

Road stories have a built-in hook for readers and listeners. Told well, we find ourselves wanting to see where the road leads, where the journey takes not only its characters – but through them, where the road takes us. Consider J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*. At one decisive point, Frodo complains to Gandalf about not having had much choice in taking on this journey as well as the times it has forced upon him. Gandalf offers understanding of the dilemma. But then he adds: *But that is not (ours) to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.* Or, to paraphrase: all we have to decide is what to do with the road set before us.

Two followers of Jesus leave Jerusalem on Easter and take the road to Emmaus. What was on their hearts as they walked? Remember what Luke reported when the women returned to the disciples Easter morning with news of angels telling them Jesus was raised. *But these words seemed to the disciples an idle tale, and they did not believe the women.* The disciples on the Emmaus road, like Paul on the Damascus road, were not on a way distinguished by faith.

What changes this way for these two? They are joined on the road by a stranger. Their conversation turns to the events of the weekend. The two have taken it all in, but things are still in the dark. Unrecognized. Like the stranger. When the stranger enlightens them with a Bible lesson on Messiah and glory and all manner of such things, you would have thought that Word Alone would have sufficed to turn on the light bulb. Not. They journey on toward evening.

To the disciples' credit, they offer hospitality by inviting the stranger to stay with them and share table fellowship. But Luke is fond of reversals, you know: good Samaritans, prodigals who are welcomed, a beggar named Lazarus and a rich one named Dives. Here: the stranger becomes the hospitable host – not simply in breaking bread, but in opening eyes and faith. And the ones on a road trip to get away from it all decide to take up the path of apostleship Christ set before them.

They are back on the road again.

May it be for us as well.

For Reflection and Action:

*What details in this road story surprise you; sound familiar to you?
What do you make of Jesus' words not providing the turning point here?
What road stories in your own journey of faith does this remind you of?*