

2nd Sunday after Easter - 26th April 2020

Luke 24: 13 - 35

### The Walk to Emmaus

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[a] from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognising him. 17 And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.[b] 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' 19 He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth,[c] who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.[d] Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' 25 Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah[e] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us[f] while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

-----

These 2 - are unnamed disciples. Most of the people in the bible are unnamed, and in fact when we find out someone's name there is always a reason. Perhaps they were a significant figure in the emerging church, or they were related to someone important in the story of Israel, or the their name means something.

Unlike the other 3 gospels, when John talks about disciples he means the whole crowd - the women, the 12 and the others - so there's no way of knowing which 2 these are.

But we do know which direction they're going - they're leaving Jerusalem.

Jesus was a wanted man, a terrorist - put to death. As his followers their lives are in danger, so they are running away.

Scared, and sad - because all they hoped for, all the new possibility, died with Jesus on that cross.

And they are joined on the road by such a strange person - "a right charley" my Dad would say. I mean he doesn't even know what's been going on in Jerusalem the last week! Where's he been? In prison?

But as they explain what's happened, and as he then tells them his version - well it seems perhaps he's not such an idiot after all. He has a really interesting way of seeing things.

Like this was all part of God's plan. That things might not just go back to normal. That even this Messiah might not be dead.

I don't know what they talked about - it says - he interpreted to them the things about himself in the scriptures to them. Moses, prophets - it would have been the most amazing Bible study to be in.. I wish I was there.

For many people this is one of their favourite bible stories, or resurrection stories - because it has such great homely details

The first bit is them persuading him to stay with him. What was it, 5 or 6pm. They're saying - come on, eat with us. And he's saying - no, no, I'll go on a bit further.

Was this just middle eastern polite bargaining, was he always going to say yes, or is there something more - like - is he testing them in some way? Has their hope returned, have they opened their mind to this new

idea that Jesus really is the Messiah, have they opened their hearts to Jesus - are they welcoming him to eat with them..

Its difficult to know. On one hand middle eastern culture says you have to be hospitable. When I was travelling about in Pakistan I would often get asked by completer strangers if I had a place to stay or if I could come to their house to eat with them.

So in one sense hospitality is normal.

But then again - the idea in the middle east is that when we eat together, it is one of the most intimate things we can do. To share a meal is to share our whole lives.

I know there are many people who wouldn't have people to dinner - perhaps because they think their food is no good, or they're ashamed of their house or being untidy - but perhaps those are only surface things - perhaps its really they don't want to be known.

Anyway - in lockdown - we see into everyone's homes - so now we know how tidy or untidy we are. And we're desperate for community - so after this there will be so many meals, face to face, round tables, or on knees - won't that be amazing!! That's something to hope for.!

Back to Emmaus - this little village, with its inn, which was expecting 3 visitors for a meal and a bed. And they say down, and Jesus breaks the bread, and then there's .. the moment..

what was it they saw - the scars? the bread? the words?

And seeing, in Johns gospel, remember the man born blind, remember Nicodemus in the night - light and seeing is all about spiritual sight - so they didn't "see" Jesus. They recognised him - their eyes were opened - they believed, they realised who they were looking at...

Oh My Goodness - its YOU!!

And he disappeared. how did he disappear - just like - poof!? Wasn't that scary? Odd?!

or just like in some dream - well of course I was inside a giant hot dog racing Lewis Hamilton - doh! Like - of course he disappeared!

And then this so true to life bit - they run back to Jerusalem.

Its taken all day to walk to Emmaus, but they run back in what - an hour? to meet the disciples before nighttime!

We've all been there - depressed, sad, taking ages to pack, finally walking very slowly...

8 hours to walk 20 km, or 7 miles - back in 1 and a half!

on the way back - excited, hopeful - amazed - ran all the way!!

And how amazing - to share their stories with Peter and the Women - its all true!!

-----  
So finally - just to say that this is clearly portrayed as an "instant conversion". Their eyes were opened, suddenly they saw, they believed.

People used to think or preach that instant conversion was the "only way" - one moment you're bad, the next good - repent - an instant thing.

All our research in the last 30 years shows us that most people are on a gradual journey to God - over 75% of people can't say the moment they decided to make God their God, or would say they believed. Its more of a gradual dawning, realisation - this is true and I want to live more like Jesus...

And here we are in lockdown - with some of us having time to think about God, or read the bible, or to take steps to keep our faith alive, without the support or aids of regular worship in a church building.

So it may be that you want to follow Jesus a bit more - like those on the road to Emmaus. To read about what the bible says about him. To go deeper.

And I wonder if we welcome Jesus to eat with us at our table - to be part of our lives?

How hard would you argue to persuade Jesus to stay with you?

Are we ready to open our eyes to who he is, or to open up our heart to him.

Or to offer up our lives?