

SERMON

Journeying on? (Luke 24:13-55)

“Jesus was a prophet”

“Jesus was a great preacher. His words were fantastic!”

“Jesus performed miracles. We’ve seen him perform some great miracles!”

“The chief priests didn’t like him so they had him crucified by the Romans.”

“We had pinned all our hopes on him for a New Israel. One without the dreaded Romans.”

That happened on Friday and today is Sunday.”

“We have been told that the body is gone by some of the women in the group, but we didn’t really believe them. They said that they had met some angels, probably in a vision, rather than in the flesh, who told them that Jesus was alive.”

“Some of the Apostles went to the sealed tomb that was then open and did not find the body of Jesus.”

“They never found a body though.”

If they were being interviewed for church membership, would we have them? I think we probably would. They know all the facts. Isn’t that the sort of people that we want as church members – those that are knowledgeable of their Bible? Our universities have people in them who are teaching theology, who are taking degrees in theology, the study of God and can quote verse after verse but do not recognise know Jesus. In a booklet recently acquired by our eldest and her husband on adoption, they say that the earliest mention of adoption was in the Bible, in Exodus when Moses is adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter. As we read after the daughter of Pharaoh found Moses in the basket in the river and Moses’ sister goes and fetches Moses’ mother as his nurse

“Pharaoh’s daughter said to the woman, the mother of Moses, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him. When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, "I drew him out of the water."”

(Exodus 2:9-10 NIV)

Someone who wrote the book knew their Bible, but do they recognise Jesus for who he is.

The two on that road to Emmaus, they have been with Jesus during his life. Then we read when Jesus comes up to the and they tell Jesus the story, verse 17

“Jesus asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast.” (Luke 24:17 NIV)

Their faces were downcast. Many translations like the Contemporary English Version has

Jesus asked them, "What were you talking about as you walked along?" The two of them stood there looking sad and gloomy. (Luke 24:17 CEV)

They were gloomy and sad. Does being a Christian mean that we will be constantly happy? We are told that we are to be joyful, but does this mean that we cannot be sad? It is so sad and annoying to me that when a fellow Christian is suffering depression that there are those Christians who say that a Christian should not be depressed. Why? Why cannot a Christian be depressed at times? We do not know the circumstances of the depression. If a Christian breaks a leg we are all very sympathetic, but if a Christian is depressed, and it might be clinical depression caused by a chemical imbalance, then they can be condemned and so they feel even worse having a double guilt.

When we have sad news, we are allowed to feel sad. Jesus cried at the entrance of the tomb of his friend. Do not be conned into believing that being sad means that you are not a Christian. However this does not mean that we can wallow in sadness and constantly be sad because we are to have the joy of the Lord in us. Joy is to be a constant state, but it is OK to be sad as well, at times.

They were not happy. They knew everything, but did not recognise Jesus. In fact Jesus came up to them

“but they were kept from recognising him.” (Luke 24:16 NIV)

We are not quite sure why they were kept from recognising Jesus.

- Was it that the resurrected body of Jesus was different to the one he had before death?
- Was it that in their grief and sorrow they never really looked at the man who had joined them?
- Was it that for some reason Jesus did not want to be recognised?

We are not quite sure and many reasons and theories are put forward, but in reality it is guesswork. This was not their only emotion though. As they go through the story, but who are they?

We know that one is called Cleopas, he is mentioned in verse 18. All the pronouns related to the two travellers that day are in the masculine gender, but they are all in the plural and the companion is never mentioned in the singular either by name or as a pronoun. This has led to the thought that it could have been Cleopas and his wife because then the pronouns would have all been in the masculine plural when referring them together.

Most scholars say that it is two men and John Wenham, a New Testament Scholar in a family of Biblical scholar says in his book entitled *Easter Enigma*

As to the unnamed companion of Cleopas, we are left to speculate. It is my belief (of no importance to this study) that he was Luke himself and that the empty house to which they went in Emmaus was his (John Wenham in *Easter Enigma*, page 100)

Others who have been put in the frame as the companion are Simeon the son of Clopas whom many identify as Cleopas, Cleopas being in Luke gospel, only in this passage and Clopas being in John's gospel in John's gospel, John 19:24 as being one husband of one Mary who with other women stood near the foot of the cross.

Yet others have taken it to be Philip the evangelist mentioned in Acts 8. Again it is all guesswork.

