

# *Companions on a Journey*



The day is ending, and the pullets above are supposed to be on a journey to their house where they will sleep on their perch for the night. Instead they all seem to be going off in different directions, or not going anywhere at all! At least they are more or less staying together as companions. They can be an illustration of the followers of Jesus after he had risen. They did not know where to go either, and probably wondered what they were to do?

The disciples soon found out that they had journeys to take. The women followers of Jesus were sent to tell the men that Jesus had risen (Matthew 28:7). The men were told to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). In Mark 16:15 the disciples were even to, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation”. To assist and guide them in this work, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22-23, Acts 2:1-4).

In the season of Easter we, as disciples of Jesus, baptised Christians and receivers of the Holy Spirit, are reminded of our calling to share God’s good news with all. As individuals and together as companions we are to reveal in words and actions the love of God, and so work to make God’s kingdom a reality in our context. This loving work for others can be seen as a journey giving meaning and purpose to our lives, and will be expressed in a variety of ways.

Sometimes, like Jesus who joined the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, (Luke 24:13-27), we shall be called to proclaim God's kingdom by being beside others, carefully listening to their stories and asking them questions. Our work will also involve prayer as we ask for God's guidance in what we do, and bring the needs of others to God.

The kingdom of God can be understood as life following Jesus and being guided by God's Holy Spirit. It will involve God who promises to be always with us, ourselves and our working with other people and nature as companions.

If we consider a church group, we are all different people with different talents and ways of seeing things, which can be used to assist one another to bring about God's kingdom on earth. We are not rivals competing against one another, but more like members of a sporting team encouraging, learning from, forgiving and being forgiven by one another to achieve a common goal. The important difference between us and a sporting team is that we want everyone, even those regarded as our opponents, to succeed and become the loving and loved people God created them to be.

Sharing the good news with others, as Mark writes, involves not just people, but the whole of creation. Being companions means people and nature working together. Working together as companions is something that already happens in our bodies and in nature. We know that different parts of our body continually help and serve our whole body to live in a healthy way. In nature, companion planting can benefit the plants involved. But people and nature being companions is also important to benefit all of creation.

In order to prevent climate change from destroying our planet we require help from nature. God created the whole world and so we as Christians should not be surprised about nature's involvement. Trees in many places are being planted by humans to enable certain animals to live and flourish for the benefit of all, and the climate to be less destructive. The sun also helps by being used to produce solar electricity and so reduce the need for fossil fuels and their emissions.

Having considered working with God, other people, and nature for the good of all, we also need to care for ourselves and thank God for our very beings. We know we have weaknesses and at times fail to love God and others, but are we

companions and loving neighbours to ourselves, accepting ourselves and affirming God's love for us?

At times we may become overwhelmed with stress, emptiness or pain. Do we need then to remind ourselves how much God loves us, and how we are to love and care for our bodies, perhaps by doing some gentle physical exercise?

We can also benefit our mental, emotional or spiritual state by doing something creative that engages our whole attention like writing, cooking, gardening or woodwork. This is particularly helpful when we are doing it for others. Also, I find that by stopping to look at a beautiful sunset or scene in nature, I can for a few moments drop all that is worrying me. In such beauty, I think we glimpse something of the beauty of God.

Whoever we are, and wherever we go on our journeys in life, we can proclaim by our very beings and behaviour the good news of Jesus' resurrection and God's love for the whole world, people and nature. By caring for and serving others with our whole selves, I suggest we and our companions on our journeys are revealing and experiencing something of the loving kingdom of God on earth.

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