

23rd April 2020

Dear Friends,

As we continue to move through the Easter Season, spotting glimpses of resurrection all around us, and with beautiful sunshine most days, we are still living with the strange phenomenon of being largely shut in our homes. For some holidays will have been cancelled and plans set aside, birthdays and anniversaries will have been celebrated but very differently, and this will continue as time moves forward. I do not know how many of you are getting out for a daily walk, I know some are, and some are not able to, and yet this week the Lectionary offers us the story of a walk. The long walk to Emmaus. I will copy some of it here:

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.' Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As I ponder the story, I am struck by several things, first that the two companions did not recognise Jesus, they knew him, but maybe because of grief, maybe because of confusion and despair and loss of hope, they simply did not realise who he was. As we walk through these days I wonder if we are taking time out to connect with God, to worship, and to see and know that we are deeply loved? I must admit my days are very busy, but I am striving to ensure that I do take that time, for it lifts me out of the busyness (I am busy and need your prayers), and makes me stop, makes me be still, and to know that God is in control. We can do this in many different ways, we can pause and read and pray, we can listen to worship music, we can walk around our gardens noticing the beauty of the season, we can sit quietly, maybe lighting a candle. We can make a cup of coffee or tea and simply sit quietly and know that we are in God's presence, or maybe in our busier family homes simply spend some time together sharing the story of Jesus with one another. Or maybe all or any mix of those.

The story continues:

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the

eleven and their companions gathered. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24: 13-35)

Their eyes were opened and then he vanished, how frustrating, but it did not dim their joy, they had to return to Jerusalem, and they ran back! As I read that I reflect that we will be back together, we will have stories to tell of how we have met with God in these days, we will see that in all of this Jesus has walked with us. Just as the Footprints prayer reminds us, there will be days when he has carried us, because we were not able to walk alone. I am so encouraged once again that we are not alone, that you tell me about one another, and that you are genuinely surprised when I call you (watch out you are on my list, I am trying to call all of you at some point- but quite often you are on the phone, so I hang up, but will try again). If I don't get to you and you want a chat with me, then please call, I would love to hear from you. One day soon I pray that we will be together breaking bread. In the meantime, let's be in touch, let's be the church in our homes, in our relationships and our calls, letters and more, and let us pray for one another and our ongoing mission to love and serve our communities, just as Jesus has called us to do.

I leave you with a song and then a challenge:

*From the breaking of the dawn
To the setting of the sun,
I will stand on every promise of Your word.
Words of power, strong to save,
That will never pass away,
I will stand on every promise of Your word.
For Your covenant is sure,
And on this I am secure,
I can stand on every promise of Your word.*

*When I'm faced with anguished choice,
I will listen for Your voice,
And I'll stand on every promise of Your word.
Through this dark and troubled land
You will guide me with your hand
As I stand on every promise of Your word.
And you've promised to complete
Every work begun in me,
So I'll stand on every promise of Your word.*

*When I stumble and I sin,
Condemnation pressing in,
I will stand on every promise of Your word.
You are faithful to forgive,
That in freedom I might live,
So I stand on every promise of Your word.
Guilt to innocence restored:
You remember sins no more!
So I'll stand on every promise of Your word.*

*Hope that lifts me from despair,
Love that casts out every fear,
As I stand on every promise of Your word.
Not forsaken, not alone,
For the Comforter has come,
And I stand on every promise of Your word.
Grace sufficient, grace for me,
Grace for all who will believe,
We will stand on every promise of Your word.*

We stand as the church, on every promise we have been given, to cling to hope and not to despair, and in that we are called to worship. A part of our worship is giving, and I know that many of you are in so many ways. Currently, we are separate from our buildings, but they still need maintaining and all our expenses still need meeting. For those giving by Standing Orders and Direct Debits, I thank you for continuing. For those who take part in the envelope scheme, thank you for continuing. Others maybe give in different ways, and again I thank you for that, while recognising that for some these hard times mean a loss of income and that giving is no longer possible, please hear that there is no criticism, we are all affected in different ways by our current situation. However, I do urge you to consider what the Spirit might be saying to you, and to give accordingly. Pray for one another, pray for the future we face, but know, truly know that God has us in his hands, and that our future is assured, for the grace, the deep grace of God is sufficient for us all, and that has not and will not change.

So, I leave you with deep blessings and a picture of a road. Ponder it, imagine walking it with Jesus, what might you want to say to him right now? The listen for what he might be saying to you.

May God bless and keep you

Sally Coleman

Reverend Sally Coleman



The path up to Stanage Edge from Redmires.