

**Theme: Recognising Jesus (The Road to Emmaus)**

**Sunday 20 April 2014 EASTER SUNDAY, Milson Combined Church  
Silvia Purdie**

Verse for the day Colossians 3:1. Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Prayer for the day

Living Christ, you are risen from the dead! Love reigns! You are life stronger than death; raise our eyes to see you as the new day dawns.

Bible readings

Colossians 3:1-15

*Alan or Yvonne*

Luke 24:13-35, The Road to Emmaus (dramatic reading)

**Luke 24:13-35** Contemporary English Version (CEV)

Narrator: <sup>13</sup> Early in the morning the disciples found Jesus' tomb empty. Later that day two of Jesus' disciples were going to the village of Emmaus, a couple of hours walk from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> While they walked they were talking and thinking about what had happened. <sup>15</sup> Jesus came near and started walking along beside them. <sup>16</sup> But they did not know who he was. <sup>17</sup> Jesus asked them,

Jesus: "What are you talking about?"

Narrator: The two of them stood there looking sad and gloomy. <sup>18</sup> Then the one named Cleopas asked Jesus,

Cleopas: "Are you the only person from Jerusalem who didn't know what was happening there these last few days?"

Jesus: <sup>19</sup> "What do you mean?"

Cleopas: Those things that happened to Jesus from Nazareth. He was a powerful prophet, who delighted God and all the people. <sup>20</sup> But the chief priests and our leaders had him arrested and sentenced to die on a cross. <sup>21</sup> We had hoped that he would be the one to set Israel free! That was three days ago.

Cleo: <sup>22</sup> Some women in our group shocked us. They went to the tomb early in this morning, <sup>23</sup> but they didn't find the body of Jesus. They came back, saying that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. <sup>24</sup> Some men from our group went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said. But they didn't see Jesus either.

Jesus: "Why can't you understand? How can you be so slow to believe all that the prophets said? <sup>26</sup> Didn't you know that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory?"

Narrator: <sup>27</sup> Jesus then explained everything written about himself in the Scriptures, beginning with the Law of Moses and the Books of the Prophets. <sup>28</sup> When they were nearly home, Jesus kept on walking, but they begged him,

Cleopas: "Stay with us! It's already late, and the sun is going down."

Narrator: So Jesus went into the house to stay with them. <sup>30</sup> After Jesus sat down to eat, he took some bread. He blessed it and broke it. Then he gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> At once they knew who he was, but he disappeared.

Cleo: "When he talked with us along the road and explained the Scriptures to us, wasn't your heart on fire? Mine was!"

Narrator: <sup>33</sup> So they got right up and walked all the way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven apostles and the others gathered together. <sup>34</sup> And they learned from the group that the Lord was really alive and had appeared to Peter. <sup>35</sup> Then the disciples from Emmaus told them what happened on the road and how they knew he was the Lord when he broke the bread.

## **Sermon**

What an odd story  
don't you think?

It is so odd that it must be true – I mean, who would make up a story about disciples not even recognising their master? Why didn't they recognise him? ... the sound of his voice, the look of his face, the content of his teaching – they who knew him intimately over months even years. If they couldn't spot Jesus when they saw him, what hope is there for the rest of us??

But I love that. I love this story. I love that we don't need to know what his face or beard looked like. I love that we don't need to know his human voice, or even be able to understand the language he spoke. Jesus risen from the grave rises above all tangible things. Jesus who bust open the tomb breaks through all barriers of space and time. He has become Spirit and Truth, universal and glorious.

But the risen Jesus is not amorphous. He enters into any space and any time still with his personality, his character. The Spirit of the risen glorified Jesus is a particular spirit with particular characteristics. And we who seek his face and his voice, we who seek to follow him, we learn more and more how to recognise him.

So how do we recognise the risen Christ? Let's learn from this story. If you like to count things, you can count with me to 8 ... a 8 point sermon today for no particular reason.

First, Jesus comes alongside. He walks with them on the road. First and foremost, God is PRESENT with us because Jesus rose from the dead. God is with us. The Lord is here. I am with you always. We who have invited Christ to be our Lord have one thing absolutely guaranteed, rock solid promise, 100% guaranteed – that Christ will walk alongside us, no matter what, no matter where. We are not alone. He is here. We might feel lonely, even abandoned, but we aren't. Life is forever a conversation, we can absolutely take for granted and utterly depend on the presence of Jesus.

I wonder what difference that makes in your life. For me, it has become strong foundation. The ground I stand on. And my experience of the presence of God keeps changing. This past month God gave me a picture of his presence being like a solid sort of spongy protection around me. High, thick, surprisingly lacking in words – just a big 'I AM'. No matter what.

Second, Jesus relates with them. He asks them what they are talking about, he cares for how they feel. He comes alongside not as boss but as friend. Respectful, walking at their pace, listening to them, encouraging them to be honest about how they are. Honest. Genuine. Companion.

When I was 12 years old my leader on a camp at El Rancho told me Jesus was my friend, I remember her inviting us to picture him sitting with us in our cabin, wearing jeans. I remember saying the words with my mouth and my heart and every shred of me – “Jesus be my friend. I will follow you.” .. and that has been true for me ever since, because that is just who Jesus is.

Third, Jesus teaches them, making the connections between their current experience and the truth of scripture ... linking past and present and transforming the future. The risen Jesus is in full continuity with Abraham and Moses, David and Isaiah. Old is not lost in the new, but in Christ Jesus all the truth about God is fully true.

