

## JESUS RECOGNISED

Luke 24:13-35 [MW17-11]

Sermon preached by Rev Wayne Thornton at Mangawhai and Wellsford, Sunday April 30 2017

It's all over isn't it?!

- just like Pilate, the Chief Priests and Elders and most of the people in the city thought and hoped
- it's all finished

So two of Jesus' followers are leaving Jerusalem and all that happened

- all it meant, behind they are walking away, away from it all on the road to Emmaus

Imagine them talking to each other, asking each other "what went wrong?"

- surely it seemed like everything was finished ... if only it had happened differently ...
- so these two are walking on that lonely road, towards Emmaus they had each other's company, but the world seemed somehow bleak and empty
- perhaps they were going home going to a place where they would feel warm and secure
- wondering if their lives would take new directions or just slowly drift back to the same old patterns
- their world, their hopes, their dreams, if not shattered were left strangely hanging

They walked that lonely road, away from Jerusalem, toward the setting sun

- perhaps they just wanted to withdraw for a while to think about things to see if they could find any meaning in what had happened to try and work out how they should continue to live
- I think there's a little bit of those two on the road to Emmaus in all of us

But, but this is not the end ...

- this is one of the immortal short stories of the world the writer, Luke, presents this story with a typically human touch: recording an episode about ordinary people and their needs
- and how those needs are met by the message of salvation in Jesus

The two on that lonely road to Emmaus are joined by a third traveller

- some of you might remember the 1984 "Liturgy of the Eucharist" with this picture on the cover [Slide 1]
- the third traveller is Jesus, and yet the two do not recognise him

They were walking towards the sunset

- perhaps the light of the setting sun dazzled them [Slide 2] perhaps they were so bound up in their own thoughts they did not look closely at the one who joined them
- perhaps they were convinced that miracles of that sort just do not happen and no stories about angels and an empty tomb could persuade them otherwise
- they refused to believe Jesus could be risen

Jesus asks them what they are talking about and why are they so sad

- for the conversation of the two travellers was heavy with sorrow disappointment and bewilderment they had thought Jesus would be the one to free Israel from foreign domination
- then there were the women who found the tomb empty with angels telling them Jesus was alive
- other members of the group had indeed been to the empty tomb but they did not see Jesus

And yet, despite the sorrow and sadness

- the stranger's question resulted in a full outline of the facts about Jesus one commentator describes Luke 24:19-24 as "The Gospel According to Cleopas"
- these two followers knew all we know of Jesus ... his ministry in word and deed, the crucifixion which completed it the hope of redemption which filled it with hope and meaning, the conquered grave and the followers who witnessed to that
- and so as the two travellers talk to the stranger they are describing, but not recognising, Jesus the resurrected Lord [Slide 3]

The two on the road do not recognise it because although they are relating the events

- even including something of the hope, they are as yet mere facts the hope for them is not real
- they need a personal word, a personal experience of the living Christ which will make the facts live and their hope real
- that word from, that experience of the living Christ was upon them ... and at that point they were unable to recognise it

Those two on the road to Emmaus were trying to make sense of things

- but the whole situation seemed beyond explanation their hope is shattered
- we can hear the poignant, wistful, bewildered regret in their words: "we had hoped he was going to be the one to set Israel free!"

Yet as Jesus talked with them the meaning became clear

- and the darkness became light Jesus was able to make sense of things
- they talked of glory he talked of suffering
- they talked of hope shattered by the cross he talked of a kingdom and of glory which unfolded through suffering being established in triumph beyond the cross and grave

And so they talked as they walked, perhaps not quite so lonely

- until the two travellers reached their destination no doubt the stranger had given them food for thought but in spite of his teaching, they still did not recognise him
- Jesus would have continued on he did not wish to force himself upon his travelling companions
- perhaps sensing something of their desire to be alone among familiar things

- to grieve, to ponder ...
- to allow them to work things out for themselves in their own time
- Jesus instead awaited their invitation

Then, having been invited to stay and share a meal

- Jesus, the stranger, the Guest, without apology takes the place of the host blessing the bread he breaks it and gives it to them
- and it is then, then, that the two companions see and recognise Jesus Jesus became known became known to them in the breaking of the bread
- which brings to mind the Last Supper and how we too may know Jesus in the breaking of the bread at our celebration of the eucharist

The thing is though, the two travellers who were followers, were not at the Last Supper

- so how did they recognise Jesus? maybe they had been present at the feeding of the 5000 and recognised his hands
- perhaps at last they stopped and had a really good look or maybe they recognised the familiar comfortable actions
- or saw the nail marks on his hands, the smile on his face the light in his eyes, as he said the blessing and gave them the bread [Slide 4]

We can imagine the joy as these two realise that Jesus is risen

- it is him, it is really him! but before they have time to greet him as Lord, to even cry out in surprise he vanished ...
- then they realised the truth of what he had said when explaining the scriptures to them Jesus had indeed been able to make sense of everything: "Wasn't it like a fire burning within us when he talked to us on the road ...?"
- their hope is fulfilled the two companions recognise that Jesus who was dead is raised from the tomb and is alive forevermore!

These two don't even stop to finish their meal!

- there's another story here about the abandoned meal just left on the table chairs tipped over and door wide open as they just take off into the night ...
- Luke 24:33 says "So they got right up and returned to Jerusalem"
- having finally recognised the Good News they rush off to share it
- no matter that the sun has set and it is pitch dark no matter they have just made a long journey everything else is forgotten as they turn right around and run the eleven and a half kilometres back to Jerusalem
- because they had recognised Jesus they knew he was alive they wanted to tell the others

The two who had been on the road to Emmaus rushed back

- to tell the others about their personal experience of the risen Jesus they recognised Jesus who lived, died and rose again
- there are of course many others who are recorded in the New Testament as recognising Jesus ...
- Paul lists the original ones in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8  
Peter, the twelve apostles, James, a gathering of 500 believers many of whom were still living when he wrote  
then he adds, "Last of all he appeared also to me"

But it does not stop there

- with those in the New Testament, or with the Saints through the ages we too are called to recognise and point out the risen Jesus
- Bishop George Appleton wrote:  
"Every believer all down the centuries and in every part of the world ought to be able to say the same. Every one of us should be able to speak of our experience of the risen Christ."
- so that we are able to help our family, friends, neighbours, workmates, colleagues recognise and respond to Jesus

As we reflect on how we can help others recognise the risen Lord we have seen [Slide 5]  
- here is a poem by Malcolm Guite

We thought that everything was lost and gone,  
Disaster on disaster overtook us  
The night we left our Jesus all alone  
And we were scattered, and our faith forsook us.  
But oh that foul Friday proved far worse,  
For we had hoped that he had been the one,  
Till crucifixion proved he was a curse,  
And on the cross our hopes were all undone.

*Oh foolish foolish heart why do you grieve?  
Here is good news and comfort to your soul:  
Open your mind to scripture and believe  
He bore the curse for you to make you whole  
The living God was numbered with the dead  
That He might bring you Life in broken bread.*