

How you doing for Easter eggs? Maybe you never got one, or you've already eaten what you already had – I think I've run out – and the tendency by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter is the same, wanting to move on, past Easter – tired Easter Gardens – although the flowers still look great – maybe that's the difference, they have been tidied, added to, changed around a bit, kept fresh.

That's true for us too. Whether you're watching online or here in person this is Sunday, the first day of the week, important to us as Christians as it's the day of the resurrection – each and every time we meet it's our focus – as someone once said – we are an Easter people and alleluia is our song – which is why we're still using the Easter orders of Service.

Today we move away from the resurrection appearances in Mark and John's gospel, and focus on Luke chapter 24 – turn with me to page....of the church bibles so we can discover again as Luke's first hearers did not simply what happened that first Easter, but what it means for us today.

Let's pray (pray)

How do you organise your day? Around meals? Breakfast, lunch, dinner (or whatever you call these – might be dinner and supper) – or morning, afternoon, evening? It's useful to see the day in 3 parts, and that seems to be what Luke does in chapter 24 as he describes that first Easter Day in people's encounters with the Risen Lord Jesus and the whole range of emotions involved – so let's go with Morning, afternoon, evening... and along the way we'll see that meals feature too!

Morning.... Luke 24:1-12 – it's very early on the first day of the week and the scene is the garden tomb, Joseph of Arimathea's tomb 'lent' to Jesus and it's there that the bereaved women who had come with him from Galilee (23:55) came with spices to embalm his body. But they did not find the body – v3&4, so they are perplexed. Why – the stone has been rolled away, the body gone. Perplexed and frightened, what can these women make of Jesus betrayal, of his crucifixion, nor what he said beforehand. None of it makes sense, a whole series of events that appear meaningless. I wonder if we know people like that? Life is just about meeting personal physical and emotional needs, and to understand what life is about, really about simply passes them by? What these woman are offered also seems frightening - a supernatural, not a rational answer - a real, tangible yet mysterious answer from beyond the grave – but how? Luke tell us in chapter 24:6 and 8 – remember what he told you when he was still alive, and they remembered his words. Deeds and words – in Jesus we see them totally and utterly linked. We are people of the word, God's word – the word of God still needs speaking into people's lives today, and we as God's people have no excuse to remain ignorant of them. To discover God's word is to discover that life does make sense and it is the teaching of Jesus seen through his actions, supremely his sacrificial death on the cross enables us to see this. To see the plain words of Jesus – remember how he told you...

Afternoon...Luke 24:13-32. The road to Emmaus, an event that only Luke tells us about and though we don't have enough time to look at it fully this morning, homegroup Wednesday week, we'll look again at Luke 24 and focus in particular on this episode of ordinary people, not even the disciples, having their need met by the risen Lord Jesus, just as he continues to do for us today. It was a walk of 7 miles – seven miles, some of us might say! Yet, easily done in 2 hours, and a good amount of time for husband and wife to talk through their experience of the week before. But note they don't do this in a vacuum, but with Jesus at their side, sharing God's word with them. Their conversation, full of sorrow, disappointment and bewilderment (v17, 21 and 22-24). We get the gospel of Cleopas (v19-24), factually correct, yet not with the living Christ changing history into a living reality. Until... until he shares the scriptures with them v32. God's eternal word, the risen Lord Jesus, speaks to them. What was true then is true today. Jesus still speaks to us through his word, through his spirit. We can still say 'Jesus says'. I wonder where your Emmaus road is? Where did your heard become strangely warmed as Jesus spoke to you? For Charles Wesley he went unwillingly to a church service but Jesus met him nevertheless. For Atheist journalist Sara Miles, she happened to walk in to a church service, received bread and wine and was converted there and

then, in her words 'the mysterious sacrament turned out not to be a symbolic wafer but actual food – the bread of life'. For me, it was in 1974, in a church celebration where the Spirit of God was powerfully at work and I could see the love of Jesus in other Christians and knew that I had to say sorry to God through Jesus. If you haven't had an Emmaus road experience yet, maybe Jesus is still walking alongside you, and you might need to welcome him in to your life?

Evening: the upper room (33-53)

We find ourselves, probably back in the same room where only a few days before Jesus had broken bread and shared wine transforming a Passover meal into the Lord's supper. It's still the same first Easter Day, a day full of conflicting emotion, the day when the women had declared the tomb empty, the men not believing them, until Peter and others went to the tomb and believed. As the opening of our gospel reading says, Into this gathering bursts the two who've now made the 7 mile return journey from Emmaus, with the detailed account of their own experience, and in a moment their words become the living experience of all as Jesus appears. His appearance (v34, 36,41) find them believing and unbelieving, startled, joyful and afraid, thoroughly confused emotionally. They are in need, and Jesus meets their needs. Once again it begins as on the road to Emmaus, with Jesus opening up the scriptures for them (45-47) (read it). How does God meet our needs? He meets those perplexed in the morning garden with the words of Jesus. He meets those in the afternoon's journey with Jesus speaking words of scripture in the power of the Spirit. And in the evening's confusion again we hear the words of God's risen son Jesus, not just pointing them to the past – the past of crucifixion and resurrection, but of the coming gift of the Spirit and the life of the gospel seen in the birth of the church. In brief, there are 4 things worth noting that they are given... 1) a biblical theology (46), 2) an evangelistic programme (47), an apostolic authority (48) and 4) a spiritual dynamic (49). All these are as relevant now as then. We often ask ourselves where are we as a church supposed to be heading, what are we about, what are we for? This is especially true now as we start to rebuild post-pandemic.

We need to be open to the Spirit, to know in whose name we speak, and that we have a gospel to proclaim – to preach repentance and forgiveness (47), and we do all this by knowing our bibles, studying them and listening to the risen lord Jesus through its words.

Even though these are the last words of Luke's gospel, they represent a beginning, not an end. Luke writes them to people like you and me, not eyewitnesses of the resurrection, but ones who can reflect on those eyewitness accounts, and having discovered the risen Lord Jesus through them, share that discovery with others. Luke's 2<sup>nd</sup> volume, the book of acts, begins that journey. We as Christians here at Cudham and Downe continue that journey today. To be continued.

*At end... entering the story...(roots p33)*