As is the place they are going to, Emmaus. Luke says in Luke 24:13 that Emmaus is about seven miles from Jerusalem. There were a number of villages and towns called Emmaus known in Palestine and so one particular location has not been fixed. Apparently *Emmaus* means a *place of warm springs* and so the village could possibly have had a reputation as being a place of healing.

But back to our two companions on the way to Emmaus. They were sad and gloomy, but they were also disappointed. Verse 21

“but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.” (Luke 24:21 NIV)

Our hopes have gone. Jesus has died. He was sent to be our Messiah, our anointed one, the one to bring our country back to glory like it was when King David ruled.

Have you ever been disappointed with God? Are you disappointed with him at the moment? There is that situation you are praying for, but the answer is not coming, at least the answer that you want. It is amazing that we do, as human beings, decide on a course of action and then go and ask advice from someone else, when really we want them to confirm what we are saying. And if person A does not give the right answer we move to person B and possibly C and D until we do get the answer we want.

The two that day were disappointed because they did not realise that the death and resurrection of Jesus was to bring far greater redemption than just to the country of Israel, and for just the natural lifespan of Jesus. Hear the words they said again, verse 21

“but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.” (Luke 24:21 NIV)

Maybe the reason why you feel disappointed with God is because we cannot see the big picture, there is something far greater for us. If Jesus had of turned into the warrior king, then the salvation of the world would never have happened. There is the saying that

our disappointment is God’s appointment

But it can be very hurtful and distressing when we are going through a disappointment, when we cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel, but we have to remember that God is still with us, his rod and his staff ready to comfort and protect us.

So the two companions were sad, disappointed and then bewildered. They told Jesus the story and ended it by saying, verse 22

“In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this 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, but him they did not see.”
(Luke 24:22-24 NIV)

They were bewildered. At times I am totally bewildered with what God does. I am totally baffled how he uses someone like me in his work, to bring his message to others. I am totally bewildered when I see the most unlikely person come to Christ, someone whom I would not have given a hope to, but God has and the person has responded.

Surely all of us have been or are going through times when we just want to say to God, “God, what are you doing? This course of action makes no sense.” This is what happened to Peter in the video clip we saw this morning when the disciples saw Jesus asking on the water, and it made no sense to Peter to get out of the boat to join Jesus, also walking on the water, which is why he then began to sink.

The bewilderment is ours and not God’s. The two companions could not believe that Jesus had rose again from the dead – they had forgotten that at times, God works outside of the box. They only had to remember back in their history when Joshua was in a battle and wanted more time to win, and we read

“On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar.

The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!" (Joshua 10:12-14 NIV)

Speaking in a Physics sense, that cannot happen because that would have meant that the earth would have stopped turning suddenly and so everything on the earth would carry on going and be ripped off of the surface of the earth and then something had to begin the rotation again and the stationary things at that point, if there were any left, would then all fly backwards. But God does not always keep to the law of Physics!

We can be bewildered at times by God, but he is God and he is in control, always!

So the two invite Jesus into their home to stay the night. These two who knew the full story, who then listened as Jesus explained everything using the Old Testament – have you ever tried doing that? Try to tell the significance of Jesus, but only using the Old Testament.

They two were speaking the truth, but there was no recognition of Jesus. It was when they allowed Jesus into their sphere that the words then fell into place. Without that the words were not enough. Verse 32

"They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"" (Luke 24:32 NIV)

They heard the words, and they made an impact, but it was not until they recognised Jesus that everything fell into place. Maybe you are one whose knows all the words and you know they are right. The words even make an impact on you and you want to follow them, but it is really hard – maybe that is because you do not have that relationship with Christ, that recognition of Jesus. This evening we have had communion, a simple meal of bread and wine, and this is enactment of what Jesus did for us, his body broken, his blood spilt – he did that to have a relationship with us.

Head knowledge also needs to have that heart relationship. We need both. We need to recognise that Jesus is the one who died for us, and then rose again from the dead. We have to Journey On, in a way past all the facts to the person, from the truths about Jesus, to the relationship with him.

We do need both, but all facts makes us very dry and maybe sad, disappointed and bewildered. But a relationship which is not built on facts makes us very wholly and empty. We need both and then we recognise Jesus for who his is and for what he has done for us.

So just as the two on the road to Emmaus we need to journey on, to be with Jesus, to make him the centre of our lives and then like those two that evening who as they recognised Jesus he disappeared from view, we read, verse 33

"They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread." (Luke 24:33-35 NIV)

All sadness was dispelled, no longer was there disappointment, no longer bewilderment, but great joy, great certainty, people of action. May we too know Jesus like that.