

Jesus said “What is this conversation that you’re having with each other as you walk? And they stood still, looking sad.” [ Luke 24:17]

Jesus said “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.” [John 16:33]

“This is a wonderful day. I’ve never seen this one before.” Maya Angelou

Day 30. Of the Big Sick, the Great Pandemic of 2020, the Twilight Zone episode which is the real deal. March 16th was the day the restaurants closed and I was mighty disappointed as I was to have dinner that evening with two wonderful Young Life leaders. Then came the realization that many people in that industry here in Maryland were going to lose their jobs, and that many people in other States had already lost their livelihood. A week later, when all the non-essential businesses were shuttered, my mounting disappointment graduated to discouragement and waking up to the doom and gloom news didn’t help. By the time the Governor issued the “stay at home directive” I had established a routine – well, no routine really, wearing the same outfit every day of yoga pants and a T-shirt, going to bed late and waking whenever, forgetting what day of the week it was, wondering if this will ever end. Despondent is a good description. If not for my standing on what I knew to be true – Jesus has overcome the world and hence what do I have to fear, if not for the privilege of having God’s word available at a moment’s thought, if not for the fellowship of the church through phone calls and texts, email and video conferencing, bible studies and sharing of needs and prayers concerns, if not for the corporate prayers of His people, I would be right in the pit of despair.

I love the Easter season, the remembrance of the week from Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his trial, death and his resurrection. One of my favorite eyewitness stories of Jesus’ appearance the day of the resurrection is told by Luke. In Chapter 24, two of Jesus’ followers are walking from Jerusalem to a town called Emmaus, a good 7 mile journey. Both are clearly familiar with the events of the last three days and the discovery that morning of the empty tomb and the claim that one of the women had seen angels who said Jesus was alive. They were having a conversation about what it all meant, perhaps even debating whether his body had been stolen by the disciples, a damage control type of story spun by the religious authorities. In the King James version, Luke describes their physical countenance as being sad. Other translations describe them as discouraged, downcast, gloomy. “Long-faced, like they had lost their best friend.” [The Message] The hope they had that Jesus was the Redeemer, the long-awaited Messiah, their deliverer from the oppression of the Romans and the corrupt religious establishment was extinguished with Jesus’ death. They were confused and bewildered, despairing and without hope that life would ever be the same again.

And then Jesus. He shows up as another traveler on the road, keeping the two from recognizing him. Excuse my paraphrase, but the conversation goes like this. Jesus asks “excuse me but what on earth are you two talking about”. Incredulous, they respond “ What, have you been living under a rock these past few days! Everyone knows what happened to this great teacher, Jesus who was going to save us all and how unfairly he was treated and now his body is supposedly gone from his grave and we haven't a clue what is going on!” In his unmatched patience, Jesus then guides the two through Old Testament prophecy, starting with Moses and “interprets to

them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” [verse 27. ESV] By the time the three reach Emmaus, Cleophas and the other friend invite Jesus to spend the night at their house and have a meal with them. And it is in Jesus’ breaking and then blessing of the bread that the two followers, who for miles absorbed scripture after scripture, truth after truth, spoken by the very Word himself, recognized the risen Jesus. His mission accomplished, Jesus vanishes. Rather than wait until morning, the two friends travel the 7 miles back to Jerusalem to share with the remaining 11 disciples and other followers the good news that indeed Jesus is alive and they have seen him!

The story of the two travelers on the road to Emmaus reminds me of three things. First that Jesus is walking with me, even when I can’t see him as I battle feelings of disappointment, discouragement and despondency and perhaps even despair during this unprecedented time of turmoil. Second, by reading His word, seeking His will, communing with Him every day with a thankful and contrite attitude, my focus shifts from the troubles and travails of this world to the eternal hope that is found in resting in Jesus. And finally, during this time, we are His hands and feet, and while our going is somewhat limited right now, we are to share the Good News of Jesus whenever and however we can, to whomever God places in our path.

Day 30. “This is the day that the Lord has made; let me, let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

Karen Jensen