

Dear Friends,

I have been pleased to chat to a good number of you over the time of the lockdown though I know there are others I haven't spoken to for some time. I'm glad that this is one way in which we can maintain some contact over the period when we cannot meet up face to face.

The gospel reading this week (Luke ch24 vs13-35) is set on a journey. The bible is full of journeys, people are always on the move. In the Old Testament Abraham left his home and set out in obedience to God, the Israelites travelled to Egypt and then spent years wandering in the wilderness after they escaped. In the New Testament we have Jesus constantly moving from place to place and Acts is full of journeys, particularly Paul's missionary journeys.

On the Emmaus Road the two disciples are travelling on a journey away from Jerusalem. They meet a stranger but they don't recognise him. They talk with him for some time but they still don't recognise him. The faith journey that we're on is partly a journey of recognition. We can see ourselves being on a journey into God, a journey on which we can get a greater understanding of God and his purposes. We can't stand still on that journey, though we are often tempted to try to do so.

It is an open-ended journey, we can't see the end of that journey, we simply have to put our trust in God. One of my favourite television programmes is MASH, set in an American field hospital during the Korean War. It was a tragedy when they sold every episode to one of the satellite broadcasters, though I have been given a couple of DVDs. I've always rather liked Major Charles Emerson Winchester, the pompous and sophisticated major from a wealthy and prestigious New England family. In one episode his protective shell breaks and he becomes deeply depressed at the suffering and death he sees around him. He starts desperately seeking answers to the question of death. He disobeys orders and goes up to the front to a battalion aid station where casualties are taken first. He is called to attend to a soldier who is close to death. The soldier says to him, "I can't see anything. I'm dying, hold my hand." Major Winchester holds his hand and sees his opportunity so he asks the man, "Can you see anything? Can you feel anything? I have to know." He is desperate to find the answers to the ultimate questions about that journey.

The journey that we're all engaged in is the journey into God. We don't know all the answers, we don't even know all the questions. But we are travelling. And part of that journey is the journey of recognition. God helps us to recognise the truth about ourselves, he helps us to be honest with ourselves. But he also helps us to recognise the truth about him. And he helps us to recognise the particular role that we are each called to play in his purposes.

With best wishes,

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