

“We’ve suffered distress and anguish.  
The snares of death encompass us;  
then I called out:  
O Lord, save our lives.” AMEN!

The student came to the master potter to ask  
what the secret was to the creating  
the perfect vase.

The master took a lump of clay and  
began to knead it at length.

The student watched carefully  
taking note of the pressing of the clay and  
the work of the master’s hands as  
they worked the clay on the wheel.

The student watched thinking that the secret lay  
in the outer form and in the elegance of  
the vases curves.

But when the vase was finished the master said,  
“The secret is not in the clay that’s finished,  
but in the emptiness created.

Without the emptiness it would  
be a block of earth.

The same is true with life.

When we are filled with too much,  
accumulated too much, carrying too much,  
one day we wake up with a strange sensation  
of reaching a limit where nothing else can  
be received.”

There’s no room in us for the  
truly meaningful and important things.

This story from Taoist teacher, Chen Li,  
speaks to what happens to us  
when we are overwhelmed, or too full,  
and when our expectations are crushed.

(Pause)

It is a way, of sorts, to understand these two  
walking the road to Emmaus in Luke’s Gospel.

They were leaving Jerusalem crushed.

They’re expectations shattered following  
the events that occurred.

They were full of emotion, and unable to make sense  
of everything that’d happened.

These two disciples of Jesus were deflated  
and walking home from Jerusalem on that  
first Easter Sunday when suddenly

Jesus came near to them and began  
to walk alongside them.

It is good to be reminded that this is  
the first resurrection appearance of Jesus in Luke.

Up to now, there's only been an empty tomb and  
an angel that told the women that Jesus  
was raised.

Yet, these two walking and encountering  
the risen Christ, don't recognized Jesus.

To them he's a stranger, and (to be honest) a  
rather dim one, because he didn't even know  
the things that have occurred.

Yet, they allow this speedy walker to join them,  
and they continue to strike a conversation,  
even amidst their grief.

And they spoke to each other while they walked.

And it was in that time where Jesus opened

the space for them to begin to recognize him.  
(Pause)

A woman spent years filling her house,  
her calendar, and her mind with many things.

On her shelves were books she never read,  
in her closet were clothes she's never worn,  
in her calendar were obligations  
she didn't enjoy,

and on her tongue were opinions about everything.

One spring she began to clear away the clutter.

At first she thought it meant cleaner shelves,  
but as the rooms emptied her mind  
also began to change.

She noticed the way she'd kept busy  
to cover up the fear.

Fear of close relationships, and of simplicity,  
fear that if she wasn't busy, she wasn't of value.

Then learning to sit at a plain table,  
eating slowly, taking walks,  
she found herself praying without even trying -

life became simpler and space were opened  
for deeper things to become clearer.

You see, that's often how truth comes -  
quietly, after the unnecessary is put down. (Pause)

In perhaps one of the most sad verses of the Bible  
we hear these two proclaim of the hope  
they'd had that Jesus was the one  
to redeem Israel.

The one to finally kick the Roman forces out,  
but instead he'd been executed and  
the enemy gloats.

Wrapped up in disappointment and grief  
they didn't recognize Jesus  
right there with them.

Now, I am not saying that grief is unnecessary,  
but we can understand that when we  
are in full grief, we tend to miss the  
God-sightings right in front of us.

Not one of us can blame these disciples.

We can't blame them because  
the truth is resurrection faith isn't natural.

Maybe it's not even meant to be understood  
and resurrection faith was not meant  
to solve everything, but it does  
*do something* inside of us,  
that is, it creates space.

When there's space, we are left to ask  
"where we stand?"

Are you on the road, overwhelmed and perplexed?  
If so, have hope, Jesus joins you.

Are you among those who reflect and  
listen and ask questions?

Do you hear what the strangers around you  
are saying and allow your hearts to burn?

If so, have strength, for your eyes are  
about to be opened.

Or are you those who truly see  
Jesus in the table fellowship?

If so, be inspired, for it is no small thing  
to eat together and invite others to come and sit.

For how might this story have ended if Cleopas and  
his companion had refused the company of

this “other” one? (Pause)

This resurrection account reminds us  
that our relationship with the risen Lord is

one of long walks, risky conversations,  
reframed traumas, and quiet dinners.

Simple but not simplistic.

These events lead our hearts to burn and  
they open space within us to share the way  
we’ve been opened to see Jesus and

share of his bread and his peace.

**AMEN!**