

Resurrection Sunday

Good morning everyone as its Easter Sunday I am going to greet you with an old Christian greeting taken from Luke 24:34 “He is risen!” and the traditional response is “He is risen, indeed and appeared to Simon” – we shall do this a few times during our message this morning so be ready to respond!

Let’s give it a go ‘**He is risen**’ response ‘**He is risen, indeed and appeared to Simon**’

I prefer to call this day ‘Resurrection Sunday’ due to all the connotations associated with Easter, bunnies etc.

Bottom line is; it’s what Christianity is all about! We wouldn’t have a faith, we wouldn’t be here at all today **if not for the resurrection** the apostle Paul sums it up in I Corinthians 15:14-22.

“If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

But alleluia ‘He is Risen’!.....

As a reminder let’s remember the events of that great resurrection day. Jesus rose from the dead early in the morning on the third day. Some of the women who had served Jesus had gone to the tomb, and as they got there, they found that the stone was already rolled away.

Jesus was no longer in the grave, angels in shining garments told these women, “He is not here! He is risen.” The scripture tells us that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and some of the other women then went told these extraordinary events to the apostles.

Then Peter, full of excitement, ran to the tomb looked inside and saw Jesus grave clothes neatly folded in the tomb. John went with him and he also looked inside and believed.

Mary Magdalene must have followed and then stayed at the tomb lingering there, weeping, and she met a man she thought was the gardener. But it turned out that it was

Jesus. He showed himself to her and then she went also and told the disciples that Jesus was indeed alive.

The disciples were filled with joy. And yet there was still uncertainty. Some couldn't believe it. Others wondered how this was possible. Soon the rumours began to spread throughout Jerusalem. Jesus of Nazareth body was missing from the tomb.

Had someone taken his body? Did the disciples steal his body? Was Jesus truly resurrected? Was Mary mistaken? The same day we read of another encounter they had with the risen Jesus.

And I will use this as my text to speak from this morning.

The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

“Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 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.

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 they did not see Jesus.”

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 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?”

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 recognized by them when he broke the bread.”

I love this story it contains the full emotions of the Easter message – These disciples were downcast to begin with but as Jesus spoke to them it says a ‘fire burned within them’ hope was being restored, until they couldn’t contain themselves any longer, their belief overflowed and they had to share their new found excitement with others.

I want to look at 4 areas today from our story as I believe it reveals the heart of God, the character of Jesus at this special Easter season.

Firstly **He focused on relationship.**

Jesus could have done a lot of things that first day –he could have appeared to Cesar or Herod, the Jewish leaders even, those that decided to crucify him. Wouldn’t that have been something!

But He didn’t do that - what does he do instead? He appears to 2 unbelieving disciples who were on their way out of Jerusalem and didn’t seem able to grasp a single truth about what had happened! Incidentally one of these disciples name was Cleopas whom we never hear mentioned again in the scriptures.

Then before that, He had appeared to a number of women after his resurrection (By the way in Israel at that time Jewish rabbis disagreed over whether or not women could testify in court. Many thought their witness was unreliable) so if you’re going to make up a story this isn’t the best way to do it! In all truth (and I say this from a worldly viewpoint) **these were ‘insignificant people’.**

What does this tells us about God? Well to begin with He doesn’t see things in the way the world sees them, status, and reputation, mean little to Him.

It was exactly the same about Jesus birth, humble beginnings, born in a stable, brought up in unprivileged surroundings, His father was a carpenter, He came from an insignificant town called Nazareth. Are we getting to see Gods heart?

Jesus makes it clear in his teaching “it’s not the healthy that needs a doctor but the sick” (Luke 5:31) the main emphasis of Jesus’ teaching on the ‘sermon on the mount’ was ‘blessed are the poor’ ‘blessed are the meek’ blessed are those ‘that hunger and thirst for

righteousness' in essence it's the 'opposites' in God's kingdom 'the have not's' that are exalted in God's sight.

