

Easter 3, 26/4/20  
The Road to Emmaus – Luke 24.13-35  
Rev. James Pacey

If you've been with us over the last couple of weeks from Easter Sunday, you'll have realised that there has been a sort of theme running through the sermons,

The theme of belief.

These past three Sundays have all had Gospel readings about people coming to belief,

Moving from a place of despair, anger and sorrow to a place of joyous, transforming belief,

On Easter Sunday we started with the women at the tomb, being met by the risen Jesus and who commands them to go and tell his disciples.

I spoke about the challenge of belief in a time of uncertainty and a time of sorrow, that perhaps saying 'I want to believe' is enough.

Last week we had the story of Thomas, needing proof, tangibility of Jesus' Resurrection.

And of him coming face to face with the Resurrected Jesus: wounds and all.

I spoke of how our life of belief means we will carry the scars with us, but like Jesus giving the Holy Spirit, our journey of faith is not done in our own strength, but with the power of God in and with us.

And today, we get the final Resurrection appearance,

These two disciples having a literal journey as they symbolically journey into a place of belief.

It's a powerful place for us to leave our own thematic journey.

We too as disciples have gone - indeed are going - on a journey,

From doubt, from moments of crying 'I want to believe', to now having our eyes opened.

Now perhaps our own faith journey isn't quite that straightforward,

Sometimes faith is the old cliché – three steps forward two steps back, or even two steps forward, a hundred steps back,

But wherever we are in our own belief, it is not enough that we keep it to ourselves.

Like the two disciples on the road, we who have seen Christ revealed in the scriptures and in the sacraments, are compelled to do something.

Verse 35 'then they told what had happened on the road, and how had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.'

So, my question as we finish our thematic journey of belief: is what will you do?

Whether that's a glimmer of faith, beset by storms of doubt, or whether that is a faith nurtured as a lifelong Christian, what will you do?

What will you do with this story of one who says to the women 'do not be afraid,'

Who says to the disciples in the upper room 'as the Father has sent me, so I send you.'

Who causes the hearts of those on the road to Emmaus to burn and their eyes to open,

What will you do with this message of Easter, Resurrected life?

A life in all its fullness?

A life extending beyond death?

Because one thing is certain, wherever we are in our own belief, we can not leave the same.

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Maybe you've seen the film *Risen*.

it's loosely based on the centurion who after Jesus' death turns and says 'truly this man was the Son of God.'

In the film, a fearful and angry Pontius Pilate demands answers when the crucified body of a Galilean preacher named Yeshua mysteriously disappears two days after being buried in a tomb.

He sets his best man, the Tribune, Clavius, on the case.

For the majority of the film, it plays out like some version of CSI Jerusalem.

But then in the most powerful moment, Clavius enters an Upper Room – the very same room where Yeshua and his disciples broke bread,

And there, He comes face to face with the Resurrected Yeshua, the one who he watched die two days prior.

And Clavius breaks down, collapses against the wall of the room, and weeps.

What would you do in that moment?

And what will you do?

Clavius cannot go back: he becomes an additional disciple and is there to witness Yeshua's other Resurrection appearances.

At the very end of the film he tells his story to another man who asks him: 'do you truly believe all this?'

And Clavius replies: "I believe. I can never be the same."

"I believe. I can never be the same."

Wherever we stand in relation to the empty tomb today,

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Still inside, quizzical, afraid to step in, our running out of it with joy, we can never be the same.

Life cannot go back to what it was before for us who have caught a glimpse of the beauty of eternity.

What will we do that beauty?

With the hope?

Will we hold it to ourselves?

A personal truth that excites and moves but one we nevertheless keep secret?

Or is this something to live out, to be shared?

This is what repentance is: turning away from something and re-orienting our lives to Christ,

Not because he has told us to (though that plays a part),

Not because we are afraid of consequences,

But because we do it with joy, and because it's such Good News – that there is a love that sustains us even in the now, that there is a better way of love and service,

Then their joy must flow from us.

Sharing the news won't be easy.

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.'

To believe what we do is on a human level, foolish,

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It can seem foolish to preach a news that says death has been defeated in the midst of this pandemic.

It can seem foolish to preach of a life in all its fullness when there is a fear of stepping outside our front doors,

It can seem foolish to believe in something that is Good News when we are suffering,

It can seem foolish to believe in Good News when Christians consistently fail and hurt one another.

Paul knew these objections. In 1 Corinthians he writes: 'the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.'

Paul knew, as do we on some level, that in this season of Easter, we encounter a God who has overturned death and has ultimately, one day when His Kingdom arrives in full has, driven out suffering and pain.

A God who stands with us in the now.

Surely that is Good News.

So what will we do, our own movement into belief?

We share that belief.

Not by standing on street corners and yelling,

But telling your story,

By speaking of your faith – and about being honest,

About not hiding the doubts and the fears and the uncertainties,

But also by living.

By being the light in the darkness.

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By being the leaven in the world,

And by reminding a world in fear that there is a hope and love that no darkness, no virus, has ever defeated.

I pray wherever you are in your journey of faith this day, you will be able to find strength and hope in the God who walks beside you,

And to join with me in proclaiming

‘Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.’

I believe. I can never be the same.