

NOTES -TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON – Easter Sunday 20th April 2025 am
TITLE: Experiencing the Risen Christ TEXT: Luke 24 verses 13-36
Scripture references from the ESV

Luke 24:13-36 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles^a from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even 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 him they did not see." ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!"

It is only too easy for something to be right in front of you, and for you to fail to notice it! That is particularly true for things that are part of a very familiar landscape. The two disciples in the account above had spent time with Jesus before his execution. They had heard him speak and knew what he looked like physically, and yet, after Jesus is raised to life, they fail to recognise him.

Jesus is physically present with the two disciples but they do not know that.

Jesus has risen from the grave, in which he had been laid three days earlier. He is walking with them but they think he is still dead and are mourning his death even as he is ready to fill their hearts with joy.

Our own Christian experience can seem like that at times, and we can struggle to feel the truth of the resurrection. Bible reading becomes a dreary history lesson, church seems dull and when we pray it feels as if no one is listening. Life seems just to go on the same as always. Is it possible, on this Easter Sunday, that you are like those disciples?

- Do you fail to recognise the presence of Jesus, even though you are in his presence?
- Are you so familiar with the story and the songs that you do not see Jesus with the eyes of your heart?
- Are you so disappointed with God that you do not experience the joy of Christ's presence with you?

This is possible for all of us. Jesus is not always as real to us as we might have imagined he would be when we were first saved. We do not always recognise that he is walking and talking with us as we go about our daily lives.

The way that Jesus dealt with these two disciples teaches us a really important truth and it is good news for us.

To say that Jesus is alive is to say that Jesus is with us now.

Just because we cannot see him, like the two disciples, does not mean he is absent. Luke has recorded this so

**We would know that Jesus is alive
and experience him as he walks with us in his risen power.**

How do we experience the presence of the risen Lord Jesus with us? In the account above, we see how Jesus makes himself known to these two disciples, and we can be encouraged that what he did for them, he will do for us.

1. Jesus diagnoses the problem. Everyone was talking about the events surrounding Jesus of Nazareth. They knew of his betrayal into the hands of the religious leaders, his arrest and trial, his death on the cross, and of the reports that he was alive after he had died. These disciples, too, were talking about what had happened (**v13-14**). When Jesus, alive from the grave, joins them they do not recognise him, but why not?

There are two reasons. Firstly, this was something God had done (**v16**).

God had kept the identity of Jesus hidden from the two disciples

This was a supernatural blindness, because God wanted to teach the two disciples (and us) a really important principle about seeing Jesus. That will come to light later.

Secondly, there is a reason that Jesus points out (**v25**).

They had a faulty understanding of what God's Messiah was meant to be

They had rightly understood that he would be a king who would be exalted over his enemies (**v19-21**), but they had failed to understand from the scriptures that Messiah must first suffer. Their failure to recognise Jesus stemmed from failure to understand what God had promised about the Messiah, and a failure to believe those promises. That is true for us today. We can believe wrongly because we do not know the promises about Jesus.

- In believing wrongly, we fail to experience Christ in our lives.

Jesus is with us, and there is never a moment when he is not with us, but we can just be not aware of him. As examples, we might think that:

- He is not interested in what we should do for a career, and so we do not seek his wisdom, but look to friends for help or just follow our own selfish plan
- He is not really all powerful and so we do not seek his strength and help in difficult situations, but just try to tough things out, or look elsewhere for help.

This is how we tend to live our lives, and by doing that, we do not experience the reality of Jesus' presence.

2. Jesus delivers the prescription. Jesus offers a twofold prescription for the twofold failure to understand and believe the promises.

a) He opens the scriptures to them. This does not mean he got a Bible out! That did not exist. He would have quoted from memory, having learned the scriptures from the Temple scrolls of the Old Testament. As he quoted them, he would have been showing how they spoke about him (v27). The scriptures are primarily about Jesus, not the patriarchs and prophets. The Bible is not some form of self-help manual either, but rather

We read the scriptures in order to see Jesus Christ.

What scriptures did Jesus quote? We are not told, but he might well have included any of the following:

Genesis 3:15: I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

Perhaps he reminded them that they were right to believe that the Messiah would crush Satan, but for that to happen, Messiah must suffer a stinging bite from the serpent.

Psalm 2:7-9: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." This is God's promise of victory to his Son, but Jesus might well have gone on to point out that the victory would come at a great cost.

Psalm 2: 2-3: The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying ³"Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us. Pontius Pilate, King Herod, Annas and Caiaphas, the High Priest, as kings and rulers, would conspire against Messiah, as God had promised.

Undoubtedly, Jesus would have quoted from **Isaiah 52-53**. Although God promises that his servant would: **act wisely; [and] he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. (52:13)**, he also says that: **his appearance [would be] so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind (52:14)**. God's servant would be so badly beaten as to be unrecognisable as a human and be **despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows (53:3)**. We would see him stricken, smitten by God,

and afflicted (53:4). The reason for all of this was: **he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.**⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (53:5-6).

Then perhaps he turned to **Psalm 16: 9-10 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.**¹⁰ **For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption,** as he went on to explain that the Messiah would not stay dead but be raised to life.

By this time, the disciples and Jesus are likely to have reached Emmaus, and Jesus pretends that he will continue onwards. However, something has happened in the hearts of the two men (v32 above). As Jesus has opened up the scriptures, so their hearts have come alive. Like the disciples, we cannot see him, but he is here with us to open up the same scriptures and cause our hearts to come alive.

Because Jesus is alive, he is present with us by his Spirit this very day.

b) Jesus opens their eyes to see him. This is the second part of the prescription. The disciples are not willing to let their mystery companion go, for their hearts are on fire. They offer true Biblical hospitality, despite their tiredness, wanting the Bible study to continue. It is as they sit down for fellowship with Jesus that something supernatural happens (vv30-31). Their eyes had been supernaturally prevented from recognising him, but now they have been helped to understand that it was necessary for Messiah to suffer, their eyes are supernaturally opened.

Jesus opens the scriptures to cause them to understand

Jesus opens their eyes to see him

Both need to happen for us if we are going to experience the reality of Christ with us. It is possible for us to read the Bible, come to church, and pray, yet still be unmoved by the glory of Christ. How can we make use of these means of grace so that we do experience Christ?

i. We need to take time over the word of God. The disciples spent a long time walking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Many of us snatch just a few minutes of Bible reading, or perhaps attend church only once a month or pray for just a

few minutes. Then we wonder why we do not experience Christ. To see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we need extended periods of being in the word, with God's people and at prayer.

ii. **We need to recognise what fellowship with Jesus really is.** Jesus is alive and present with us, which means:

- Our Bible reading is a means of listening to our Saviour
- Our praying is talking to him in response
- Our meeting with believers is family time as brothers and sisters with our elder brother, in the presence of our Father
- The Lord's Supper is a family meal with Jesus

When we start to think like that, we begin to experience Christ in a new way. We come to see that:

He is not just a person in a book but the ever present risen Lord of our life

We cannot command the Spirit of Christ to make Jesus real, and there are certainly times when the Lord keeps our eyes from recognising him (v16), perhaps to teach us something from his word that will cause us to go deeper with him. However, we can see that Jesus voluntarily met with the two disciples. He drew alongside them. It was not that they asked him to join them. Jesus does not hide in the shadows, reluctant to make himself known.

We have a Saviour who is alive and wants to meet us.

**As we allow him to open up the scriptures and open up our eyes,
we can be sure that we will come to experience Jesus.**

What would we expect to happen as a result of this?

- Our sadness will be turned to joy, as happened to the two disciples (v17, 32). People who meet with Jesus are not dull in their Christian faith and life. They are alive and joyful, and that joy is infectious.
- We will be unable to keep quiet about meeting with Jesus (v33-5). The disciples walked the 7 miles back to Jerusalem to encourage their friends. Our best friends are those who take time to tell us that Jesus is alive and Jesus is with us. For them, it is not just some creed they've learnt, but it comes from a personal encounter with the risen Lord Jesus.

What is true for you at this time?

- Are you one who is leaving Jerusalem with a heavy heart, bewildered by a Jesus who has failed to do what you thought he would do? Are you sad because he feels so absent from you, and it feels as if all your hopes are buried with him in the grave?

If that is where you are, it is not necessarily sinful. Sometimes we are hit by circumstances that plunge us into despair, and we wonder where God is in all of it. That can happen to even the godliest of people. If that is where you are, be assured that Jesus is with you, even though you do not recognise his presence with you at the moment. As you cry out to him to open the scriptures and open the eyes of your heart, with the desire to have fellowship with him,

Jesus will draw near and reveal himself to you, and it will be so sweet.

Take time now for this:

- If you are rejoicing now, and are knowing Jesus' presence with you, then give him thanks for that, perhaps picking up on something specific he has used to show his care for you.
- If your heart is heavy and you are feeling overwhelmed by life, ask Jesus to reveal scripture to you, to open your eyes and to have fellowship with you. Ask him to bring good friends into your life to encourage you.

**May the loving power of God, which raised Jesus to life,
strengthen you in hope, enrich you with his love,
and fill you with joy and faith. Amen**