

Holy Trinity, Heworth 26th April 2020 Third Sunday of Easter

An Encounter with the Resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus

Prayer

Let us pray to God,
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,
through illness or isolation or anxiety,
that they may find relief and recovery:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For those who are guiding our nation at this
time,
and shaping national policies,
that they may make wise decisions:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For doctors, nurses and medical
researchers,
that through their skill and insights

many will be restored to health:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For the vulnerable and the fearful,
for the gravely ill and the dying,
that they may know your comfort and
peace:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom
we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.
Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

READ Luke 24:13-35

This is where Jesus takes over.

Quite It almost goes without saying that we're living in unusual times.

So, of course, were these followers of Jesus!

Opening verse begins, v.13: **'Now that same day...'**

This encounter is taking place on the same day that the Tomb was discovered empty.

What a weird time this must have been.

Miracles and disaster.

Jesus was famed for His healings and His authoritative teaching.

One minute He was being heralded as **'the king who comes in the name of the Lord'** (Luke 19:38) – these two disciples may well have been among those who'd been chanting His praises. The next moment cries of **'Crucify Him!'** (23:20).

And now tales of an empty tomb!

This is the first Easter Day – we can imagine sometime in the afternoon while it was still light.

Luke simply says that **'two of them were going to a village called Emmaus'**.

We don't know exactly where Emmaus was – there are several possibilities – but Luke specifies that it was about 7 miles from Jerusalem – so perhaps 2 hours walk.

Luke says, vaguely, that there were **'two of them'**.

Just a little earlier we're told that the women who had discovered the empty tomb and had encountered the angels, v.9, **'came back from the tomb... [and] told all these things [that they had seen and experienced] to the Eleven and to all the others.'**

So these two were amongst those **'others'**.

They were devoted followers of Jesus.

But they were, like the rest, devastated by the events of that weekend.

Who wouldn't be? Life is sometimes like that.

There are so many questions?

As Christians today we have many questions as well.

Why does God allow Covid 19? Why does God allow some to survive and some not?

Asking such questions is nothing new.

The only other detail we know for certain about these two is that one of them was called, verse 18, 'Cleopas'.

That tells us a few things about him, and perhaps them.

Luke uses his name here – because he would have been known to the Christian community.

Although the name doesn't occur elsewhere in the NT, the name 'Clopas' occurs in John 19:25, where one of the women standing near the cross is described as 'Mary the wife of Clopas'. It's quite possible that 'Cleopas' and 'Clopas' are one and the same.

And it's possible, if not likely, that the two disciples here were that same husband and wife – 'Cleopas [and] Mary'!

Not surprisingly after such a week – they were going over the details over and over – as one does!

Jesus, as in the other Resurrection appearances, appears, as it were, from nowhere.

And then after spending time with these disciples – disappears again.

That seems to be a feature of His Resurrection Body.

He draws close to them – and feigns ignorance.

They don't recognise Him. Another feature of the Resurrection.

It certainly speaks of its authenticity.

If you were inventing a story that somebody had died and come back to life – you almost certainly wouldn't have said that he wasn't recognised.

And yet that happens several times – with Mary Magdalene who thinks He's the gardener.

Or on the beach in John 21:12, where we read, 'None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" they knew it was the Lord.'

The fact that that question even entered their minds – is intriguing.

Matt. 28: 17 records the following when Jesus appeared to disciples in Galilee, 'When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted.' (28:17)

In short, His appearance had changed.

Whatever else one says about the Gospels – they were scrupulously honest.

They didn't cover up things that might seem awkward.

Getting back to this meeting on the road to Emmaus.

Jesus asked them what they were talking about.

Slightly taken aback they say, v.19, 'About Jesus of Nazareth'.

It seems that that is the way Jesus would generally have been referred to.

After all 'Jesus' was a common name in those days – there were many Jesus'.

Jesus is simply the Greek form of the Jewish name Joshua – a popular name – then as now.

They describe Him as 'a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people'.

Adding, v.21, 'we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.'

In other words – they hoped He was the Messiah.

You can hear their disappointment. Their confusion. Even their frustration.

