

The God Who Breaks in on Our Lives

Easter 3
15 April, 2018

Reading: Luke 24:13-35

May the words spoken help us see Jesus. In His name, Amen.

It was a Monday morning. I was having the day off. Unshaven and more than a little bleary eyed, I staggered down to Countdown for the shopping. Gazing at the Edam cheese trying to work out which one is cheaper, it happens. “Nick! Is that you? So good to see you Nick.” “How have you been Nick?” “It's been a long time Nick.” “Rosemary and the girls, how are they?” They are so enthusiastic and so delighted to see me, every second word is Nick. The only problem is that Nick can't remember who they are. In the end it turns out I married them. They now have little kids and are happy and living in Rolleston. But I just wasn't expecting to see them. They were out of context and they had unexpectedly broken into my life.

Imagine then how much more those two on the road to Emmaus weren't expecting to see Jesus. Not only did he appear out of context but he was supposed to be dead! It is an ordinary day. Two followers of Jesus are walking home discussing the events of the last couple of days. We often assume that they are men but I like to think of them as a married couple walking home for the night.

Jesus draws alongside them. They are downhearted but when he talks their hearts burn within them. He explains the meaning of the Scriptures to them and so they urge him to come inside with them, after all it is getting late and this is a road full of bandits. They sit down for a meal and it is then, when he breaks bread, that their eyes are opened and they recognise him.

And then a bit that we often miss. They get up, and so energised are they at having met the risen Lord, that they walk back to Jerusalem (a journey of about 11 kilometres).

I don't know about you but it would take a lot for me to get up after having walked 11 kilometres followed by a big meal and then, in the dark,

walk another 11 kilometres but, such was the power of this encounter, these disciples did.

Many artists have tried to capture the power of this moment, of Jesus breaking into the lives of this couple.

There is some truly beautiful art generated by this encounter. Most paint Jesus breaking the bread and do stuff with the light and the eyes of the couple, or maybe their hands. Some notable hacks like Rembrandt made a good fist of it. But my favourite is by Diego Velazquez.

His painting, done in 1620, is called ***Kitchen Maid with the Supper at Emmaus***. Diego is no revolutionary, he works in the court of King Philip of Spain after all, but he chooses not to focus on the couple or indeed on Jesus. Instead he draws the eye and then the heart to a simple servant girl. He sets it in his own context of Renaissance Spain and so the servant girl is a Moor, a black woman.

The main action is still there but it's off to the side in the left back corner. You can see by the tilt of her head that she is listening intently to the conversation. And she is suddenly so overwhelmed by the power of recognition, of who this really is, that she is barely able to stand up. She steadies herself with her hand on the counter.

We are in a sense her. We are listening in on a conversation. In our own time and place, Jesus comes to us.

Luke gives us in today's reading two of the classic ways that God breaks into our lives, two of the ways that Christians have found Jesus breaking in on our lives. When we break open the Bible, and when we break open the bread. But God is not limited to these.

A close friend of mine, Ray, was an electrical engineer. He had a nice family, a good job, a happy life. He wasn't especially religious. Then one day he was walking home along a railway platform. By chance he looked up at the sky, it was a clear clear night, and above him he could see all the stars of the Milky Way in their beauty. He was overcome with the majesty of it all. He wasn't given to acts of extrovert emotion, he was English after all, but at that moment he got down on his knees on a cold oily platform and acknowledged God and gave his life to God's service. He became an Anglican priest and gave his life to serving this Jesus of the starry night.

You see God is a God who breaks in on our lives. God comes and makes the ordinary extraordinary.

Last week I had a week's holiday. A young person taught me how to put an out of office message on my emails. I had tried once before only to have it pop up randomly and email the Bishop telling her in April that I was away until October. I got a very quick phone call to tell me that I wasn't!

To be honest I dreaded the moment upon my return when I had to troll through the 50 or so emails that awaited me. But the very first one I opened read like this: *I just wanted to say many thanks to you all for all the work and effort which you gave to ensure the Easter services went so well. I thought they were so well planned and reflected Holy Week in both content, music and engagement. The fact that nearly 200 people attended this morning's service is a testament to how well things are growing and building. I also realise it is all due to your hard work.*

Thanks for everything and I do hope you have some time to yourselves in the next few days.

God Bless...

There's that God of grace again, breaking in.

The risen Jesus is alive and will break into our lives; to a couple walking home, to a servant girl in the kitchen, to an electrical engineer on an oily platform, in an email from a friend.

Nothing is surer than that Jesus is breaking into your life too.