2023 04 23 IMAGINE – how much do we yearn for the CLOSENESS

Acts 2:14a, 36-41. Psalm 116:1-4,12-19. 1Peter 1:12-23. Luke:24:13-34 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Can we shut our eyes and live this situation in our souls:– these two people, Cleopas and ? , although not of the 12 disciples they were in the group that followed Jesus and possibly where first hand witness to the Lords arrest and crucifixion – imagine their slowness of walk, their mindset, the feeling of puzzlement and anticipation …the empty tomb - . V24 “some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” They were not random strangers that Jesus joined with but part of the closer group – their hearts burned within them, there is something familiar about this man, they recognized him in the blessing and breaking of bread v30.- their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

It takes more than knowing and talking about the words of God to know God – our emotions may be effected – butremember the three types of soil: belief comes quickly yet for some it fades away and the old person is back. – it is God the Holy Spirit who brings our spirit into rebirth – into rising from the dead.

They lived in Emmaus, about 10 km from Jerusalem and late in the afternoon they were walking home when this stranger joined them – well not exactly a stranger because something inside them stirred in the strangers presence – “did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures.”

Do we sometimes walk like this – troubled time, fear, disappointment, things have not come to pass as we had believed and we are despondent; or maybe the routine of life ‘where do we go from here’, is heavy on us. God, the Holy Spirit brings Jesus Presence to us.

God had closed their eyes so that they did not recognize Jesus – are we sometimes like this – alone in our minds and emotions filled with the bad or the good or the ordinary things – yet in the reality of God, we are never alone. “Their hearts burned within them.”

When Cleopas and ? spouse, returned to Jerusalem they found that the Lord Jesus had appeared to Peter, Peter the coward who had sworn that he did not know him! Jesus had also appeared to some of the women.

While they were talking Jesus appeared among them, not just the 11.- what was his message “peace be with you!”. My point in emphasizing this is to reinforce that it was not just the closest 11 but all of us are represented present.

Do we yearn to have the eyes of our understanding opened? Do we ache to know the closeness of Jesus Presence, to have our hearts burn within us!

I want to be honest and say that sometimes, especially the last few months I have a dullness inside me and even though I read the bible every day – it does not come alive to me. If I am at a study or taking notes – yes – my mind/spirit becomes alive. Yet where is this “as the deer pants after the water brook so my heart pants after the Lord!”

Do we each desire that our hearts/soul be burning inside us? These two people had great joy. Tears and joy go together, Jesus was anointed with the oil of gladness above anyone who ever lived. I was startled, intimidated, guilty in myself when I read this verse lately from Deut 28:47 “Because you did not serve the Lord your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity …”God’s Presence – our awareness of the Spirits Presence fades in our consciences.

Yet God does not leave us.

Walk along, talk with a friend, be honest with each other but do not look down on me or anyone else and say – as someone did to me “I expected more of you Allan” when I told him how I was feeling once.

Let us look at some points in the other readings:

There is a common theme of joy and thankfulness and obedience – choosing 24/7 to go Gods way – “Your kingdom/country come Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”

When the followers of Jesus received the infilling of the Holy Spirit they were so happy people thought that they were intoxicated at9 o’clock in the morning – strange to me that they thought intoxication brought happiness – after 25 years in football I see it as bringing aggression and removing the self-control that that lets out the dangers in peoples personality.-.and the boorishness of drunk people.

Peter spoke out and told them that this was the freedom to be joyful, free that came from the Spirit of God making them alive – fully alive – no space between us and God. Peter who cursed and swore that he did not know Jesus is now so filled with boldness that he tells them the truth of the persecution and murder of Jesus – of Jesus defeating death and God bringing Him to life again.

He told them of the righteousness that comes to us through Jesus becoming sin for us.

The Spirit of God’s presence was so real that the listeners were “cut to the heart”. There is a world of difference between saying that we have done wrong or in today’s language “I made a mistake” which is making our rebellions non personal – lowering their impact and distancing ourselves from them. We did not make a mistake - we chose. These people were “cut to the heart’ – the difference is between a sorry person and a devastated person who is ready to enter into Gods Country.

They cried out “what must we do to be saved!”

Not ‘Jesus I accept you into my life but a cry to God. Their Jewish history had been filled with ‘doing’ the law -sacrifices, regular religious days, strict laws - now they find that it is not physical doing but that the purity of Jesus taking our impurity into himself and giving us Gods righteousness – it is for us a hard thing to understand – but they had been living it for generations – that the death of an animal in their place for their sins took/ brought them forgiveness for maybe a day – no – the blood of the animal  **covered their uncleanness -**  the blood of Jesus coming from Gods love is so enormous that it removes the sin, the rebellion of self from all people - in all eternity - **if** we step into it.

People on hearing of Jesus – people who probably were in Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover and may have been in the crowd that shouted “crucify him – crucify him” were now “cut to the heart and their cry is now “what shall we do to be saved!”

Peter answered their question “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “Gods definite plan and knowledge before it happened was that Jesus, should be delivered up, and that YOU would kill him BUT God raised him from the dead because of his purity and innocence death could not hold him. Jesus was exalted at the right hand of God, and God gave him the promised Holy Spirit whom Jesus has poured out this day.

People who shouted “crucify him” now in agony of spirit, “cut to the quick” with guilt and with open hearts crying out “what must we do to be saved”

The two people walking home “felt their hearts burn within them” and rushed back to Jerusalem. The disciples and others who had secured themselves behind locked doors for fear are now declaring **boldly** that Jesus is the Lord.

The night of his arrest Jesus told his disciples that he would ask the Father who would send the Holy Spirit/ the Presence of God to be IN us forever.

The Spirit is our comforter and guide who brings Jesus to us to walk with us 24/7

The Spirit of God is in us and **as we are sensitive** to the Spirit so we become more intimate with God.

Psalm 116:17 “let us offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving.”