

FROM HEART TO HEART
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Mystery of life through death

by Mary Sharon Moore

Who would expect a heartbreaking tale among the Easter stories? Two disciples, overcome with misgivings and grief, travel down the road to nowhere. They had cast their lot with this itinerant prophet and healer, their lives changed by the way he captured their hearts. And then everything went very wrong. He died a slow and hideous public death.

Three days later, they still try to make sense of their loss. *But we were hoping*

How human their story. Who of us has not been stung by grief and betrayal, wandering clueless when the center of our universe has been ripped from us?

Still, at the point of greatest hopelessness, encounter occurs. The mystery of this Easter story hinges on that small, revealing phrase: “But we were hoping.”

The encounter may seem inconsequential, a distraction, a piece that does not fit with our grief-stricken state of mind. And that One who is only and passionately about relationship cuts through our human grief to again reveal the unitive mystery: I am with you. I have always been with you. There is no separation.

But we, like those two disciples, are hoping for some outcome to the tragic stories that would fit with our picture of the world. We hope for deliverance from war and famine and disease and injustice, from greed and addiction, from stony-hearted hurtfulness and despair.

Like these two dejected disciples, we often get stuck in the painful but familiar part of the story, the part about loss. Yet if you have ever been graced with unbidden love, you know with certainty that our deepest human passion is for what is enduringly life-giving, merciful and just. We hope beyond hope because in Jesus’ Resurrection we find a God who is big enough and true enough to draw forth life from our death.

Our God is a God of passionate fidelity to all creation, including the human family. In the person of Jesus, God reveals the vulnerability of self-emptying for the sake of others. And in the risen Christ, God reveals the destiny of all humankind: to live in fullness of communion with the One whom John the Evangelist describes simply as Love.

The dying to self, the rising to new life: This is the Easter mystery of life through death, a mystery that defies the life-robbing realities of our world and invites us to stay faithful to the task of telling the story and breaking the bread. Only in the blessing, the breaking and the sharing of the bread do these two wearied disciples recognize the Risen One. Their eyes are opened.

And then he vanishes from their sight. Why? We are his presence in the world. Jesus vanishes from their sight—and that’s the point. In the ritual blessing and breaking and sharing of bread, the risen Christ is again in our midst. And in the breaking open and sharing of our lives, we are food and hope, healing and encouragement for a hungry world.