from the tomb that same morning and told of angels who said Jesus was alive. What to think???

And as they talked and thought and discussed, a stranger fell into step with them. He asked, and they told Him, what they had been discussing. So He rebuked them: "*Oh how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ...Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He*

interpreted to them the things about Himself in all the scriptures.” [Lk 24.25, 27]

Let’s stop to consider for a moment. How often have we heard that the Bible cannot be taken seriously, or that it’s just a bunch of fables, or that somehow it’s irrelevant? Yet Jesus used the Bible to bring understanding to the confusion. *He interpreted to them the things about Himself in all the scriptures.” [v 27]* So there is a valuable lesson here. The Bible points to Jesus. If we would understand the person of Jesus, then we must begin, at least, with a diligent reading of the Bible. When we’ve done that, and when we’ve come to grips with what the Bible says about Jesus, including the truth that *“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved” [Acts 4.12]*, then we can begin to understand how Jesus might be present in our lives, and what He might be accomplishing in us. But the Bible is the best place to start, because the written and inspired Word of God bears reliable testimony to the Incarnate Word of God. Let me add, also, that when Jesus used the scriptures to teach about Himself, He underscored the importance and the relevance of God’s written Word, something that should not be forgotten in our time.

Still, the disciples didn’t connect all the dots! They heard Jesus opening the Scriptures to them, and it gave them something to think about, but that was all. They continued on, until they reached their destination. Jesus made as if to continue walking but they urged Him to eat with them. And He did.

Then something else happened. During the course of the meal, Jesus *“took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.” [Lk 24.30]* Where had they seen that, before? It all began to make sense to them. The Bible says, *“their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.” [31]* I should say their eyes were opened! How did they react? They began to say to each other how their hearts had burned within them as Jesus opened the scriptures to them. (We should all have that

kind of heartburn!) And immediately they returned to Jerusalem to share their adventure with the others.

They recognized Him in the breaking of bread. What the eyes could not see, what the ears could not hear, the heart could perceive. It took the words of Scripture, and it took the Eucharistic action before they realised Who was in their midst.

I love this Gospel because it speaks so clearly of the witness of Word and Sacrament. There are many ways to worship Christ, but I cannot help feeling that approaching Him in Word and Sacrament leads to a very balanced experience.

And this brings me to my third point: Word, Sacrament, and *Experience*.

Have you ever really wondered *why* some Churches seem to have more of a following than others? There are probably a number of factors, some of which might be more obvious than others. But if you look at the total picture of religious practice, there is a bit of a parallel between what happens in many churches today, and what happened on the road to Emmaus that first Easter. Can you suggest what the parallel might be?

The Gospel seems to suggest that the disciples didn’t recognise Jesus along the road, *because they didn’t expect to*. He had died, right? He was buried, yes? So why didn’t He stay dead? Why didn’t He stay buried? It’s probably safe to assume that in most of their experiences, dead people stayed dead. Jesus, Lazarus, and the son of a widow at Nain, were among the notable exceptions to the rule.

The point, here, is that many folks don’t experience Jesus, because *they are not expecting to experience Him*. They haven’t been taught *how* to look for Him, or even that they *ought* to be looking for Him. Many churches, with traditions of fine