

## SHEARWATER REFLECTION; EASTER 3, Sunday 26 April

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### **Behold!**

Behold what? An empty tomb? Remarkable!

Yes, a tomb that is empty because life cannot be contained. Because death will always have its way. But then life bursts out, renewed and transformed.

There is no resurrection without death.

Meaning and purpose...gone. Life...gone. Well what is emptiness and loss then?

Our hands must be truly empty, their grip loosened, in order to reach out and touch the simple shape of eternity. It is only when hope is truly dead and buried that love bursts out (or bursts in). This is when love is born. Unexpectedly. Uncontainedly. Uncomprehendingly. Sensationally. In odd and unexpected places. Sometimes unrecognisably...until it calls our name and walks into our path, shares a meal with us, breaks bread with us, has brekky on the beach or a dinner of fish with us. It takes on our doubts and our fears and walks beside us in the grief and loss into the new adventure of a different way to be. In this is the reborn and renewed life we call "born again".

Holy one of unexpected and rebirthed places,

Remind us again and again of the letting go, of embracing the empty, allowing the death. Sit with us in the garden of all that feels like it is gone, truly gone. Let us hear in the hollow of the empty, your love echoing back to us in newness and refreshment. In this unique and strange time, when themes from the past cannot be reshaped but must be emptied out and begun anew, refresh and recreate us as your church for this time. In the strange emptiness of now, there is a fullness which calls us back to the basics and we hear the primal sound of your Spirit hovering over us. Behold! The Christ, the very Source of Life here with us.

Thanks be to God!                      Amen

### **Walking away.**

We've all done it. We've walked away when things in our life have got too outrageously tough to bear. It's what we do. Sometimes it's the hard but healthy thing to do, sometimes it's the only thing to do, and sometimes walking away seems right, but maybe it's not...

Walking away is what two disciples are doing in the Gospel reading from Luke this week. They're walking away, away from Jerusalem. They've seen Jesus arrested, tried, beaten, crucified and then his life-less body placed in a tomb. Now they've heard nonsense from some women and had the women's unbelievable claims verified by some men (interesting!) that Jesus' body is not there, that he is alive. Look, can you see them on the road? They are walking away.

They're putting it behind them, for some reason, maybe it's respite and maybe it's more permanent than that. Maybe they're going back to somewhere that feels safe and known, whatever it is, they are moving away from Jerusalem and the craziness of the past few days. Then a traveller approaches and joins them, asking what they're talking about, listening patiently to their response. In the conversation that follows Jesus teaches them again,

beginning with Moses and expounding the scriptures, but they still don't recognise him, that will come later, at the table.

I'm so glad that those two disciples chose to walk away. I'm so grateful that we can read it in Luke's Gospel. I'm glad because it gives me a story that fills me with hope, every time I hear it. It makes my heart sing to think that when we walk away and turn our backs, when we have to find the exit in a hurry and get ourselves somewhere safe, or when we simply need some space and time to sort out hard and painful things, Jesus gently joins us on the journey. Mostly we don't even recognise him.

May we be wise enough to invite this strange traveller to stay, to join us at the table, until our eyes are open.

### **At the Table**

Here at the table, on this 'indwelling' journey in our lives, we listen into Scripture, where we travellers invite the stranger to our table. We are not sure, like the travellers in this Gospel that it is towards evening, we may have many more weeks of 'indwelling' to go, but these sojourners plead that this stranger stays, as the day is long: *"Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is nearly over."*

That's a beautiful prayer for us this week as we sit down to our evening meals at home to pray a grace that says *"Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is nearly over."*

The remarkable thing in this story is that the happenstance of Jesus walking beside us in our grief and loss only slowly becomes conscious in the characters. For their saddened hearts, warming in the conversation with Jesus, warming as the Scriptures remind them of who their God is and who they are in God, call for more of this communing together: more of this company: more of this hope as the day fades.

And it is as the day fades, and in the twilight of the meal when they recognise what God has been up to with them all along.

Uniting Church minister and theologian Rex A. E. Hunt, notes that this story is characteristic of Jesus' ministry: he is remembered as one who readily accepted invitations to meals as a guest rather than a host, and found the meal table the ideal place to share faith that re-imagined what it is to live faithfully in relationship with one another, in God. He notes:

*"Words and food are made out of the same stuff", writes Rubem Alves. "They are both born of the same mother: hunger." For around a meal, food is shared not hoarded, friendships are made and relationships strengthened.*

Even though we cannot physically gather around tables after church or for our evening meals, this Jesus who meets disciples locked in a room in grief, who walks alongside saddened friends who seek to leave their pain behind is the same Jesus who at the table becomes known in the breaking of the bread.