But then they add, v.22-24: 'In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early in the morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said...'

who they thought He was – we don't know.

But given His remarkably authoritative teaching that we hear of throughout the Gospels – I sure they were spell-bound.

In fact, later, v.32, they speak of 'their hearts burning within [them] as [Jesus] talked ... and opened the Scriptures to [them]'

I wonder if you've ever had that experience yourself. I know I have.

Sometimes it's when I'm reading about the Christian Faith.

But often it's in a sermon – where suddenly the word of God comes alive.

A little like falling in love.

What was the content of this talk? We don't really know. But we know enough.

Verses 25-27: "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.'

The Jews call what we call the OT, the Tanach. Which is an acronym for the Torah (that is the so called Books of Moses – Genesis to Deuteronomy), the Neviim – that is the Prophets and the Ketuvim – that is the Writings (anything else).

So Jesus effectively took them through the whole of the OT and indicated 'all that [it] said... about himself.' The OT is actually about Jesus.

At this time of lockdown – a time to think afresh. Read the Bible through – OT and NT together.

Jesus is, as it were, the missing link.

Everything in the OT is, as it were, unfulfilled.

God is constantly at work, and yet the world and the people of God never actually become as God wants them! The fulfilment comes with Jesus.

Jesus undoubtedly showed them – that He was the Good Shepherd, the true King of Israel, the Sacrifice that all the sacrifices of the Temple were pointing towards.

Jesus wants people to think for themselves.

Here He doesn't tell the two disciples who He is.

They need to think things through first – before it's revealed to them.

Verse 28 says, 'As they approached the village..., [He] acted as if he were going further.'

It reminds me of the occasion in Mark 6, when Jesus is walking on water and Mark comments, 'He was about to pass them by.' (v.48)

He elicits a response from them. So here – they have to urge Jesus to stay.

We don't know what further conversation took place.

But what we do know is that they had a meal together and verses 30-31: '[Jesus] took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight.'

What made them recognise Him?

Was it that He broke the bread and spoke in a way that was characteristic?

Was it that they saw the scars in His wrists where the crucifixion nails had been?

Maybe. We don't know.

But suddenly realising that the person they'd witnessed dead on the cross on Friday – was now more alive than ever – completely mind blew them.

I know when I've learned something exciting.

Or seen a marvellous film – I don't want to keep it to myself.

So not surprisingly, they're off back to Jerusalem – a further 7 miles – but this news couldn't wait.

But when they got there – all the disciples already knew.

Verses 34-35: 'It is true! [meaning presumably, what the women had said] The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' [Why Simon? Cf. John 21! Takes him back to the beginning – sometimes we have to undo years of misunderstanding!]

Luke continues, 'then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.'

They were all telling each other what they'd experienced.

Sometimes, often, we need the encouragement of each other.

Well, of course, there were many more encouragements to come – not least immediately, verse 36 says, ‘While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”’

Those earliest Christians needed all the encouragement they could get.

We know what happens next and the innumerable joys – but also sadnesses that were to come.

But because of the certainty of Jesus’ Resurrection – they knew that the battle had been won.

The Resurrection speaks of Good News. Christians are Good News people. The word Gospel means Good News.

The early Christians had to learn how they should respond to the tragedy of the death of Jesus in the light of the Resurrection.

Translating that into our current situation we must learn how to live at this time of uncertainty in the light of the Resurrection.

Let me end by referring to a book, I’ve just read, called *Where is God in a Corona Virus World?*, by John Lennox (formerly Professor of Mathematics at Oxford).

Towards the end of the book he has a section entitled REMEMBER ETERNITY.

By which he means: Remember that things work out well.

The final words of the book are: ‘[The coronavirus and all the plagues that have ravaged the world will be no more: the crown of righteousness that will be given to those who love the Lord Jesus will never perish or fade.](#)

[Peace in a pandemic? Only Jesus can give that. The issue for all of us is this: will we trust him to do so?’](#)

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught us to love our neighbour,
and to care for those in need
as if we were caring for you.
In this time of anxiety, give us strength
to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick,
and to assure the isolated
of our love, and your love, and your victory
for your name’s sake.

Amen.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**