

"Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

This story takes place on the evening of Easter, not 24 hours after Jesus rose from the tomb. We are now 2 weeks away from that feast day; two weeks, and more than 2000 years.

I suppose those two disciples who were walking along the road to Emmaus should be forgiven that they were having trouble digesting the momentous events that had just occurred that very day. But Jesus expresses something quite different.

"Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe," he said. But a closer look tells us that Jesus wasn't frustrated with their astonishment, or their struggle to understand recent events. Jesus does not chide them that they were having trouble grasping what all had happened. Neither is Jesus particularly upset that they did not understand his teachings about his death and resurrection. Instead Jesus was more concerned with these men's lack of understanding of their own beliefs, and their own Scriptures.

"Oh, how foolish you are," Jesus said, "and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets declared." It is not as if the events of Jesus life, death, and resurrection happened in a vacuum of time and history. The prophets had pointed to the coming of the Messiah for centuries yet these men almost missed it. Or did they?

Just as they were struggling with how to make sense of the day's stunning events and news, so they were struggling to understand God's hand within those events. Are we not like these men? Are we not each on our own roads to Emmaus, on any given day, in any given place?

Their challenge, and ours, is that we struggle to understand. We ask why, and how. We seek to discern God's hand in both the joys, and the sorrows of our lives. That is, in fact, the life of faith. That is what we are supposed to do.

These men were good, and faithful men who expected God to act but they were stunned in the way God acted. It is well worth noting that Jesus met these men where they were, and on their way. He sought them out, asking what what they were discussing, and then listened to their tales, and thoughts before he taught them.

Why? Because these were children of God, humans struggling with the life of faith, struggling to understand a God that is bigger, and broader, more wise, and effective, and powerful than they were. Jesus' words to these men were not a chastisement for their struggle to make sense of recent events. Jesus' words were gentle reminders that each of us need to hear from time to time, even moment to moment.

"Oh, how foolish you are," Jesus said, "and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets declared." The focus of Jesus words to these men, and to us, is that we expect God to work in certain ways. God rarely works in ways that we would expect.

Two thousand years later it is still an amazement to each of us that God Almighty became human, and lived as one of us, died as one of us, and rose again. We all struggle with understanding, and believing that. It makes no sense, but it is true. So many things our God does makes no sense, but they are true.

Perhaps the central struggle of the life of faith is that we are blindsided time, and again to discover God working in ways we would least expect, and in ways that we probably wish he wouldn't.

But such is the life of faith. It is a life of faith, of faithfulness, of challenge, and surprise because that is who God is. God is not us. Or, to put it more clearly, you are not God.

Why are we surprised to find God working in peculiar ways? Isn't that how God always works? Why are we stunned to find God where we least expect him? Have we ever found God anywhere else? Why are we so often so foolish, and slow of heart to believe what the prophets have told us? What the apostles have told us? What the saints of old have told us? What our Lord himself has told us?

We are this way because we are human, struggling to see through a glass darkly, trying to make sense of life in a senseless world. But thank God that we are not alone.

We follow a Savior who seeks us, meets us where we are, understands our limitations (because he, too, once knew them); and who teaches us that God is working in the most surprising ways.

What a wonderful story that on the evening of that first Easter two obscure disciples, one whose name we do not even know, were blessed to be met by their Lord, and taught the truth of their convictions, and hopes.

As we leave here this morning, taking our own roads where they lead, let us not be surprised when we find God sidling up next to us, nudging us, teaching us, and encouraging us.

We shouldn't be surprised because that is what God does; from that first Easter to this very day.