



Day 3:

Dashed to Delighted Hope

by Lesley Searle

Luke 24 v 21 ‘... But we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel.’

Everyone seems to have a time in their lives when they walk their personal Emmaus Road. We look down as our feet kick up the dust, and we say with those two of long ago, **“but we had hoped”**.

It could be many things:

But we had hoped the tumour wouldn’t be malignant ...
 We’d hoped our marriage would survive ...
 We’d hoped our son would return home ...
 We’d hoped the depression would lift ...
 We’d hoped to keep our job ...
 We’d hoped to carry the baby to full term ...
 We had hoped to feel God’s presence when we prayed ...
 We had hoped our faith would hold up under trial ...
 Words of pain, disappointment, bewilderment, and longing. Words we voice when we come to the end of our hopes, when expectations and dreams lie dead.



We resonate with these two, for as far as they are aware, Jesus was dead. The one they staked their lives and hopes on. The Messiah they expected to change the world has died the most public, humiliating, and horrific death, and the promises of a new kingdom lay in tatters. Even worse, Jesus’ tomb and body is missing! The women of their group seem to have gone mad with bizarre reports of angels, gardens and ghosts. It’s all fallen apart.

But we had hoped ...

It’s hard to realise that this is actually resurrection day, and for some resurrection takes longer than three days to arrive! Sometimes, recognizing the risen Christ is difficult.

Isn’t it amazing that the risen Jesus just quietly comes alongside these weary and defeated disciples? No hullabaloo, triumphant trumpet blasts announcing victory, no “ta-das” or grand entrance; but with no effort to vindicate himself He walks on a quiet road, so gentle, so understated with two of his despondent disciples.

We want dramatic. We want convincing. We want spectacular. **We had hoped ...**

Yet, as he falls in step with those walkers, he invites them to share their story - and they do. All their confusion and uncertainty. All their pain and loss. Jesus listens, and then tells his story back to them, explaining what they had missed, puts in context, grounds truth in the lens of scripture with a narrative that long precedes an act of redemption, hope, love that spans centuries. Jesus shares his story from his word, and hope stirs.

Romans 5 v 5 ‘... and hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.’

We all need Jesus to meet us on our Emmaus Roads. To weave his promises and purposes into our narratives through his word.

Even when they reach Emmaus, he gently gives them a choice. Do they want him to stay? Do we? Do they want to go deeper with this man who makes their hearts burn, or are they content to leave it there? Jesus doesn’t impose, but gives us space and freedom to choose – always. Do I really want to know who this stranger is? And when they ask him to stay and he takes that bread, breaks, blesses – such a simple act ... everything changes. God makes himself real in the mundane, the ordinary, the rhythms of our everyday.

But we had hoped ...

The stranger, who is the Saviour, still meets us on our Emmaus roads. He gently writes himself into our stories and he wants us to know the dashed to delighted experience these two found in recognition.

May we keep walking, keep telling our stories, keep our hearts burning, wherever our Emmaus road is taking us; it is surely to the place of **Romans 15 v 13: ‘May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit’**, where we know that blessed assurance, Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

May it be so in each of our dashed experiences – may we be delighted with this hope.

