

Dear Friends,

LUKE 24: 13-24

Have you had any strange dreams lately? You would not be alone. It is thought to be a result of our minds working overtime to make sense of life with the coronavirus. This should not be underestimated. What we are facing is traumatic. We usually assume that the world is mostly safe and reliable. We also assume that what we do will be reasonably fruitful. We are confident that we are securing the future for ourselves, for those we love, for the causes for which we care. But we are living through a pandemic which has shattered these assumptions. The future has become uncertain. Our personal survival is threatened. We're not just facing a few difficulties. This is trauma.

The friends of Jesus also experienced trauma when he was put to death. They too had their assumptions shattered. They belonged to a people who had been waiting for centuries for God to set them free. They had come to assume that Jesus was "The One" through whom God would take charge, putting right all that was wrong and setting free the people who had long been oppressed by foreign nations. But with the execution of Jesus they had abandoned all these hopes. On the morning of the resurrection some of the women had come with news that they had been to the tomb and found it empty. They said they'd seen a vision of angels who had told them that he was alive. Their story had seemed foolish. Some of the men had gone to check and yes, the tomb was empty. But they had seen no sign of Jesus.

The break up of the devastated community began. Two of them walked away from Jerusalem taking the road to Emmaus. One of them was called Cleopas. We don't really know who Cleopas was. We do hear about a Clopas, who was the husband of one of the Marys who bravely stayed close to Jesus at the cross. I like to imagine that Clopas and Cleopas are the same and that it's Mary and Cleopas who are the two travellers who we meet on the road in deep conversation.

A stranger joins them. He asks what they are discussing. They stand still, looking sad. Their hearts are breaking with grief and disappointment. The stranger is aware that their eyes can't see, that their hearts are closed and getting a little cold. But the stranger also knows how to heal, how to open eyes and warm hearts, for the stranger is the risen Jesus.

God bless you,

Tony