

## **A WALK BEFORE DINNER**

### **Luke 24:27**

*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

What is the best walk you have ever been on?

Many people would list walks in grand mountain vistas – like in the Australian Alps or Cradle Mountain in Tasmania; or maybe along a wide sandy beach at sunset or first thing in the morning.

The walk that has stuck in my memory for decades now is a walk with mum around the garden of our house in Toowoomba.

I reckon I was about six at the time. We had just got the two chooks roasting in the oven, with lots of potatoes and pumpkin. So while the dinner roasted, with its yummy odours wafting out the kitchen window into the garden, we went walking round the garden.

We, by the way, was my mum, my younger sister, two dogs, two or three cats, myself, and a couple of friendly magpies who would hop a head of us and pretend to be dead.

Along the way mum taught us about jam melons and sweet potatoes growing in the vegie garden, loquats and grapefruit, prickly walnuts and juicy gooseberries, and why the agapanthus flowers were blue in one place but purple in another part of the garden.

And all the time the smell of the roasting chooks wafter out the windows of the kitchen.

What a magic afternoon!

And that leads me into the two disciples walking to Emmaus.

We don't know where Emmaus was. In the bible passage there are two different readings for how far they walked – 60 stadia or 160 stadia (a stadion = 157 meters); about 9.5 kms or 25 kms.

There are indeed many references to Emmaus in ancient sources, none of them give us any specific directions. The oldest

identification that is currently known is Emmaus Nicopolis (ca. 160 stadia from Jerusalem).

If this is the right place, then it was a day's walk back home for these two disciples.

Whatever the distance, it must have seemed a long walk to begin with, when all they could do is talk to each other about what had happened over the previous two days with Jesus death and reported resurrected.

But how things changed when Jesus walked with them. They didn't recognise him, but even so he helped them understand, from the scriptures, what God had been planning along, and had been completed in Jesus of Nazareth. *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

What a magic walk that ended up being!

Ironically, the seemingly superficial mystery regarding the actual location of Emmaus fits in nicely with the deeper meaning of this passage. Do you know the way to Emmaus? Emmaus may be here, or there, or anywhere. The site of the original episode is irrelevant. Christ will travel wherever his followers are going. Christ will appear wherever they break bread. Even here. Even now.

The two disciples want the moment to last and as long as possible:

<sup>29</sup>*But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.*

Jesus does stay with them. Their walk together ends in dinner. And I'll say a few words about that soon.

But I want to highlight something special about these words, "Stay with us".

In the King James Version of the Bible, the invitation of the two travellers reads, "Abide with me; for it is toward evening and the day is far spent." These words which were the inspiration for the hymn, "Abide with me/Fast falls the eventide." The hymn was written by Henry Francis Lyte, for 25 years the vicar of the parish at Devonshire, England. He was 54 years old, broken in health and saddened by dissensions in his congregation. On Sunday, September 4, 1847 he preached his farewell sermon and went home to rest. After tea in the

afternoon, he retired to his study. In an hour or two, he rejoined his family, holding in his hand the manuscript of his immortal hymn. Though Lyte died 20 Nov 1847, his hymn did not become popular until the early 1860s.

The hymn is about dying and death (eventide). But more importantly, it is about the Resurrected Lord of Life who is with us, abides with us, even in dying and death.

In a way then, though the two Emmaus disciples seemed to finish their journey at Emmaus, their walk with Jesus had only just begun, and he would indeed stay with them until the journey's ultimate end.

And that is every Christian mother's prayer: that Christ will abide with each child until the journey's end.

And at the end of the road, they had dinner together, and finally recognised Jesus in the breaking of the bread.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in a little book called Life Together has this wonderful insight:

*"The Scriptures speak of three kinds of table fellowship that Jesus keeps with his own: daily fellowship at table, the table fellowship of the Lord's Supper, and the final table fellowship in the kingdom of God. But in all three, the one thing that counts is that 'their eyes were opened, and they knew him.'*

*"The fellowship of the table teaches Christians that here they still eat the perishable bread of the earthly pilgrimage. But if they share this bread with one another, they shall also one day receive the imperishable bread together in the Father's house."*

[Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 66.]

By the way, at the same time Jesus is having dinner with these two disciples, he is in the locked upper room in Jerusalem with the disciples gathered there. Go figure!

And how did these two respond to that wonderful day? They simply had to tell someone!

<sup>33</sup>*They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup>and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." <sup>35</sup>Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.*

They were like school kids coming home at the end of the school day with an enormous big story about what happened at school to tell mum as soon as they get in the door: "Mum!

Mum! Johnny was running under A block and ran into a post and split his skull open and there was blood everywhere and the ambulance came and we all had to stand in the parade ground while Mr Melon told us not to run around the school buildings.”

Fortunately, our message we can excitedly share is much better: “*It is true! The Lord has risen!*”

Amen.

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## By the Way....

### A Mother's Prayer

*If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place, but have not love, I am a housekeeper—not a homemaker. If I have time for waxing, polishing, and decorative achievements, but have not love, my children learn cleanliness - not godliness. Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh. Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly cleaned window. Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk. Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys. Love is present through the trials. Love reprimands, reproves, and is responsive. Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child, then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood. Love is the key that opens salvation's message to a child's heart. Before I became a mother I took glory in my house of perfection. Now I glory in God's perfection of my child.*

*As a mother, there is much I must teach my child, but the greatest of all is love.*

Author Unknown