Not long after I became a Christian we were in what I would call a 'middle class church' I never felt particularly comfortable there, being from a working class background.

There are always 'misfits' in every church, those that don't quite 'fit in' those who haven't got it all together, who are struggling in one way or another.

I got to know quite a number of these people, I was attracted to them and can I say they sought out my company, they had their problems but when I look back now I feel privileged to have known them and hopefully I was able to help some along their way.

I think we have found that haven't we Julie? We have attracted 'misfits' along our Christian journey? People who have a need, often God puts people our way to test us. The truth is we are probably all misfits; we all have our idiosyncrasies, none of us 'have it all together' have it 'sussed'! In fact when you think you have, when you feel you've arrived then you're in trouble!

I would say be very generous in the company you keep, 'you may be entertaining angels' and that's the first thing I want to say about this Easter story, the heart of God is all about relationship, He draws near to the lost, the downcast, those that doubt Him even! Those that perhaps the world would look down on, but like the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus, He draws alongside them and brings encouragement; we should follow our master's example.

Secondly **He revealed His presence to them.**

This story shows we are all 'spiritually blind' until we have a personal encounter with Jesus.

"How foolish you are and how slow to believe" in says in verse 25

And you can know all the facts as these 2 disciples did and still be blind to the truth.

Each of us has to have that personal encounter with Jesus – can I ask you have you had that Emmaus road experience like these 2 disciples? Has Jesus drawn alongside you? Has 'your heart burnt inside you' when he revealed himself and his word to you?

Elisha prayer in 2 Kings 6:17 is the same for us "O LORD, open his eyes so that he may see." We think of the words of that great Hymn 'Amazing grace' "I once was blind but now I see" this story shows us how dull we are, how totally dependent on Jesus & the Holy Spirit to open our eyes up to anything spiritually.

It's what John Wesley & Charles Spurgeon yearned for, they had the facts all the knowledge, they knew the story, the events, but they had not experienced the 'presence of God' or had a personal encounter with Jesus and when they did they were changed.

Thirdly **He explained the Scriptures to them.**

This story tells us the importance of knowing the scriptures, that was another aspect of these disciples problem- they didn't know the scriptures, yet it was all in there!

“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself”.

We get into trouble because we don't know the scriptures! From beginning to end there is a plan, and is it not the trouble with the 'church' today? – In fact it is a greater tragedy from not knowing them to knowing them and not believing them.

But what Jesus is saying to these disciples is; work it out for yourself! Use your brain, It's all in there from beginning to end; do you really believe this is the inspirational & supernatural word of God? Then believe it!!

This is how God always leads us - through His word, it is very rarely you will get God speak to you through an 'audible voice' but He speaks often to us through the scriptures.

And we especially need to know the scriptures in the days we are living in, with all that's going on around us – it's all in there for us to see, especially OT prophecy and how the end will come.

So thirdly can I encourage you to know the scriptures, study them, and be diligent. It will save you a whole lot of anxiety.

Fourthly and perhaps most importantly **He stayed with them.**

These 2 disciples invited Jesus into their home to stay longer, to fellowship with them.”*Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.*” So he went into their house to stay with them.

Have you asked Jesus to stay with you? If you do He will stay with you through thick and thin.

Jesus says in Revelation 3:20_“*Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me”.*

Have you invited him into your life? Like these disciples He waits for our invitation to do so.

Lastly as we come into a time of communion the final few verses of our story say;

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him”

It was as He ‘broke bread’ their eyes were opened. I am going to ask for each of us; that as we take the bread and wine together in our time of communion that God would ‘open our eyes’ to a greater revelation of Jesus (or it may even be our first revelation of Him!)

That’s what we need, that’s the message of this Easter story. ‘He is risen’ He is alive and because of that glorious truth we can experience Him in a new and living way this morning.

(Pray for the congregation)

So Dave if you will come up and we are going to sing ‘Jesus paid it all’ and as we do that invite him into your heart in a fresh way this Easter morning.

Amen

Tony Troy

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