

**“The process of renewal” a sermon preached by Kerry Enright at the evening service on Easter Sunday in Knox Church Dunedin New Zealand based on the story of the walk to Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35.**

1. The story of the walk to Emmaus tells a story of remarkable renewal.

Two people begin in tiredness and end with energy.

It is a story for us as a church and a people because this happens to us in our lives, through our lives, when tiredness comes, when we lose energy, when we lose our way, when it seems as if there is no way through.

Renewal is available.

It can apply to you and to me, when you want to start again, with new life.

So tonight, we are journeying with the two to Emmaus and with renewed vigour back to Jerusalem.

2. The possibility of newness is available to us, but we cannot see it, we cannot recognise it.

We trudge along consumed by what is, dominated by what has been, by the pain and the hurt and the lack of trust that we carry in ourselves, by what has been.

Yet, hidden, nearby, is newness, waiting for us to see.

3. As we undertake the journey of renewal, great God, open our eyes to your presence with us, in whom there are resources we will never exhaust, in whom there are resources that enable us to start again, in whom there are resources for living fresh. Keep us on the road with you, we pray.
4. He asks them their story. They need to put into words what has happened to them. What is happening for you? Put it into words, in prayer to God or in conversation with another or written down.

So what do they say? They had hopes but they were dashed, lost, ended. Their hopes were not quite big enough, and because of their limited hopes, their hopes limited by what they had already experienced, they thought it was the end.

But on the horizon, there was the possibility of something new. But it did not come from the source they trusted, or the place they knew, or the voices they respected. From women who had been to the tomb.

Renewal comes from paying to voices our society or our world or our church does not listen to or has not listened to in the past, or whose voices are not privileged.

5. Who is it we fail to notice? Whose voices have we excluded? Who have we systemically sidelined? Who is it we have privileged and always listened to and who do we not listen to? Open our ears to the new from places we easily dismiss.
6. Jesus becomes the interpreter of their tradition, their heritage, their past. The source of renewal is in their history, in their heritage, in their past. But they had missed it in their past, somehow.

Part of the tiredness comes because we are trying to hold things together, or keep things, that need to be released.

Or we are holding to things which do not any longer fit, and we need to open our hands and let them go.

The harder we try to hold on to these things, the more tired we become.

It requires a new frame, a new interpreting, in order for it to release the deeper truths from our past, the greater possibilities from our past, resources the present are waiting for.

So Christ became the interpreter.

There is, for example, enough in the history and heritage of this church, there are stories, and incidents, and people, and they always require new frames and new interpreters to see and hear and recognise things we have overlooked or underemphasised or missed. It's all there, but in each generation, in each age, in each time, we need a new frame to see it and to release it.

And there may be things we need to release, to sit with more openly, to hold our hands out for, rather than as a fist or a closed hand or something defiant and clenched or even as a shaking hand, as something to be feared.

7. Sometimes we sense that there are possibilities for renewal, but we are not yet entirely sure what it will mean, or what it will involve, or where it will take us.

The best we can do is to sit with it a while, to attend to it with some intention, with some particular openness, and to wait and wait and be open to the revelation, the discovery, the freshness.

We need to come to the point we can trust what is going to happen, and trust it will happen.

He stayed with them.

8. Which brings us to Communion.

In the physicality, in the movement, in the action around a table, they recognised him. What they were struggling to hold together, they were trying to make sense of it all, what they were wondering how they would keep doing what they had been doing, and using up so much energy in doing so. came together, resolved itself, for them at the table.

Somehow the breaking of the bread took their brokenness seriously, and they could acknowledge it, that they had been trying and trying to hold on to things as they were, and using up so much of their energy.

Somehow in the breaking of the bread, their own brokenness was released, let go, handed over, and replaced with wholeness.

And because they had found the key to their life, a lens through which to interpret their life, a life that made sense of their life, all their previous effort could be let go, released.

They had it in them, inside them, and so they did not need it externally any more. He vanished from their sight, because now they had inner sight, heart sight, life sight.

9. At the table, they finally let go what they had been holding on to, what they had been trying to keep hold of, what they had been trying to hold together, using all that energy.

Once they let that go, and left it with God, they could relax more, their energy was released, their future was taken care of, they could trust and be open and be engaging of others.

They walked all the way back to Jerusalem, the place they feared, the place they had known suffering, the place they had known death and crucifixion and loss.

And they built a community of resurrection, in which he would continue to be known to them in the breaking of bread.

And they were bold enough to speak of their experience, of what happened to them, less afraid of how others would respond and what people would think of them.

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