

## **A Walk with Jesus**

Luke 24:13-35

### **Introduction: A Walk with Jesus**

Since the lockdown, we've started it seems as a nation to take up three new habits, I think. The three new habits that we have as a nation.

The first one is 'Clapping'. Hasn't it been amazing being able to show our appreciation to those frontline workers- putting their lives on the line for us? Someone on twitter a couple of weeks ago put that they'd put out their bins on Thursday night and got a round of applause from the neighbours. It turned out that it was eight o'clock and they were clapping for the NHS! Clapping has become our new thing, maybe we should find a better way though to show our appreciation after this over!

The Second Habit is 'Filming ourselves'. Not entirely new, everything gets filmed at the moment. My friend, Graham Thomson, who is our mission partner, was on the national BBC news after he'd filmed himself singing (I'm still waiting for the call!).

Finally: the third thing that we've taken up is 'the walk'. Everyone's going for 'a walk'. Not walking to somewhere, Not walking to get somewhere, just walking for pleasure. This conversation's been happening up and down the country:

"I've had an idea darling."

"What is it? A way to stop the virus? A way to end the lockdown? A new way to get toilet roll?"

"No, let's go out... for a walk."

And there they are, walking down places they never knew existed, just streets away. Of course, some are going for a jog, but let's face it, for most of us, that's just a walk with all the pleasure taken out! As a nation we've rediscovered 'the walk'.

Well this morning we're going to get our daily allotted exercise by going for a walk with a difference: a walk with Jesus. We're going to follow two friends as they walk somewhere... and then walk back again! But this is no ordinary walk. This is a walk that will literally change their lives. After this walk things will never be the same. We're going to listen in on their conversation, and who knows, maybe it will change our lives too?

This account takes place on Sunday (after Jesus has been crucified on the Friday) 5th April 33 AD.

### **Jesus Unseen**

Our first point is we see "Jesus unseen". These two friends are heading to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. Not a massive distance by today's standards, only the distance between the clocktower in Otley and the Ilkley Moor Vaults, only quarter of an hour in the car, but it's nearly two and a half hours on foot. A fair distance to cover (more than we're really allowed to go out at the moment, if you think about it).

The Passover festival is over and they're heading home. They'd come with such high hopes, such high expectations. They'd been with Jesus and he'd been talking for months about

some thing big that was going to happen when he got to Jerusalem, but now they are down in the dumps! They'd thought he was a prophet. They'd thought he might just be the one to overthrow the Roman government that so cruelly oppressed them. They really thought that He was 'the guy'! But in the end their teacher was crucified, the dream is over and it's time to go back home.

They're talking about this when a man approaches them on the road. The sun is going down, they can't quite see him in the strange light, his cloak obscures his face and his hands and his feet. He asks them what they're talking about, and their faces drop:

"Don't you know? Haven't you heard what's happened in Jerusalem? Jesus, the great prophet, he's dead. Put to death by our own authorities in Jerusalem. We'd thought he was the one who would free our country from Roman tyranny and oppression. But in the end it came to nothing - three days since it happened now - and nothing. There were some women at the grave this morning, said that they had a vision of angels telling them he had risen from the dead! Sure enough when others checked, the body was gone, but there's no sign of Jesus!"

You can tell, can't you, that they don't put much stock in the women's report! But there's a certain irony and humour to this. They're complaining to Jesus that Jesus hasn't appeared. It's a bit like in the film 'Cars'. One of the characters, Lightning McQueen, asks why everyone is so sad, and Mater, one of the not-so-quick characters, turns to him and says "it's because he has left town, and not even said goodbye." It takes him a good few seconds to catch up that actually he's there with them. Well, it's going to take these guys longer! They're glum about a lack of evidence when evidence is standing right in front of them. They're saying this **to** the evidence! It's almost as though it's supposed to be funny!

Could that be you this morning? Perhaps you're someone who says "There's no evidence for God", "There's no evidence for the resurrection", when actually the evidence is right in front of you? You just haven't looked at it that way before. For example, the Bible, which tells us about God. The amazing world that we live in - we've seen such wonderful weather, haven't we, even though we've been stuck indoors? The sense of right and wrong that we have, no matter what culture or creed.

All these things point us to a God- we just might not see those things as evidence. That doesn't mean those things aren't evidence. And it's worth asking yourself what evidence you would accept for something like the resurrection of Jesus - An eye-witness account? Could be lying. A video? It could be faked. A personal appearance? Well it could be a hallucination!

For some people, nothing could convince them, not because of lack of evidence, but actually because they've decided already that it's not true, they have preconceptions of what can and can't be true. I would argue that's not particularly unbiased or open minded. These travellers though have the evidence right in front of them- but they didn't see the evidence either!

