

The Reason for an Emmaus Road Experience

Introduction

If your life has ever been shattered, then this is your story. If your life has ever been restored, then this is your story. And if you've ever been in that in between place, between being shattered and restored, then this is your story.

Within this story is a pattern that describes the journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus and back to Jerusalem, and even beyond Jerusalem. It's a journey Cleopas and his companion take and it's a journey each of us has taken, is taking, or will take. It's not, however, a one-time journey. It's a journey we take again and again. However, the end outcome is supposed to be the same – God's good news in a risen Jesus Christ is supposed to go into all the world.

Jesus invited people to believe in Him. Not just in His teachings. Not just in His cause. Not just in His ideology, but in Him. He called people to a personal faith – faith in a person. And the response of His followers to His intensely personal call, was to sacrifice everything in devotion to Him.

Jerusalem – Luke 24:13-24

Have you ever felt like you just had to get away? Or felt like life had given you more than you could handle? Have you ever run away from life? Have you grieved the death of a loved one, a dream, an identity, a future? Has your life ever been shattered? If so, then you know what it's like to be Cleopas and his companion.

We may "run away" in all manner of paths. It may be a physical up and going, or it may be a dependency or addiction, or into ourselves. We tend to want to run from pain – and that's understandable.

Emmaus - Luke 24:25-31

Emmaus is our escape from life. Or so we think. What we don't know at the time, and what Cleopas and his companion did not know, is that it is also the way back to life. That realisation happened for the two disciples, as it does for us, in the breaking of the bread.

It wasn't an escape from life that took them to Emmaus, but a hunger for life. It wasn't brokenness that took them to Emmaus but a hunger for wholeness. It wasn't a shattering that took them to Emmaus, but a hunger for restoration.

Jesus wasn't just giving them bread, He was giving them back themselves. This was their restoration. When Jesus broke the bread something in them broke open. With that breaking open, their lives were being put back together. So, it is for us as well. We've all had times when our lives were broken open in ways we could never imagine or have done for ourselves.

Despite how it feels, our brokenness is not an ending. It is a breaking open to new life, to new seeing, to new recognition, to community, welcome, hospitality and love. Isn't that what we experience when we have our eyes opened to the sacrifice of Jesus giving of Himself?

Jesus fed them not just with bread but with Himself: with His body, His life, His love, His compassion, His strength, His forgiveness, His hope, with all that He is and all that He has. Their life was being restored in their being broken open.

Jerusalem - Luke 24:32-35

Jerusalem is not only the place of death it is also the place of life. It is not only a place of sorrow, but also a place of joy. It is not only a place of shattering, it's a place of restoration.

We leave Jerusalem in order to return to Jerusalem: to face our deaths, losses and shattered lives. In so doing we discover that life awaits us. We return to reclaim ourselves, to recover the lost pieces of ourselves. The city hasn't changed but we have.

Shattered lives, broken bread, restored lives. Jerusalem, Emmaus, Jerusalem. That seems to be the pattern. It's never, however, as simple or easy as it sounds. It's one thing to name the pattern but another to live it. It takes time and effort. It's not easy and it's painful.

It means trusting that somehow the broken pieces of our lives will become the pieces for a new life, a new seeing, a new way of living.

Jerusalem and Beyond – Luke 24:45-49

In all three synoptic gospel accounts – they end in a similar pattern. Jesus appears to His followers, convinces them beyond a shadow of doubt of His resurrected life and then tells them you will be my witnesses to tell the world about Me being alive and how they can find their wholeness in Me.

It's when our hearts burn within us that we have something to share with others. We share what we have experienced – being restored by Jesus.

Jesus was in Jerusalem before Cleopas and his companion ever left. He was with them on the road to Emmaus. He was in the breaking of the bread. And he was already in Jerusalem when they returned. Do you know what those intersections are called? They are called the gifts of God for the people of God and they are meant to be told to others.

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you see this pattern in your life? How have you experienced it?
2. Are you leaving Jerusalem? In Emmaus? On the way? Returning to Jerusalem? Or telling others about your experience?
3. What is your Jerusalem today? Is it a place of sorrow and loss or is it a place of life and restoration?
4. In what ways has your life been shattered? Is it in pieces today? What might you be running from today?
5. What is your deepest hunger? What are you running toward?
6. Where is your Emmaus? What do you need from Emmaus today?
7. How do you imagine the lives of these two disciples to now be different? How would you like your life to be different?
8. What today in your life is being broken open? What needs to be broken open? What in you, in your present circumstances, is being or needs to be restored and put back together?
9. Will you go from your Jerusalem to tell others about Him?