

**Luke 24:13-32**

**CC 9am 24<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

I don't know what it is about walking but often when you are out walking you will speak to complete strangers. I don't mean when you are wandering through Festival place but when you are out in the countryside somewhere. You may be following a footpath and see someone coming towards you and you at least say hello and perhaps even more.

Here in this passage from Luke we see something like that happening.

I am sure this is a familiar story to us from Luke's gospel and from the first Easter day.

We see two people making the journey back from Jerusalem, where they had presumably been for the Passover festival, to their home in Emmaus, a journey of some seven miles.

As they made the walk they met up with a stranger, for that is what Jesus was to them at that point, and talked with him.

What we see from the conversation was

### **1. A lack of understanding.**

As they made their journey they were v14, "talking with each other about everything that had happened". It was after all the topic of the moment much as we might this weekend have been talking about the terrible shootings in Norway. The two of them were trying to get their heads round what had happened. However as we see from their summary in vs 19-24 they hadn't made much progress.

Big questions were there before them. Who was this Jesus? In v19 they described him as "a prophet", which ties in with what the disciples had said to Jesus when he asked them "Who do the crowds say I am" (Luke 9:18-19). Why had he died when so much was hoped of him v21? And had he risen as some were suggesting?

Who is Jesus? Why did he die? Has he risen from the dead? Big questions for them and for many people today. These two were trying to sort it all out but not having much success. Human reasoning was coming up short. Perhaps for some of us we still haven't sorted out these big questions. Or it may be that we have but we still have questions about our faith, about heaven and hell, about prayer or about 101 other things. There may be much we don't understand about Jesus and faith. In what happened with these two we see something of where we can find the answers.

### **2. Jesus explains.**

Well Jesus listened to what they had to say and then, though describing them as obtuse and slow witted, he patiently explained to them what they should have already understood and he did it from the Scriptures, v27, "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

The question was what should these people believe and the answer came from the Bible. The importance of this can't be underestimated. What Jesus did sets us a precedent. When it comes to matter of doctrine and faith, when it comes to answering the kind of questions these two people had, then it is to the Bible we must look for our answers.

I was reading a paper at the weekend and was reliably informed, because that's what papers do, that there is an increase in the numbers of schools and pupils doing Latin. It took me back to unhappy memories of slogging through Latin declensions and so on. I say this because I want to use a little Latin now. When the reformation under Luther and others took place their theological beliefs were summarised in five short statements one of which was sola scriptura, only by Scripture. The point being made was that in matters of faith and doctrine it was the Bible that should be the guiding factor and not the traditions of the church or human reason. This is where many of the problems facing the church today lie in where people look for authority. Some will suggest that it is

to the church and its teaching we should look, so if a synod or Council of Bishops decide it then so be it. Others say no it is what we as humans can with our minds understand and accept. However for many of us we look to Jesus and to passages like this and say no Scripture, God's word should hold authority and it alone should teach us our faith – Sola Scriptura, only by Scripture.

So in the contentious area of homosexuality, while some using human reason will say love is good no matter who shares it, and while others will say the church must move with the times and vote to accept that practicing homosexuals can be ordained and leaders of the church, still many of us would say that Scripture presents homosexual practice as wrong, as it presents sex outside marriage as wrong and therefore to be repented of as with all sin.

I say all this because it is important for us all to understand how we work out matters of faith and doctrine. Last week Margaret Locke-Wheaton in her sermon was speaking about us having a series on the Bible and then used the throw away line "but then we always focus on the Bible here" and indeed we do and we should because it is our sole authority in matters of faith and doctrine. You have not come here this morning to hear my latest ideas and thoughts, which is just as well because I rarely have any. We have come to hear what God has to say to us through his word. That is why we study the Bible in our services. It is also why we do sermon series looking through a book of the Bible or a topic, trying to hold a balance between Old and New Testament, between gospel and Epistles so that it is God who is setting the agenda not me. Each Sunday I am faced with a passage not arbitrarily chosen by me but often simply the next in Bible book and sometimes I wish I didn't have to preach that passage.

I was talking to my son Philip the other day. He spends most days writing songs and I was asking him how he manages to come up with new ideas. How difficult is that to regularly have to come up with a new idea for a song, something different to say. When it comes to preaching it is not a matter of trying to think up something new to say but instead, as far as possible, we let God decide which passage we are to preach from and then seek to say what God says through that passage. In that way we deal with the whole counsel of God. Sola Scriptura – only by Scripture this was the pattern of Jesus and it is our pattern.

That should be so not just in the teaching from here but for us as we try and find answers to the big questions of faith we have. It is to the Bible we need to go. Then also if our friends have questions it is to the Bible we need to point them. After all, as we have been seeing, this is the word of God so where else would we go?

So Jesus explained to these two travellers the answers to their questions from the Bible and that explanation had

### **3. An amazing effect**

Often when I have spoken about these verses I have said that we in England in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are different from these two in many ways not least culturally. However, I think there was a touch of Britishness in these two. Some of you here I know are not very British, probably because you're not actually British. But note these two. They met with Jesus and he explained things to them. They encouraged him to have a meal with them where he broke bread in such a way that suddenly they recognised him only for him to disappear. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (v32) While Jesus had been explaining things to them something had been happening in them but, with remarkable Britishness they hadn't said anything at the time. "Well I didn't want to feel like a wally did I?" But there was a response. As Jesus spoke to them there was an inner response, which was the working of God the Holy Spirit. The word of the Scriptures resonated with them in a deep way. It

found an acceptance. They sensed more that thought that what was being offered to them was truth. As such it turned their lives around and we see them rushing back to Jerusalem with the big question answered, “has Jesus risen”? Yes he had they had seen him but more he had taught them from Scripture that this is what had to happen. It was through the teaching of the word that these two found a new faith in Jesus. It is something that has happened to many down the years, to quote from one commentary:

“John Wesley found his 'Emmaus road' in London, on May 24, 1738. 'In the evening', he tells us in his Journal, 'I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.' It was William Holland's reading of Luther's commentary on Paul's epistle, but even at those three removes Wesley heard the voice of the living Christ and found in it salvation.”

The Bible is not just there to teach us about our faith it is there to lead us to faith in Jesus Christ and to help us to lead others to faith. We need to have confidence in the word of God to do the work of God and that is to bring about salvation. As Michael Wilcock said in that quote even at three removes from the word, God was at work in the life of John Wesley through the word and he can do that same work in the life of your friend and mine, your family member and mine.

You may well have a friend who has the same kind of big questions that these two people on the road to Emmaus had, who is Jesus? Why did he die? Has he risen from the dead? Don't be afraid to seek to answer your friends from the Bible for as we have been seeing over recent weeks this is the word of God and it makes us “wise for salvation” (2 Tim 3:15). It is our sole authority in matters of faith and doctrine and as such we should use it to answer the questions we have and the questions others have.