I am this year rattling around in Psalms especially. I come to each Psalm fresh, and I ask of each Psalm, where is Jesus here? And I ask Jesus what he thinks of the Psalm. Last night I happened to find myself in 24. ...

Fourth, the risen Jesus makes their hearts burn within them. If you are a Buddhist you will try to squash your emotions and reject anything which makes you FEEL because passion is attachment and attachment is bad. If you are a child of our age you will value emotions of thrill and cynicism and try not to feel too much else. Only Christ brings us fully alive emotionally. Passion and pain, tenderness and peace, joy and desire, even fear and anger, all are part of being human and we are only truly human when we let the God of Jesus release us to be fully alive.

Lately I have been very aware of emotions. I have two dear friends who are in crisis and uncertain of their future, and I have felt for them deeply. I feel as a mother, as a wife. I feel for you and for the church. I enter into prayer and worship heart and soul.

Fifth, Jesus is vulnerable. He waits to be invited in.

" *be lifted up, you ancient doors,  
that the King of glory may come in.*

Cleopas could have let Jesus walk right on by and he would never have known who it was, this teacher on the road. Jesus might be

the King of glory but he isn't a pushy one, no King demanding right of entry. Just a traveller on the road. Will you dare to say "Stay with me. Come in. Come into my heart, my life." I dare you to say this again to Jesus this morning. Let him in. Give him access to all of you, all of your home and your work and your heart and your aches and pains and your hopes and dreams. Stay with us, Jesus. You are welcome."

Sixth, Jesus breaks bread. He sits and chats as he waits for the meal, then at table he takes bread, gives thanks to his father in heaven, blesses the bread, blesses his friends, hands them the bread – to Cleopas and everyone else who gathered at the meal table that evening in that house – and it just clicked for them. They all knew that this was Jesus as he shared himself with them in that moment.

for me this is a moment of worship. This simple, symbolic action of sharing bread, opens the soul to God. Thanks, praise, blessing – this is the work of worship, this grows our love for the Lord as we experience in taste and smell and touch his infinite grace and mercy towards us. And that is as true for us in our Communion today as it was for Cleopas and his family 2000 years ago.

7. A really odd bit of the story. Jesus vanishes. How do we recognise him even as he disappears? What's with that? But they don't start hunting for him, where's he gone? Is he under the table? Did he pop to the loo while we weren't looking? The response of Cleopas and the others that night is awe and wonder, not desperate rushing around trying to find him and hang onto him. It was a visitation and then it was over, it had brought them to a point of clarity and that was enough. The risen Jesus is like that, in my experience. There are times of intensity in my walk with him, when I have had a vision or a word of encouragement or a feeling of great peace or a time of amazing worship or intimacy with a special friend ... and then that is over and life carries on. Our lives resonate with the presence of the risen Christ, but that is mostly in the background as we make the tea and prune the roses and play with the kids. Jesus disappears so that we can live in the real world, changed, renewed, inspired. The point is, Jesus, the risen, glorified Jesus, is always present, but now within us, - as Michal said on Friday, we have become the Holy of Holies, the place in which the living God dwells. Jesus is alive in me, in you.

and lastly, 8, Jesus motivates action. I find myself at this time in my life needing more solitude and time to think and pray and feel and read. God shapes us on the inside through things we call spiritual disciplines and reflection. But if it is Jesus Christ we worship then the inner always leads us to the outer, and the outer world leads us to the inner world. Action! Drive! Passion and energy. Work. Movement. Mission. Why do you think the Christian faith evangelised the world, and brought vast improvements into the worlds of medicine, education, care for the poor, the disabled, the hungry? We didn't achieve all that sitting around navel gazing. Cleopas and his wife could have stayed in their nice warm home and tucked themselves up in bed feeling very blessed and special that Jesus had come to them and opened their eyes and their hearts and wasn't that nice dear. No! They got right up, tossed a change of clothes in the backpack and set off again. Surely they were exhausted. Surely they could have had a decent night's sleep then gone back to Jerusalem. It wasn't even safe to walk in the dark, what were they thinking!!

But the fire in the belly is not for us alone. Jesus is just like that, it's part of his character and how he shapes our character. Living in the presence of the risen Christ will get you into trouble, it will inspire you with the desire to reach out to other people, even if it would be more comfy staying home in bed. It will bring you into fellowship with others and together you will work, and there is joy in the community and there is joy in the work.

so, 8 ways to spot the risen Christ ... I wonder how many you remember. Lucky for me I have my notes!

1 – Jesus is there! present. accompanying us on the road

2 – Jesus is friend. 'Tell me about that' he says.

3 – Jesus is teacher. opening our minds to truth, linking the authority of the Bible with everyday life, past and present and future

4 – Jesus makes our hearts burn within us. Emotional integrity and aliveness.

5 – Jesus waits to be invited in

6 – Jesus breaks bread, opens the way of worship, Jesus invites us into blessing and relationship with God.

7 – Jesus disappears, is there vividly with us at times then graciously steps aside to let us get on with life in his power

8 – Jesus calls us and energises us for action as we care for others and continue Jesus' work in the world

The risen Jesus simply IS ... he doesn't fit our preconceptions

his best friends didn't even recognise him at first

his risen shape slipped from their grasp even as they reached for him

as their eyes were open, he was gone

so his risen shape became a life that they knew together, within and among

the Kingdom is within you, among you, between you ... not as a set of rules, not as a programme to be done, but as a personality, a character, a dynamism with a particular shape and texture. The risen Christ moves us in particular directions

As you have reflected these past 2 months on who you are and what you carry and the particular shape of you at this time in your life ... I wonder how you recognised the presence of Jesus with you.

May we know him more and more.