And then Jesus steps in. It would have been so easy at this point, wouldn't it, to just reveal himself, "It is I, Jesus of Nazareth!". But he doesn't do that! Instead he's got some work to do with these guys, which brings us to our second point.

## Jesus Underway

I always imagine Jesus saying this with a smile on his face, "foolish ones and slow to believe". One translation puts it: So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! But I don't think that's really what it means, it's not really that strong. It's more like "engage your brains!", "Don't be so slow to believe!", "Come on guys, the prophets wrote about this! They said this was going to happen, hundreds of years ago!" And Jesus begins what must be one of the greatest Bible studies ever given!

He starts with Moses - that's Luke's way of saying Genesis - He starts with the first book of the Bible and works his way to the end. He's got some mistakes to correct. You see, they think he's just a great prophet - that's what they say, isn't it, that he was a great prophet - but actually Jesus is the son of God, that's what he's going to show them. He'd not come to bring about an escape from the Romans, he'd come to bring about a rescue from sin and its consequences! And to do that He had to suffer and die. That was what he had come to do! Die on the cross and rise again.

So He takes them on a tour of the Bible, Genesis to Second Chronicles, the books that bookended the Old Testament for Jews. Now, I would love to know what he included in his study. Perhaps it was Genesis 3:15 - the promise, given right back in the garden of Eden, of one who would crush the serpent's head while being bitten by the serpent. One who would defeat evil, while seemingly being defeated. Perhaps he'd take them to Isaiah 53 - the one who would be pierced for our transgressions, whose wounds would bring us peace. And yet prolongs his days. Perhaps Zechariah 12 - where Zechariah prophesied that the nation would look at the one they had pierced, and on that day a fountain of forgiveness would open. Perhaps 2 Samuel 7, where King David is promised a son who will rule forever, but will be beaten by the rods of men. This is powerful stuff - and that's by no means all of it! I became a Christian 24 years ago, and it was stuff like this that convinced me that the Bible is no ordinary book, and eventually led me to believe that Jesus really is the Son of God and had come to die in my place.

These guys were wrong to write off Jesus. Their preconceptions blinded them from seeing who Jesus is. They thought they knew what Jesus was about, and they thought he was a huge disappointment! But now Jesus has set them straight.

Could that be you this morning? Your preconceptions are stopping you from seeing who Jesus really is. You think you know about Jesus, he's that religious guy, he's that moraliser, he's that comfort blanket for weak people. A sandal-wearing hippie, who has nothing to say to me, other than 'be nice to people' or 'don't do that!'. And you decide I don't need that, like lots of other people, I don't need somebody to make me feel bad about myself - I have parents or children for that - and you'd be right, you don't need that. But that isn't what Jesus offers. That isn't who Jesus is - the truth is so much more amazing.

Jesus isn't that exercise guy, Joe Wicks, who my family have been watching and exercising along with - a nice guy, setting an example, but actually making us all feel really unfit in the process. No Jesus is like one of those amazing doctors and nurses in the ICU. He's there to save our life. If he's come to just give us moral or spiritual advice, then we can dismiss him. But that was never his claim. He never claimed those things. He claimed that his death was necessary to save us, to rescue us from the dreadful disease called sin, a disease which results finally in death and hell.

He came as a Messiah - the Messiah - not a moral teacher or a killjoy. He came to offer us life - that's what we remember at Easter, and that's what he's explaining to these men on the road. The Messiah had to suffer and die, that was the plan, that was always the plan. It wasn't that his mission has failed. No, it actually meant that he'd done all that the prophets said he would do. Now these guys seem to get it, but they still haven't seen what's right in front of them, which brings us to our last point.

### **Jesus Uncovered**

Well, these guys are having an amazing time in their walk with Jesus. It's nearly night time and the two friends ask Jesus to come and stay with them. Jesus could have carried on if they hadn't asked, but they do ask, and so he turns aside to their house in Emmaus. Like any good hosts they offer him a meal – but intriguingly, Jesus breaks the bread. Now, that's not normal, the host would usually break the bread at a meal, not the guest. It would be like a visitor coming to your house and making all your family a cup of tea! That's not how it works, is it? The host makes the tea, and in their culture the host broke the bread! He's a man that's the host, even at another man's house!

As he blesses the food, breaks the bread and passes it out to start the meal they finally recognise him. People have speculated how they know at this point: Was it Him repeating the Lord's supper? Unlikely, there's no mention of wine, and there weren't any of the twelve there who were at the Last Supper. Did they see the nail marks, perhaps, in his hands? Possible - though we're not told that, and at other times he points them out. Was there a special way Jesus gave thanks for the food? Again, possible, but we're not told. Some have speculated that it reminded them of the feeding of the 5,000, but whatever the reason, we're told the real reason there in verse 31:

*And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.*

Their eyes were opened. All the way through Luke's Gospel Jesus has been opening blind eyes. But whereas physical eyes - which we now have cures for – can be sorted out, spiritual eyes are another matter. Those eyes only God can open. And that's what happens. After looking into the Bible with Jesus, after really understanding what he'd come to do, they have what I call a lightbulb moment. You know, like in those cartoons where a lightbulb just appears over their heads - they've got, they've finally got it!

