



It Was Jesus!

Day after day we plod along our path, trying to work things out for ourselves, befuddled by events and frustrated by our inability to understand the vagaries of life. We try this, we try that. We whip ourselves over our thick-headedness, and wonder some times how we've made it as far as we have. But we muddle through, and more often than not come out the other side of our perplexing trials.

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have

happened here in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things

about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also 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 exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the

(continued...)

When—and if—we at last notice that someone, or something, is there helping, we imagine that it's only our own wisdom masquerading as a stranger. A small yet wise voice deep inside us whispers that it is really the Lord, but we push aside that idea. It can't be Him; surely we are perfectly capable of working out these small annoyances for ourselves. After all, God doesn't like wimps, does He? Things happen in the course of a life, and, one way or another, we deal with them.

But He says "What things?" So we do our best to explain, stumbling and tripping over our tongue, our reason swathed in thick cotton—like trying to explain the sense of nocturnal imaginings with a clouded memory, a sleep-masked brain, and a tongue formed from the bottom of an old shoe.

But He listens, kindly, until even He loses patience with our slow-headed obstinacy. And, good friend that He is, Jesus takes us to task: "You're being foolish! You should know this by now! How long will it take? Listen to me, let me explain again how it all works together..."

So, grudgingly, we listen, but the dim bulb only begins to glow somewhat brighter, not yet to full wattage. Like a 40-watt bulb sputtering and winking on a gimpy generator, recognition comes, but slowly. The many layers of human reason

prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:13-32)

and pride cling stubbornly to us, loathe to give way to the light of the eternal.

After a while, even though complete realization is still outside our grasp, we invite Him to stay. He's a pleasant enough chap, good company and, anyway, who knows—He just might have something pithy to contribute over dessert. So dinner is served, the table spread. We take our places around the table and, because we're polite, we invite the intriguing stranger to say grace. As He lifts His gaze heavenward and gives thanks for the bread, the bulb finally glows to full intensity. Now we can see by the full blazing light of our faith.

It is the Lord!

It was Him all along! It was Jesus listen-

ing to our frustration, our confusion and misgivings; it was Jesus patiently explaining what we now realize was the truth; it was Jesus who walked beside us, shared our weepings and our joy, who took hold of our hand, who picked us up when we fell.

When we egregiously missed the mark, and our heart sank with shame, it was our Lord Jesus who responded to our contrite plea for forgiveness, who answered with the obvious truth we had somehow mislaid: "My child, it is already done. I have already forgiven you. I bore your sin at the cross, and your account has been expunged. I love you—and nothing will change that."

It was Him all along!

*O Love, Thou bottomless abyss,
My sins are swallowed up in Thee!
Covered is my unrighteousness,
Nor spot of guilt remains on me,
While Jesus' blood, through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy, cries.*

*With faith I plunge me in this sea;
Here is my hope, my joy, my rest;
Hither, when hell assails, I flee,
I look into my Saviour's breast;
Away, sad doubt, and anxious fear!
Mercy is all that's written there.*

*Though waves and storms go o'er my head,
Though strength, and health, and friends be gone,
Though joys be withered all and dead,
Though every comfort be withdrawn,
On this my steadfast soul relies, --
Father, Thy mercy never dies.*

*Fixed on this ground will I remain,
Though my heart fail, and flesh decay;
This anchor shall my soul sustain,
When earth's foundations melt away;
Mercy's full power I then shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love.*

(Johann Andreas Rothe)