

Acts 2.14a,36-41; Luke 24.13-35

I wonder if you have a favourite memory of a meal? Or if you remember a time when you made a new friend while sharing food? Eating together with others is something that people have always done, and we still love doing it today. Food is a necessity, and a community builder.

I love this story in today's gospel about Jesus walking with these disciples on the road to Emmaus. Did you notice that this happens on Easter day? They tell Jesus, not realising it's him, that it was that very morning when the women went to the tomb and found it empty, and came rushing back with tales of Jesus being risen.

So it's Easter day, and Jesus is here, talking to them and explaining the scriptures. But it isn't until they begin to eat together that they realise it's him.

Afterwards, when he's gone, they talk among themselves, and you can just imagine the excitement and them all talking over each other, exclaiming about how they didn't know but perhaps they knew, and of course it was Jesus, because their hearts were burning within them! It's such a moment of chaotic delight.

Their meal could be described as the first Eucharist. They are gathered together, these followers of Jesus, and as bread is broken they experience the presence of God among them. They experience the risen Christ for the first time, and suddenly in that moment they know that their faith hasn't reached a dead end, but is living and breathing and will carry them forward with joy for the rest of their lives.

What Jesus has done for them, on that first Easter day, is to show them the resurrection, and make their hearts sing. Their grief and confusion is turned to joy and understanding. They have a new purpose, and a new relationship with God. They are brought into the stunning realisation that death is not enough to hold Jesus back, and instead he is among them, being known in the breaking of the bread.

That's why the Eucharist, which we celebrate every week, is so special. It is solemn, yes, but it is also filled with joy and wonder. We gather as a family, as the church, and we share in this meal together which is a descendent of that first Eucharist. We break bread and drink wine together and know that God is among us, with us, within us.

And the joy that came at Easter is echoed in the fact that God wants fullness of life for all of us. Our theme this weekend, 'What makes your heart sing?' is asking us to reflect on the question of how we find joy in our lives. What gives us purpose or a sense of fulfilment?

All the things that make our own hearts burn within us, those things that we love, are gifts from God. We all have different things we enjoy or are drawn to, and we will have different ways of connecting with God, too. Perhaps you find that you connect with God through nature, going for walks, through noticing beauty around you. Perhaps you find God in quiet, or in music, in reading and thinking, in the joy of friends and family. Maybe for you, God is in your passions and skills. Or perhaps you see God in other people.

One of the wonderful things about being a church family together is that we can learn from each other, and draw inspiration from how you see God in someone else. And you may well find that someone else finds inspiration or joy from you and your faith. Like any family, we are multifaceted, and yet we continue to gather every week around the table, to join together in eating and remembering and celebrating.

We come together to experience God among us, and then we are sent back out into our weekday lives to share that experience with others.

Just like on this first Easter day, when they realise that it was Jesus who they encountered, they can't wait to tell other people, we too can tell others that we meet with God at the Eucharist, that we see God in each other, and that we experience God in the songs of our hearts.

So what makes your heart sing? Hold onto that, and don't be shy to share it with others, because you never know, it might be the key for them to encounter the risen Christ in their lives and be drawn to the table as part of our family too.

Amen.