

I will start with the gospel when Cleopas was talking to Jesus. None of them had yet recognized Jesus after his resurrection:

### **Redemption**

*“Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He (Jesus) asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.*

**The disciples had to deal with change.** We have to deal with a different kind change too. Looking past the gloom, I have this persistent hope of redemption. It’s a naïve hope, but I want COVID to save us from ourselves. It all may seem to glib, but can we find spiritual reset in the midst of this 125 nanometer storm? I need to believe that Jesus can be the One to redeem us in every change and chance of life (again and again).

### **Fellowship**

*As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.”*

My prayer life is slightly better than normal. I often “urge” God to be with me because I’m desperate. I need Jesus to carry me through this existential scream. My prayer is that, now and when we are through this, we can reset (and keep it), let kids catch up on their sleep (and not put them back on the treadmill.) I’ve praying for the ghost of Norman Rockwell present to visit and stay with the Bryants.

### **Communion**

*So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

Chinese takeout has become a weird sort of communion. I am more aware than ever of the interconnected of our social and economic lives. I feel a new kind of connection to my community. My eyes have been opened to the needs of hairstylists, bartenders, and small retail shops. Puzzle buying from Games Unlimited feels like an act of prayer. My heart burns with civic pride knowing we can support a small business. I feel downright patriotic picking up Piatti’s (more times than we can afford.) My heart in solidarity with Piatti’s GM who was forced to place her friends and employees on unemployment.

### **Serving at 6 ft**

I get choked up with pride when Kimberly does Easter deliveries for her friend who owns Sweet Street. I get verklempt when all the family joins the clatter of an Easter afternoon zoom room. You have not experienced zoom until you join the cacophony of 18 families talking at once.

At this moment (It could change tomorrow), I feel like we are on the upswing of a “crisis curve” (or change curve as Kubler Ross christened it). This curve is: *We don't want the bad thing, we deal with the bad, then find a way past the bad thing.* If we do 2020 right, we can remake our way of being within the world.

The time since early March has been incredibly creative for me. I am flush in the upswing curve of “acceptance” and “commitment.” I see joy all over in individuals, groups and businesses. Octogenarians are figuring out how to watch worship on YouTube and Facebook. Businesses (and churches) continue

flocking to zoom to figure out how to stay connected. As the old adage goes, necessity is the mother of invention. It may be an inventive time; but I still long for the good old days of February 2020!

Even with a burning, connected heart, I feel deeply fragile and easily knocked off center. I know it may be too facile to compare our experience to Emmaus, but fools go where angels fear to tread.

### **I am still cynical of the POST crisis community**

I lived through Hurricane Ike (2008) and watched in distant horror, the remnants of Harvey (2017) devastate my community. By the end of COVID, we will have to make choices, need to make commitments. If we don't, much of what we learned won't stick. The thing that is missing from the crisis curve pictured above is the post crisis crash. The crash happens after the immediate trauma is over.

We will have a COVID hangover, and **we** are responsible to ask for grace to make the new normal better than the old normal. The disciples could have taken Emmaus and said “whew, that was weird” and return to normal. But they took the invitation of Jesus to follow his new normal and we still talk about it. We *choose* to let these stories have an impact.

**Two hurricane stories** It's weird but there is a euphoria of crisis that can make us forget our work.

*Hurricane Ike – neighborhood freezer parties.* After Hurricane Ike hit, power was out for weeks. There were inspirational pictures of literally miles of highline trucks coming to the area to restore power. As we moved through the crisis curve, I was deeply inspired by the neighborhood grilling. You Californians call it BBQing, but your ignorance is offensive! We would fire up the GRILL, and people would cook all the food that would soon spoil. It was beautiful and profound, but a month later we returned to our capsules.

*Hurricane Harvey – Cajun navy.* When the water was highest, the “Cajun navy” would motor through almost every affected neighborhood to check (house by house) anyone who had refused to evacuate but was in a desperate situation. There was this huge surge in civic pride, and we all felt like we were in this together. Some neighborhoods are still recovering today. My beloved Episcopal school that shaped so much of my children's early lives will be closing next year.

I share these not-feel-good stories because after the pressure is off, the Emmaus road is still available. The temptation to return to our buffered, frantic lives is powerful catnip. If we can move the needles just a bit, maybe this silent COVID-19 can transform us and not just be a weird 2020 memory. Let Jesus' redemption, fellowship and communion, shape our road ahead.

### **Emmaus / Crisis two step**

1 Innovate and serve. Feel great about the opportunity, but don't get married to the euphoria.

2 Make a conscious effort to carry one thing from this crisis into post COVID life. Let your burning heart guide your choices especially when the burn is gone.

When we get hit again, we start the cycle all over in faith.

**Todd**