No sooner have they seen Him with their spiritual eyes, than they no longer see him with their physical eyes. He disappears from their sight. If they were in any doubt before, that doubt is taken away as he disappears from before them. You'd think that would be what they would talk about! "Wow, what a trick, it's like David Blane or David Copperfield!" (for those watching in Ilkley, David Copperfield is not just piece of classical literature, he was also a magician in the 1990's). But they don't talk about that, the disappearance, they talk about the Bible study again! Have a look at verse 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?"*

That's what's really struck them, that's what made their hearts burn within them. You know that feeling of overwhelming excitement that something really significant is happening. Their hearts burned and now their eyes opened. The gloom they were experiencing turned into

excitement, turned into joy, when they discover Jesus is alive. The doom and gloom of death is over, and life will never be the same again!

Perhaps you've experienced that, yourself. You've come to see with these travellers that Jesus really is alive. Not just in our hearts, not as some kind of ghost. But really and truly alive, never to die again! You can share in the joy these disciples have. Death is not the last word, more than that, you can have fullness of life now! These travellers run back to Jerusalem and tell the others there that they have seen Jesus, only to discover that they've had the same experience, Peter has seen Jesus. And moments later, in the passage that follows, they will all see Jesus altogether!

Jesus will tell them later: *"Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."* (John 20:29). We can join in the blessing with the disciples - not because we've seen him with our physical eyes, but like the travellers on the road we can see him with our spiritual eyes. We can know him, even though we can't still see him. We can have him as our friend, as our king, even though he's hidden from our sight. It wasn't seeing Jesus with the eyes in their heads that made the difference for the travellers, it was seeing Jesus with the eyes in their hearts and minds. It was when God's word, the Bible was opened up to them.

That's why we spend so much time as a church looking at the Bible. Not because we're bookish people- it's because in the Bible our eyes are opened to Jesus. The Bible is our key to knowing Jesus, as God himself by His Spirit opens our eyes to see Jesus.

So let me make some suggestions for over Easter, or over the lockdown. If you are at that first stage of your walk with Jesus - "Jesus unseen". Sceptical and unsure, can't see what all the fuss is about, why not have a look at the Bible for yourself? Don't depend on second hand opinions: Read it for yourself. Maybe read the rest of Luke's Gospel that leads up to this. Read it in any translation you like, though modern ones are easier to read - we use one called the English Standard Version at our church, google it - it's free online. See for yourself whether this rings true - or whether it's hokum!

If you're at the next stage, looking into things - "Jesus underway". I've got some advice, which is pretty similar really: Look into the Bible for yourself, but don't just look through to see if it's true - See what it tells you about Jesus! See how it all points to him. Maybe read Luke's Gospel as well, but see what it has to say about Jesus' death and resurrection, and what it really means. See what it has to say about our biggest need, and why Jesus had to die. If you have questions, why put them at the bottom of the screen, in the comments section? I've disabled the identity part so you can send it anonymously, and over the next week I'll be posting online some helpful resources for looking into Christianity on our social media accounts, so why not follow one of ours? Also, if you want something a bit closer to home, and more personal, people have been posting videos online of themselves, with the hashtag #easterchangedmylife and they're sharing stories about how Jesus changed their life through the events of Easter.

If you're at that last stage - Jesus uncovered – then rejoice this Easter - He is risen! He appeared to his disciples and sometimes groups of more than 500 people, on more than 10 occasions! This is not wishful thinking, this is wonderful news that death does not win! Jesus

wins! Doom and gloom does not win; Jesus wins! And he did it by dying in our place, and rising again, so that we might be forgiven, but more than that, to know the joy of new life!

Every day now is a walk with Jesus. Every day is another chance to meet with him and know him better. If you were stuck with me in lockdown, you'd be sick of me very soon, I can promise you! But not Jesus, we can walk with him the whole of our lives, knowing sins forgiven, and the joy of new resurrection life. So live it! Why not read through Luke's Gospel and meet with Jesus again, afresh, walk with him through the streets of Galilee. Watch as he heals the sick, has compassion on the needy. Listen as he teaches you what life is really all about!

Heed his call to turn from your sin and turn to Him instead for real life. Trusting in his death alone to put you right with God. Why not use this lockdown not just to clap the NHS (as wonderful as that is), not just to film yourself (as weird as that is), but to go for a walk. Go for a walk with Jesus. And, who knows, it might just change your life.