

PARK ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH, PETERBOROUGH

Sunday 19th April 2020

The Road to Emmaus

Bible reading: Luke 24 v 13-35

Introduction

One of my earliest childhood memories is of watching “The Lone Ranger” on black and white television – perhaps you can remember it as well, it was on TV in the 1950’s and 60’s. The programme always started with the same introduction, spoken in an American accent, during the playing of the signature tune which was the William Tell Overture – “With his faithful Indian companion Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early west. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear – the Lone Ranger rides again”.

The Lone Ranger preferred to stay anonymous and always wore a mask so that people would not recognise him. The Lone Ranger always fought on the side of law and order and each episode featured his heroic attempts to ensure that good triumphed over evil. The programme ended with the Lone Ranger riding off into the sunset, leaving behind the people he had helped asking the question “Who was that man?” which always got the reply “It was the Lone Ranger”. The people didn’t recognise the Lone Ranger until after he had left them.

Our bible reading today is quite similar to the Lone Ranger stories, because it is about the two disciples on the Emmaus Road who did not recognise Jesus until after he had gone.

We are going to be thinking about three aspects of this Emmaus Road experience – all beginning with the letter D – so you could say that this is a 3-D sermon!

Despair

The two disciples were in despair after all the things that had happened. They decided to leave the other disciples behind in Jerusalem and go to Emmaus, to try and make sense of the last few days. Their faces were downcast (v 17), their hopes had been dashed (v 19-21) and they found some of the things that had happened hard to accept (v 22-24). They were so pre-occupied with their own disappointments and problems, that they failed to recognise the stranger (Jesus) when he came alongside them.

Discovery

Jesus then led the two disciples on a journey of discovery by quoting from the Old Testament scriptures to explain all the things that happened to him (v 27).

Delight

Eventually the despair of the two disciples was turned to delight because, as Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, their eyes were opened and they recognised him. Immediately they got up and returned to Jerusalem where they shared the good news with the other disciples - “It is true - the Lord has risen. We recognised him when he broke the bread” (v 34-35)

How then can we apply these three D’s to our own journey of faith?

DESPAIR

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus were in despair – they could not understand the things that had happened to them – they had expected a military or political Messiah – someone who would restore Israel and rescue them from Roman occupation. When Jesus was put to death they lost all hope – they didn't realise that Jesus was a different kind of Messiah – he had come to rescue people from their slavery to sin.

These disciples were also in despair because they knew that the tomb was empty – they thought the body had been stolen - they didn't realise that Jesus was now risen and alive.

In their despair the Lord Jesus came alongside them to comfort and sustain them – but sadly they did not recognise him.

Perhaps you feel in despair as well. We are living in particularly difficult times with self-isolation, worries about our health, and wondering when it will all come to an end. We can easily become too pre-occupied with our own concerns and worries that we forget that Jesus is walking alongside us every day. We need to remember that he is there.

DISCOVERY

The two disciples were taken on a journey of discovery by Jesus. Even though they knew the Old Testament prophecies, they had failed to understand that the Messiah would be a “suffering servant” rather than a worldly king.

Beginning with Moses, followed by the prophets, Jesus explained all the scriptures concerning himself.

We don't know which passages of scripture Jesus quoted to the two disciples but it is quite likely that he reminded them that:

- The Messiah would be born of a virgin – Isaiah 7 v 14 “the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means God with us)”
- The Messiah would enter Jerusalem in triumph – Zechariah 9 v 9 “see your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”
- The Messiah would die as a sacrifice for sin – Isaiah 53 v 5 “he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed”
- The Messiah would rise from the dead – Psalm 16 v 10 “you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your holy one see decay”

These Old Testament words are very familiar to us, just as they were to the two disciples on the Emmaus Road, but we are fortunate to also have the New Testament to explain God's plan of salvation to us – “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” – John 3 v16

During the current lock-down many of us will have the opportunity to do different things with perhaps more time on our hands, or no regular routine to follow. Why not use those extra hours to go on a journey of discovery with Jesus by spending more time reading his word (the bible).

Although you may have been a Christian for many years, God still has many more things that he wants to teach you – in the words of an old hymn “the Lord has still more light and truth to break forth from his word”.

Please continue to read your bible regularly during these difficult times and remember that “all scripture is God breathed and is useful for rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” 2 Timothy 3 v 16

DELIGHT

The disciples despair turned to delight when they recognised that the stranger in their home was, in fact, the risen Lord Jesus.

We no longer have the physical presence of Jesus walking alongside us like those two disciples had on the road to Emmaus.

We can delight in the presence of Jesus in a far more intimate way – because he has promised to come and live alongside all those who believe and trust in him - and he does this by giving us his Holy Spirit to live within us – just as Jesus promised in John 14 v 16 and 18 “I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever – the spirit of truth. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you”.

Summary

Where are you (where am I) on our journey of faith?

Are you still in despair? Those two disciples on the Emmaus Road were trying to make sense of all that happened to them. Perhaps you are trying to make sense of all that you are going through at this moment. Remember that Jesus is right alongside us but we need to recognise that he is there - “Ask the Saviour to help you – comfort, strengthen and keep you, he is willing to aid you, he will carry you through”.

Are you discovering more about Jesus? The two disciples were taken on a journey of discovery as Jesus explained the scriptures to them. During these difficult days when we cannot physically meet together, we can still continue our journey of faith with Jesus by regularly reading God’s word and praying to him.

Are you delighting in the truth that Jesus is alive? – The despair of the two disciples was changed to delight and they were able to declare “It is true. The Lord has risen”. My prayer is that you too can say (or sing) - “He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today, he walks with me and talks with me along life’s narrow way. He lives, he lives, salvation to impart. You ask me how I know he lives – he lives within my heart”.

Let’s use the following words as a prayer:

Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus, to reach out and touch him, and say that we love him. Open our ears Lord and help us to listen, O open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus.

Further Prayer & the Lord’s Prayer

The Grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen