

## **How foolish you are?**

**Luke 24:13-27**

**Sunday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2014 – Easter Day**

Heavenly Father may these spoken words be faithful to the written word and lead us to the living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Introduction**

I'd like to begin on this Easter morning by showing you a very personal photograph. It's a picture of my mum and Dad's headstone in Caversham cemetery near Reading. In a hole in the ground in front of it are the ashes of my parents. Two people who I loved dearly and owe so much to. I don't show you this to shock you but to try and begin to illustrate how the two characters walking to Emmaus in our reading this morning were probably feeling. We'll talk about that little more in a moment but first also consider this...

There is probably no better way to understand what Easter is all about than by visiting a cemetery and pondering how great the miracle of Jesus' resurrection was. Two thousand years ago a man defeated death once and for all. He came out of the grave never to die again. God reversed the natural process when he raised his Son from the dead. It is a pure miracle and a mystery beyond all human knowledge. If we are to believe scripture then there is no doubt that it happened (our faith is pointless without that belief) but we cannot explain it and we cannot repeat it. To come back from the dead—that's the greatest miracle of all. And that's why we're still talking about the resurrection of Jesus more than 2,000 years later.

And so to our passage – and to help us with this message let's look at it in three parts...

1. No Hope
2. Certain Hope
3. Jesus is our King

### **1. No Hope**

Let's go back and think about how those two followers of Jesus on the road to Emmaus must have been thinking. To help us with this I've pinched something I stumbled across on the internet. It goes like this...

The longest walk you'll ever take is the walk away from the grave of someone you love. If you have never done that, you can't imagine how difficult it is.

- To walk away and feel as if the world has come to an end.
- To walk away and think about what used to be and what might have been.
- To walk away and realize, "I'll never be the same again."

- To play over and over in your mind the good times, the laughter, the crazy stories.
- To reach out and touch a face and find it gone forever.
- To cry until you can't cry anymore.
- To watch them bury your dreams and hopes and all that was good about life.
- To know it is over, done, finished, the end, and there is nothing you can do about it.

-To walk away to friends who cannot understand and to a world that hardly cares. It is the longest walk and the saddest day. Every step takes you away from the tombstone of a broken dream.

It is the first Easter Sunday but there is no joy. Two disciples are on the road to Emmaus, a little village about seven miles from Jerusalem. One disciple is named Cleopas. We do not know the name of the other disciple. As they walk along the dusty road, they leave Jerusalem far behind. They were followers of the man called Jesus, the rabbi from Nazareth, the teacher and miracle worker who claimed to have been sent by God. For a long time they had followed him. As much as anyone could, they truly believed.

On the Friday Jesus had been crucified. As far as they were concerned he was dead and buried in a tomb. Yes – there had been wild stories that the tomb had been found empty early that morning but they didn't hold any hope of a resurrection. It probably wasn't even on their radar. You see the Romans knew how to kill people. They were good at it. They could make it fast or short, easy or horrific, public or private, relatively painless or excruciatingly painful. Crucifixion was the most terrible way to kill a man and only the worst of the worst suffered that fate. How had it come to this? If he truly was the Son of God, how could this have happened? It is Sunday. Jesus is dead. And they are going home.

Our reading tells us "they were talking with each other about everything that had happened". Like anyone who lost a loved one, they tried to make sense out of the tragedy. If you have ever walked away from a funeral so deeply hurt that you could not speak, if you have loved and been deeply hurt, tried and failed, believed and then been disappointed, you know what it was like for these two followers of Jesus. They were disappointed disciples who felt their faith slipping away with every step on the road to Emmaus. They had heard the rumours of an empty tomb, but what did that mean? No one had seen Jesus yet, or so they assumed.

There comes a time in life when you have to face the facts and deal with reality. So ends the sad tale of Jesus, a story that had such a promising beginning. They believed in Jesus, and he let them down. The third day was almost gone and Jesus was nowhere to be found. Bring down the curtain, it's all over now. This is what Good Friday looks like without Easter. Without the resurrection, the cross is nothing but a tragedy, a story without a moral, a drama that ends before the final act.

## 2. Certain Hope

So...down the road the two disciples walked, deep in their sorrow and despair. And then suddenly a stranger joins them and walks with them. When he leaves them, they are changed forever. Such is the power of the risen Christ. Here is an Easter message of hope for

all who are confused and uncertain. It is also a message for those who feel abandoned by the Lord. Because he rose from the dead, Jesus is with us always, everywhere, at all times, in every situation.

Verse 16 says **“they were kept from recognising him.”** Why didn’t they know it was Jesus? After all, they were his disciples. There are many answers given to that question but the passage seems to be saying this was a supernatural veiling of their eyesight so that they saw a man but did not know it was Jesus.

As the two disciples pour out their confusion and despair, Jesus listens patiently. When they are finished telling of their broken dreams and dashed hopes, he begins to speak: “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” He calls them fools, which simply means they were slow to apply the truth they already knew. And he says they are “slow of heart” to believe what the prophets had said. Basically he gives ‘them a talking to’ for failing to understand and apply the Scriptures. He tells them they should have known and believed what God had said. As verse 26 says: Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” He tells them plainly that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and die on the cross. What seemed like the ultimate miscarriage of justice turns out to be the Father’s plan to glorify his Son.

No one took His life. He laid it down. The cross was not an accident. It was part of God’s plan from the beginning. That’s why the prophets wrote about it. The Old Testament consistently points to Jesus and reveals that he would suffer and then would enter His glory. The two disciples listened to the stranger they did not recognize, who explained how the Scriptures all pointed to Christ. We must not make the same mistake these two disciples made or else we too will be fools and slow of heart to believe. The bible as a whole is full of certain hope. If you start with the Old Testament we discover it is full of Christ.

We aren’t told exactly which prophecies Jesus talked about with these two men, but let’s look at just a few ourselves. Remember, each of these Scriptures was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born to Mary.

The Lord says, **“Bethlehem**, you might not be an important town in the nation of Judah. But out of you will come a ruler over Israel for Me. His family line goes back to the early years of your nation. It goes all the way back to days of long ago.” - Micah 5:2

This was fulfilled when Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem to be counted for the census, and Jesus was born there (Luke 2:4-7).

City of Zion, be full of joy! People of Jerusalem, shout! See, your king comes to you. He always does what is right. He has the power to save. He is gentle and riding on a **donkey**. He is sitting on a donkey’s colt. - Zechariah 9:9

This was fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, as the people shouted, “Hosanna!” (John 12:13-14)

What a good price they had set for me! So I threw the **30 silver coins** to the potter in the **Lord's temple**. - Zechariah 11:13b

This was fulfilled when the chief priests paid Judas 30 silver coins to betray Jesus. Later, Judas threw the coins into the temple (Matthew 26:14-15, 27:5).

He was beaten down and made to suffer. But he didn't open his mouth. He was led away like a sheep to be killed. Lambs are **silent** while their wool is being cut off. In the same way, he didn't open his mouth.- Isaiah 53:7

This was fulfilled when Jesus allowed the guards to whip Him and beat Him. He did not say a word to defend Himself when He was on trial before Pilate (Matthew 27:27-31, 27:14).

A group of sinful people has closed in on me. They are all around me like a pack of dogs. They have **pierced my hands and my feet**. - Psalm 22:16

This was fulfilled when Jesus was nailed to the cross (John 20:25).

But the servant was pierced because we had sinned. He was crushed because we had done what was evil. He was **punished to make us whole** again. His wounds have healed us. - Isaiah 53:5

This was fulfilled when Jesus willingly took ours sins to the cross (1 Peter 2:24). When we believe in Him, we are made new. His punishment saves us and gives us new life.

We could go on and on and on reading Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. There are over 300 prophecies about the Messiah, and Jesus fulfills every one of them. No one else could fulfill all the promises God had made about the Saviour of the world. There is no doubt that Jesus was the Messiah sent by God. Jesus explained these things to the two men on the road to Emmaus, because He wanted them to believe in Him. He wanted to take away their sin and give them new life. Certain Hope!

### **3. Jesus is our King**

Jesus is the prophet greater than Moses. Jesus is the priest greater than Aaron. Jesus is the King greater than David. Jesus is the Captain greater than Joshua. Jesus is the Kinsman Redeemer, the Scapegoat and the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world. He is the great high priest who lives forever to intercede for us. He is the lion of the tribe of Judah and the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

The whole purpose of the Bible is to point us to Jesus and he is with us even when we are slow to believe. We all live somewhere between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We are on the long Emmaus Road journey together. There are times when we feel alone and overwhelmed and doubts creep in and our heart gives way and we feel like we can't go on. Then Jesus comes to us and says, "You are not alone. You never were alone. Even when you thought were alone, I was with you every step of the way."

We still make that long walk from the grave. We still weep and remember and wonder why. But everything is changed now. A bright light shines from the garden tomb. The light slowly chases the darkness away until one day, the darkness will be gone forever.

Child of God, behold the risen Christ! You can never be alone again. We are Easter people marching from Good Friday on our way to Easter Sunday. We're not quite there but we're moving in the right direction. And so every Easter we celebrate the great triple truth of this holy day.

The tomb is empty.

Jesus is alive.

We are not alone.

He is risen! He is risen indeed! Jesus is our King. Amen.

