

Human Fixes and Divine Delight

Today's gospel takes us right into the heart of human fixes that by the grace of God get finished off with a healthy dose of divine delight.

Allow me to explore and to explain.

We have these two, who have pinned their human fixes on Jesus, the warrior king.

The one who would roust the Romans, take his seat on David's throne, and rule all of Israel for a thousand years with that time honored banner of "Peace Through Strength!"

What hopes!

What glory!

Only to have it all come crashing down, when this strange Jesus refuses to gather armed men or armed angels, but instead submits to the powers of the day: the religious high horses and the imperial Roman empire.

And here they trod, on the long road to Emmaus; back on the road to the next human fix for the grief that overwhelms them.

The road to ..." Emmaus may be buying a new suit or a new car or smoking more cigarettes than you really want, or reading a second rate novel....

Emmaus may be going to church on Sunday.

Emmaus is whatever we do or wherever we go to make ourselves forget that the world holds nothing sacred; that even the wisest and the bravest and the loveliest decay and die; that even the noblest ideas that men have had — ideas about love and freedom and justice — have always in time been twisted out of shape by selfish men for selfish ends." Beuchner. *The Magnificent Defeat*, pp 85-86.

But as they head back with heads hanging, back to headquarters, someone stops them in their tracks.

Lest we think we have a leg up on them, because we know it's Jesus, just hold that thought for a bit — because I'll bet you dollars to donuts that Jesus has stopped you dead in your tracks too — and if you're anything like me, you never knew him either.

But I digress.

They stop cold.

He asks what's happening.

They look at him with shock at his ignorance and tell him why and what and wherefore.

Funny how the only fellow who actually does know all about it is the one asking the question.

Funny how the ones doing all the talking have no idea how wrong they are just about everything.

But that's Jesus for you.

In the 1970's Playboy Magazine caused a huge ruckus when they published a drawing of Jesus laughing.

People thought it disrespectful and lacking in the proper sanctity.

But I gotta believe that Jesus did (and does) lots of laughing!

Not only does he eat and drink with folks who know how to have a good time, but he goes on telling stories about God that are way past the edge of hilarious.

Like how God is somehow like the irate neighbor who's roused from bed to stumble downstairs and give bread and beer to the fellow next door; or how God is somehow like a crooked employee who's smart about making friends; how God is like the embarrassing dad who hikes up his pants and runs to welcome home the deadbeat son who threw away the family jewels; or how the kingdom of God is like a pile of smelly leaven, what we call yeast; or that nuisance of a fast growing weed, that invades and overwhelms gardens, the mustard bush.

So I gotta believe Jesus is biting his lip while the two Emmaus bound friends are doing their talking.

The human fix didn't work.

The human fix is another disaster.

And so, back to Emmaus, back to life in front of the TV, back to that glass of gin, back to the life of boring predictability.

Back to Emmaus.

And yet.....

It seems that only here, at the end of the road for a human fix, in the midst of hopeless despair, when we have come to the end of our own resources, when our own best thinking brings us face to face with the brick wall, here comes Jesus, with something we might call divine delight.

Divine delight as he takes them back through the Scripture and shows them.....shows them what?

Perhaps he begins to talk about the God who is not the God of military might and coercion and punishment, but rather that God is the God who patiently waits; who demonstrates his power through the misery of the cross, who brings about transformation not through the gun or the sword, but through love and reconciliation.

Perhaps he shares with them how, in the death of Jesus, death is not so much defeated as it is somehow included in life — so that it's not like death did something to Jesus and then God reached into the grave and undid it—like a resuscitation or a reincarnation, but rather that Jesus did something to death, by somehow ending the conflict between life and death, by somehow taking up, and swallowing death into life.

Perhaps he explains to Cleopas and his friend all the things in Scripture which concern himself, starting with Moses and the Prophets—not so much telling them that the Hebrew Bible is pointing particularly to Jesus, as much as he is explaining to them, how from the beginning, Moses and the Prophets find themselves in the grasp of the one true God, who is Life, in the grasp of the one true God who swallows death, in the grasp of the one true God before whom no one is dead, but all are alive. Steve Godfrey, paraphrased.

Somehow, when we finally muster the willingness to take a step back, it is divine delight that steps in, and brings us home to a place we never dared to even dream exists: home to a place where surrender creates victory, where weakness becomes strength, where death is swallowed up by life.

In our weekday lives, even here in our church lives, it's so easy for many of us, myself squarely included, to get caught up with our own love affairs of how and

what to do, how we deal with family and each other, how we shape the ministries we do, so that we can often get in the way of what God has already done.

But there is a narrow door that leads to a different way, a way to take that step back, out of our own limelight, so that the light of Christ can shine.

That door, that way, is love.

And we see it today as they arrive at Emmaus.

It seems he's continuing on ahead of them.

"Stay with us please!"

"Eat, rest, enjoy!"

He agrees, he joins them at the table.

And with that grace of hospitality, the guest becomes the host, and at long last, he takes, blesses, breaks and gives the bread.

And they see him, and he vanishes.

A human fix gives way to divine delight.

And Jesus smiles.

And we do too.

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