

Easter 3A - 2023

Recognizing at Last!

In the ancient Greek myth *The Odyssey* we read the epic tale of Odysseus. Odysseus was the valiant warrior who fought so bravely in the Trojan War. But, according to legend, his homeward journey after that war was interrupted for many years as the gods had decided to test Odysseus' true mettle through a series of trials. His journeys carried him far and wide as he encountered mythic beasts and lands, many of which have passed into common parlance: the Cyclops, the Procrustean bed, Scylla and Charybdis, the sirens' voices.

Meanwhile, back at his home, Odysseus' wife and family presume he must have died en route back from Troy. Finally, however, the day came when the gods released Odysseus and he arrives back home at last. But instead of simply waltzing through the front door and crying out some Greek equivalent of, "Honey, I'm home!" Odysseus decides that he wants to determine if anything has changed during his long absence. Did his wife still love him? Had she been faithful? In order to find out, Odysseus disguises himself so as to approach his home looking like a stranger in need of temporary lodging.

The housekeeper, Euryclea, welcomes the apparent traveler and performs for him the then-standard practice of foot-washing. As she does so, Euryclea regales the stranger with anecdotes about her long-lost master, Odysseus, whom she had also served as a nurse when he was young. She told the traveler about how long her master has been missing and she noted, too, that by then Odysseus would be about the same age and of about the same build as the man whose feet she was washing. Now when Odysseus had been a young boy, he was once gored by a wild boar, leaving a nasty scar on his leg. As Euryclea went about her servile task, suddenly her hand brushed against that old scar and instantly her eyes were opened and she recognized, with great joy, her beloved friend and master!

Recognition scenes like that have long exercised a strong pull on the human heart. Sometimes this can be used for comedic effect, as in any number of episodes on the old *I Love Lucy* show when Lucy would disguise herself so as to worm her way into one of her husband, Rickie's, shows. And you always waited eagerly for that moment when Desi Arnaz's eyes would widen right before he'd exclaim, "Luuucccy!" But such shocks of recognition are also the stuff of high drama, as in *The Odyssey* and any number of plays, novels, and films across the centuries. And, of course, in also Luke 24.

(by Scott Hoezee from *Comments and Observations*)

The Road to Emmaus

A friend shared with me a beautiful legend about a king who decided to set aside a special day to honor his greatest subject. When the big day arrived, there was a large gathering in the palace courtyard. Four finalists were brought forward, and from these four, the king would select the winner.

The first person presented was a wealthy philanthropist. The king was told that this man was highly deserving of the honor because of his humanitarian efforts. He had given much of his wealth to the poor.

The second person was a celebrated physician. The king was told that this doctor was highly deserving of the honor because he had rendered faithful and dedicated service to the sick for many years.

The third person was a distinguished judge. The king was told that the judge was worthy because he was noted for his wisdom, his fairness, and his brilliant decisions.

The fourth person presented was an elderly woman. Everyone was quite surprised to see her there, because her manner was quite humble, as was her dress. She hardly looked the part of someone who would be honored as the greatest subject in the kingdom. What chance could she possibly have, when compared to the other three, who had accomplished so much? Even so, there was something about her the look of love in her face, the understanding in her eyes, her quiet confidence.

The king was intrigued, to say the least, and somewhat puzzled by her presence. He asked who she was. The answer came: "You see the philanthropist, the doctor, and the judge? Well, she was their teacher!"

That woman had no wealth, no fortune, and no title, but she had unselfishly given her life to produce great people. There is nothing more powerful or more Christ-like than sacrificial love.

The king could not see the value in the humble lady. He missed the significance of the teacher. Often we miss the value of those around us. I think it would surprise us to know how often we miss the presence of Christ just as Cleopas and his brother missed the significance of the stranger on the road to Emmaus.

Three Table Fellowships

"The Scriptures speak of three kinds of table fellowship that Jesus keeps with his own: daily fellowship at table, the table fellowship of the Lord's Supper, and the final table fellowship in the kingdom of God. But in all three, the one thing that counts is that 'their eyes were opened, and they knew him.'

"The fellowship of the table teaches Christians that here they still eat the perishable bread of the earthly pilgrimage. But if they share this bread with one another, they shall also one day receive the imperishable bread together in the Father's house."

[by Dietrich Bonhoeffer from *Life Together* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), p. 66]

"What exciting thing is going to happen today?"

In A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, Pooh and Piglet take an evening walk. For a long time, they walk in silence. Silence like only best friends can share. Finally, Piglet breaks the silence and asks, "When you wake up in the morning, Pooh, what's the first thing you say to yourself?" "What's for breakfast?" answers Pooh, and then asks, "And what do you say, Piglet?" Piglet says, "I say, 'I wonder what exciting thing is going to happen today!'"[Robert D. Dale, *To Dream Again*, (Broadman Press, Nashville, 1981).] — You and I can't really plan to meet the risen Christ because we never really know when or where He's going to show up. But you can be sure of this: He will show up.

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