

The D-Word...!

Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-32

1 Peter 1:3-9 (Series A, 3rd Sundays of Easter) Ps. 116:1-3, 10-17

Luke 24:13-35

They stood still, with sad faces. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?"

Let us pray:

I am not an English major by a long shot or English as my first language, but have you ever noticed that some of the saddest words in our English language begin with the letter **D**? For example, **disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despondency, depression, despair, and death.**

All of these words sum up how *Cleopas* and his companion were feeling as they walked up the road toward Emmaus. They were *downhearted, confused, afraid, and bewildered* over what had happened to Jesus of Nazareth on Good Friday.

The Master, the Saviour they had *believed in, loved and followed* had been horribly put to death – a degrading death on a cross. Only a week before, their hopes were so high when the excited crowds welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem shouting 'hosanna'. But now Jesus lay dead in a sealed tomb.

Their hopes were dashed; the dream was over! They invested three years of their time and resources, and here they are nothing to show forth. Even the report of the women that Christ's tomb was empty didn't raise their spirits; it only confused them even more.

The two **despondent** disciples walking the road to Emmaus summed up the situation very neatly when they said, "*We had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free!*"

Late August 1998 we have just moved to Montreal. I was on my way to Chateauguy to look at a house that was for sale, when I witnessed a suicide of a young man on the edge of Mercier bridge.

All vehicles were stopped by the police, and we all sat in our vehicles and watched helplessly as police officers and his mother (assumed) negotiated with this young man. Before he jumped to his death.

Human **hope** is a fragile thing, and when it fades, it's difficult to revive. **Despair** and **discouragement** can suck up very bit of hope out of any life. "**We had hoped ...** ", Cleopas and his friend had said.

They were saying, we had high hopes for the future, but now those hopes are gone and all we have left is **disappointment**. Can you and I identify with the feelings of these two disciples in any way?

For each of us the cause of feeling down might be different, but no one could claim that they were not affected by any of those **D- Words. Disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, depression, despondency or despair**. I personally can identify with all the **D-Word** and even more. I have had my share of the **D-word**.

As the two men walked along, a stranger joined them. This was going to be the most significant walk in their whole lives. The stranger asked them what they were discussing. And so, they poured out their hearts to someone who seemed willing to listen.

They tell the stranger all about their **hopes** and their **disappointments**. The stranger simply provides a listening ear. As the three men talk of their disappointment, the stranger walks with them. The stranger was Jesus.

Isn't that a great picture – Jesus walks along the road with his **despondent** and **confused** disciples sharing their troubles? Suddenly this 2,000-year-old story is brought into the present.

When **disappointment, doubt, disillusionment, defeat, discouragement, despondency, depression, and despair** fill our lives, Jesus is the unseen "**stranger**" walking alongside us, listening to us, and if we are willing to hear his voice, revealing himself to us.

When **disillusionment, depression** and **defeat** dominate our lives, Jesus walks with us just as he walked with the two men on the road to Emmaus. He points us to God's Word of promise in the Scriptures that tells us again and again that we are dearly loved by God and that he will stand by us through thick and thin. He turns our **despair** into **hope**.

As evening falls the two disciples asked the "**stranger**" to stop for the night and at the evening meal he *"took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them"*. Suddenly it dawned on them who the stranger was. Jesus himself had ministered to them in their sadness on the road.

Despondent hearts had been changed to hearts filled with **hope** and renewed **faith**. Jesus had revealed himself to them in his Word and through the breaking of bread. Their world once again had come together. They had experienced something of the grace of God.

God graciously cleared away the fog of confusion; he showed to them the heart of God and his plan of salvation, and finally he revealed himself to them. At the moment the "**stranger**" reveals who he was, he vanishes from their sight. But he has not gone; he is still visible to those who have the eyes of faith.

I believe the eyes of faith sees hope even in the darkest of clouds. The road to Emmaus is a symbol of the Christian life. This story is about ordinary despair, and ordinary, Monday-morning toil. It is a story about meeting a stranger, hearing his words of comfort, sitting down at table and sharing a meal.

This story is about the meaning of Easter for us. It enables us to see that the Lord gives hope and joy, when all we see is **disappointment, and despair, discouragement**. It enables us to see our world, not as a place of **death, decay, and defeat**, but as a place waiting, for God's final victory. Grace and gratitude are cousins

This story about the walk to Emmaus is a story for every day life in the year 2023. If you are walking the Emmaus road right now or when you will walk it in the future with those sad **D- words - disappointment, doubt, defeat, disillusionment, discouragement, despondency, depression, and despair** – let me remind you, you are not walking alone.

When our Emmaus road is filled with the **D-Words**, the unseen "**stranger**", the risen Jesus is walking with us right now. When walking with Jesus, our road will become a great highway of **companionship, conversation, prayer, belief and hope**. Grace and gratitude are cousins. The hymn writer puts it beautifully:

Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father, There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not.

As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!" Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided — "Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

The eyes of faith sees, hope even in the darkest of clouds!

**And when life dishes out the D-word,
remember you are not alone the road.**

Amen.