

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections based on this week's lectionary readings

May 4, 2014

Third Sunday of Easter, Year A

The readings this week:

- Acts 2:14a, 36-41
- Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
- 1 Peter 1:17-23
- Luke 24:13-25

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

Stuck

It seems as though every time I read a well-known piece of scripture, I find something I had never seen before. This week in our Lectionary Group, TKT noted that Cleopas and the other disciple stop walking in order to talk to Jesus. They weren't moving very quickly to begin with, heads drooped, discussing the crushing sadness of the weekend, but when the stranger asks them what they are talking about, they stop completely.

They are stuck.

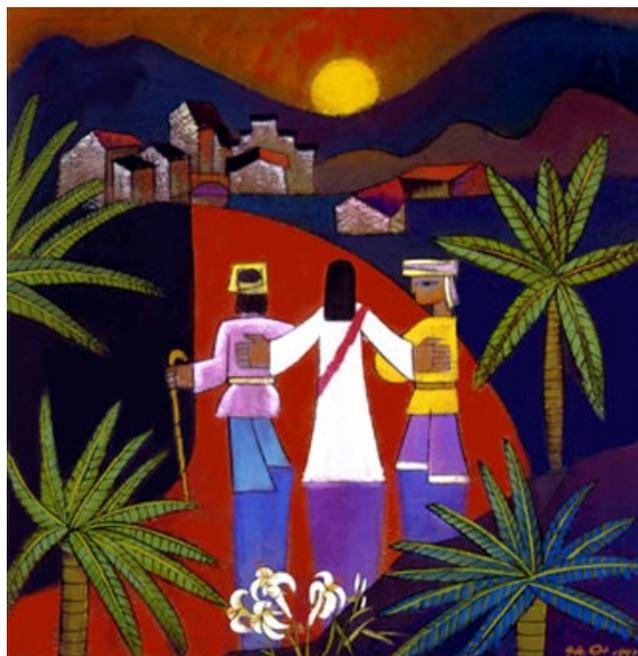
It got me thinking about all the times that I've gotten stuck. Stuck in an ideal. Stuck in an emotion. Stuck in my fear. Stuck with no real desire to get unstuck. Sometimes, I just want to stop and wallow in my self-pity. Sometimes, my fear keeps me from moving. Sometimes, I just don't want to get unstuck.

Cleopas and the other disciple seem to be there. They saw (from a distance) their Rabbi be arrested, condemned, tortured, and killed. They had come to the life altering realization that their hopes were now dead. They heard the women say, "He's gone and an angel told us he is alive." And yet they are still moping their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They're leaving town, giving up, moving on. They are stuck on Saturday, but Sunday has already come.

Lots of things get us hung up. Hopes dashed, budgets trimmed, taxes raised, life altered. We get stuck when there isn't enough. We get stuck when the power of evil gets the edge over the light, but if Easter teaches us one thing, it is that light always wins. In word and sacrament, in the exposition of scripture and the breaking of bread, God's glory is revealed again and again and again, helping us to get unstuck again and again and again.

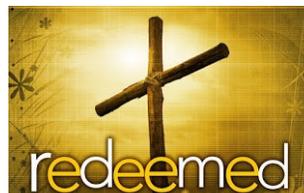
Steve Pankey, [The Christian Century](#)

From the very beginning, we find the early Christians gathering together to share with each other the bewildering experiences they have had with the risen Christ. I find it interesting that a common theme in the stories about the disciples discovering that Jesus was alive is that they immediately went back to the rest of the group to tell the others what had happened. It's one thing for them to race from Golgotha to the upper room in Jerusalem. It's another thing altogether for the disciples on the road to Emmaus to run 7 miles back to share the good news with the others. Notice that the Gospel reading says that "That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem." Anybody up for a late night 10k? When they got there, they found "the eleven" were saying that Jesus was risen. And they in turn shared what had happened to them. The cumulative effect is that in the sharing they were supporting and encouraging and strengthening each other's faith! As one contemporary prophet puts it, "The resurrection is not a fact to be believed, but an experience to be shared." ~ From [It Takes a Village](#), Alan Brehm



Reflecting on the Word

Word



1st Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

What a powerful feeling it is to stand up before a vast crowd of people and tell them exactly what you believe! That's what we hear Peter doing as he speaks. His voice rings out fearlessly as he insists that the crucified Jesus is the Messiah sent by God. How do you think we can follow Peter's example as ministers of the word? What will you do to grow more in your understanding of God's word? How will you make the word of God more a part of your life? [Proclaiming Faith](#)

Psalm Reading: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

What images of God are presented here? What did the author of the psalm experience when he called on God? How does the psalmist respond to God? God invites us to talk to him about our troubles. He does not ask us to ignore them or minimize them or take care of them ourselves. How does this compare or contrast with your expectations of God? Think of a time when you had difficulty calling on God. What made it difficult for you? Recall a time when you did call on God and he "answered you and showed you great and mighty things." What was this experience like for you? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)



Praying Toward Sunday

We find ourselves on that dusty road to Emmaus, reasoning and praying together, trying to make sense of Easter's promise. Others join us on the way, adding their hopes, their dreams, their struggles. But finally we come to the table, where we fall silent. Words fail us now; now we must live into truth. Just as the disciples' eyes were opened when Jesus broke the bread, so may the eyes of our hearts be opened as we are fed from this, God's table. May our hands too be opened to offer to the world the gift of our love and our resources. Our hearts burn within us; it is time to live in faith. [Anna's Hosannas!](#)

The LORD protects the simple hearted; when I was in great need, he saved me. ~ Psalm 116:6 NIV

Let go of everything, now, in this moment.
In the perfect poverty of prayer
walk away from it all to God,
poor and naked, alone and without recourse.
Utterly needy and dependent, fall helplessly
into God's waiting arms,
where you will receive,
Beloved,
you will receive.

- Steve Garnaas-Holmes, The One Thing

3rd Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-23

Think of a Christian you admire. In what ways does that person resemble Christ? Praise God for what you learn about him through others. What events from the past would help the recipients of Peter's letter to appreciate God's concern for them? Peter links the Word of God with salvation and new birth. What do you think Peter meant when he said that this Word is "enduring" and "stands forever"? How might an honest attempt to "be holy" improve your relationships with people close to you? In what situations might it make you, as verse 17 says, more like a stranger? Jot a quick list of all you have to do today (or tomorrow). How could you begin to tackle this list with the goal "Be holy in all you do"? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

4th Reading: Luke 24:13-25

What does Christ's resurrection mean to you? What would the world lose if Jesus did not rise from death? What strikes you about the stranger's dialogue with the disciples? We can sympathize with the disciples' struggle between despair and hope. In his rebuke Jesus identifies the cause of their despair—reluctance to believe the Scriptures about a suffering Messiah. How have the Scriptures ever moved you from despair to new hope? We have been carefully studying the life and mission of Jesus. What would you say are your three greatest incentives to be his "witness of these things"? What a message we have! The Lord Jesus has come to bring new hope and new joy to the world! How can you (and your church or fellowship group) take Jesus' message of new hope and new joy to your community? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)