

A month ago I went to a party and I met there a guy I haven't seen in over 30 years. As he came into the room I immediately recognised him but thought wow – he has changed. Not surprising I suppose in 30 years, but I was still surprised at how he'd changed. However with my grandson if I don't see him for a couple of weeks I can see he has changed.

Occasionally change can occur in us in a very short space of time.

I remember back many years now to my early 20's and a weekend I spent with a group of young people from the church I had recently started attending. Over the weekend we had a great time but something really changed for me in that short space of time, because it was over that weekend that I became a Christian. Over that weekend I changed from being someone who was interested in faith and Christianity and such stuff to being someone who believed in Jesus as God and accepted that he had died that I might be forgiven for all the bad stuff in my life and restored as a friend of God. I have to say that I wasn't then able to then witness to this change by being baptised as Poppy is today because I had been baptised just a few years before – I never can get things right.

But over that weekend my life was changed. I changed from being an interested observer of faith to someone for whom faith is essential and my relationship with Jesus Christ is key to my life.

But how does that happen? How do people change? How do people come to faith in Jesus Christ?

Do you have to be a certain kind of person?

I don't think so because here in Christ Church we have people from all kinds of backgrounds and from many countries of different ages who would say that they are followers of Jesus and while the change may have happened in different ways it has happened.

So how do people change? The answer is Jesus.

That's what we see as we look briefly at the passage we have had read for us this morning. Do turn to it, even if you are a visitor or not used to church, because I want you to see that what I am saying comes not from me but from this book. You may be aware that this year the church in this country is celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Authorised version of the Bible and as part of that we have been thinking about the Bible and what it is. Here in Christ Church we centre all our teaching about our faith on this book because we believe it to be the very word of God and so having authority in our lives.

### **1. Two people walking**

As we look at v13&14 we see something very natural happening, there were two people walking and talking as they journeyed. What were they talking about? Well if you look at v18 you'll see they were discussing the topic of the day. For them it wasn't the terrible shootings in Norway or phone hacking or famine or cricket but Jesus. Here were two people who were clearly interested in the topic of Jesus and they were positive towards him as we can see in v21 where they say "we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." A bit like wanting to see Andy Murray win Wimbledon or Kettering win the FA cup they had had a hope but it hadn't happened. So they were going home but as they walked they were talking about it trying to make sense of it. Trying to make sense of Jesus, who he was and what had happened to him.

Here were two ordinary people interested in Jesus, thinking about him but with no clear answers. However, in a couple of hours of so they would be rushing back to Jerusalem certain that Jesus had risen from the dead and starting a new life as his followers. So how did they change?

### **2. Jesus met them**

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. Anyway these two were a bit like that because there they were walking along chatting about this Jesus guy when as we see in v15&16 someone comes alongside them and they start chatting with him. However, they didn't realise it was Jesus. They told him what had been going on in Jerusalem and the fact that they couldn't understand it. Jesus response in v25 was "How foolish you are" I think modern language that would be "duh!" But then he explained it all from the Bible as we see in v27, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." It wasn't a matter of him saying look this is what I think, but using what God had said in the Old Testament to explain to them. Now I say that because I think it is just as important for us today. The Bible teaches us about Jesus. That's what he did and what we need to do. It is as we read the Bible that we meet Jesus, not the Jesus that we think we know but the real Jesus. I remember going through the gospel of Mark with a group of people and a woman at one point saying "the Jesus I'm reading about here is not the Jesus I thought I knew about". Jesus used the Bible to teach about himself and it is through the Bible that Jesus meets us and it is that meeting which is essential if there is to be change. On the weekend I mentioned earlier a guy used the Bible to help us think about Jesus and why he died and it was as he did so that it was as if I met with Jesus in a new way and that changed my life totally.

### **3. The response**

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 we might say was the working of God the Holy Spirit. 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.'"

However, it is not just people in history but people today people like me – or is that the same as people in history? As the guy taught us about Jesus from the Bible it was for me just the same. It all suddenly made sense like putting the last piece into the jigsaw.

This is how people are changed and how people become Christians, followers of Jesus, as the Bible is used to help us meet with Jesus. For some of us today I hope that this service and beginning to look at how people change might be step along the path of you thinking about Jesus. If you want to do that then you need to read about him for yourself in the Bible. There are copies of Mark's gospel outside in the welcome area. Pick one up if you want they are free. But better talk with a friend about Jesus and ask them to explain about him from the Bible.

So these two people were changed by their meeting with Jesus as down the centuries many people round the world have been changed and as Poppy here as she prepares for Baptism has been changed. It didn't make them perfect, it hasn't made me perfect.....it hasn't made Poppy perfect but it was real. I know nothing more of these two but for me this has been part of my life nearly 40 years and my prayer for Poppy is that in 40 years she is still walking with Jesus. But having recognised him wasn't the end of it.

#### **4. Telling the story**

V33 they got up straight away leaving the meal on the table and rushed back to Jerusalem to tell people what had happened to them. That's natural isn't it? If something even slightly unusual happens to us we tell it over and over again. As I said it's nearly 40 years since that weekend that changed my life but I still talk about it. Poppy this morning has spoken about her path to faith. For all of us here who have met with Jesus and become his followers I hope we do tell others about it for this can help others on their path to faith.

Here are two people who in a very short space of time were changed from being interested in Jesus to becoming two of his followers. The way they were changed was as he taught them from the Bible about himself and they then told others about what had happened.

Today Poppy stands here because she too in a very different way has been changed by meeting with Jesus through the Bible and she too has told us about that. My prayer is that in the months ahead more people will stand here and say "I met with Jesus and became his follower". Perhaps you will be one of them.