

The Road to Emmaus, Year A, 2011

Close your eyes, and picture yourself on a road. It's the road of your life just now... see yourself there. Now, ask your heart if it's the right road. Are you on the road, the path, the journey, the course you're meant to be on?

Sometimes we find ourselves, like Cleopas and his friend, on the wrong road. Wrong road, wrong direction, wrong reasons, like anger or fear, or a longing to retreat, go back, go home, to the safe and familiar. Even if we've outgrown it.

Sometimes we just kind of end up there, on a detour, heading for Emmaus instead of Galilee, because we didn't have the courage to either stay put, or to move on.

Where are you today? Stop for a moment, look around, take stock: Ask your heart: Am I on the right road, the one I'm supposed to be on?

If you are, you might find it bright and easy and well-marked. But more often than not, even the right road, especially that, can feel treacherous, scary or sad.

And sometimes it's clear where you're headed- you can see all the way to the end. But more often, even the right road, especially the right one, unfolds itself only one shaky step at a time.

Anyway, see yourself on whatever road you're on, and feel how it feels to be there.

Is there someone on it with you, or are you alone?
Is this a road you're meant to walk alone or is there someone who could help you keep walking it? Have you asked them to come?

Maybe there's someone who keeps you from walking your own road. How could you let them go, so that both of you can get onto the roads that are right for you?

Now, for a moment, even if it's all wrong, dare to just be there. Let be what is. Someone has called this "the divinity of what just is". What just is, is divine, because God is in it. Whatever road you're on, no matter how far off course or strange, no matter how rocky or smooth, twisted or straight, no matter how crowded or lonely, right or wrong, that road, the one you're on, is divine, because here comes Jesus on that very road, looking for you. See him finding you there.

Cleopas and his friend didn't recognize him, but you do, because he's looking at you with more love than you've ever seen. It makes you want to check behind you to see who he's really gazing at like that! But, nope, it's you.

And you may want to hide, or explain yourself, or pretend everything's fine, but you know he can see all the way down into your weary, wandering soul.

So, as he falls in step, imagine telling him all about it. All about your fear, or resentment, or confusion, or boredom, or regret, or longing, or hunger, or grief, or maybe your contentment, gratitude, wonder, joy, or peace. And he listens. He listens, like no one has listened, ever.

One of his best things is how he meets us where we are and loves us right there, stays with us there for however long it takes, giving us just what we need—faith, healing, hope, bread, time, forgiveness, courage, quiet, clarity, rest.

And then, when we're ready, and not a moment before, he turns us around to the right road. Or, if we're already on it, he just walks along beside us, pointing out new wonders along the way.

Wherever you are, in whatever shape you are, with whatever need you have, he is there with you. He loves to be with you, little old you, the *you* that you are. Imagine that! He loves to stay with you, at the table of your life, to feed you with his love, till you are satisfied, and ready for whatever is next.

So, enjoy that for a moment. Take it in, all the sweetness of his love, for you.

Now, he wants to ask you something. He wants to know where your people are, where your community is. Here in Emmaus, or back in Jerusalem?

Who are the people he's given you with whom to live your faith? Are they here in this room? Is this your community? And, if so, how deep are you in? Have you given your heart, your hopes, and your wounds into the keeping of these folks here? Or are you holding back, waiting for a more perfect church, just half-in, in case you need to run?

What would it take to make this community, with all its flaws, yours, your people, the very ones with whom you can become the disciple you were made to be?

Is there something you need to ask of them or give them? Is there one of them you need to forgive, or thank, or befriend?

For Cleopas and his friend, the end of the Emmaus road wasn't Emmaus at all. They had to walk it, though, because that's where they met Jesus, who turned them back around to Jerusalem, to their community, their people, so that they all together could get to Galilee, where they all belonged.

Without their own terribly human companions, Cleopas and his friend couldn't be about their work, Jesus work.

And Jesus couldn't get on with his own work without them, just like he can't without you. Are these your own terribly human people, and if not, then where are they? But, if so, how could you make them more your own?

Before you come back to this room, take a moment to decide what you'll do with all that your heart might have shown you just now on the road.

And, when you open your eyes, dare to let something be all new-yourself, your people, our table, your mind, your heart. Your road, or how you travel it.

Because, whatever, whomever, wherever Jesus touches, he is always, forever, by the power of his love, making all things as fresh and new as this day's dawn.

Amen.