

The value of meeting up with a friend for a walk...

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Sermon Audio file

The Value of meeting up with a friend for a walk

(Luke 24: 13 – 35)

Intro outside – Like walking...? There are always benefits if you are on a walk with someone else... until recently we've not been able to do that... unless you've worked out a way of combining your own daily exercise with when someone you know will be at that same place at that same time as you! It's been so hard for so many people NOT to meet up hasn't it! And then there's been real excitement when we HAVE seen another person!

When 2 people go for a walk... there's time for sharing, laughing, learning, & discovering new things.

Hope we do that as we look in on this journey today, it's a walk mentioned only by Luke, but mentioned in detail and with the purpose for imparting something to us. It's the last chapter in his Gospel, chapter 24. Luke may well have been one of the two on the walk, but modestly remains unnamed, the other is Cleopas, and they are friends. Or it could have been Cleopas out with his wife? They were going to Emmaus, 7m west of Jerusalem. No idea why and we can only guess. No idea what that 'road to Emmaus' was like either – maybe a little like this one but without the greenery and without the traffic!! The conversation between them was more than a social catch up. "They were talking with each other about everything that had happened" (24: 14). We do that all the time about Covid don't we! Have you had your jab yet? Any side effects?!

They are in a state of shock. They'd watched Jesus be crucified. They feared for their own lives. Then they pick up some nonsense from some of the women that they'd seen an angel and that Jesus was alive and was going to meet them in Galilee. Really? Was this a set up? What if it were true? What were some of the things Jesus had said when he was with them... if only he were there now to enlighten them... They needed Jesus to reveal himself to them, but so do I, frequently... guess what happened next... you couldn't have written the script!

Thankfully you don't have to because Dr Luke already recorded the conversation that took place...

We're going to have that script read to us AFTER a very well-known song has been played for us, but this time with lyrics that unpack the events of Easter... just before that walk to Emmaus took place...

Video Clip – Hallelujah (sung by two girls by candlelight) about 5 minutes??

Reading (Luke 24: 13 – 35) by Chris Martin

Message 1 - Ever feel low...? We can feel overwhelmed with sadness when things don't turn out as we expect, especially if we have believed God for something. New job? Healing? Answer to prayer? The disciples had hoped for so much in Jesus, but they had misunderstood his reason for coming. It wasn't to be some military leader who'd help overthrow Roman rule. The Salvation he spoke about and came to bring was of a very different kind – more important too. Now he was gone, and so was all they'd hoped

for. They may well have wondered about what to do next, wondered about their jobs, feared for their safety, been confused by what the women had said, been feeling a sense of anti-climax. The close knit group would've had some frank discussion and maybe there'd been some hurtful words exchanged?

All their feelings would have been valid. You can feel the lowness of these two initially as they wrestle with all they have seen and now heard. It's OK to feel low sometimes. But talking can help. And a friend can help. Jesus doesn't promise to make everything clear, certainly not at the click of our fingers. We have to trust as we work out this walk of faith. He guides those who seek him but may guide in an unexpected manner.

If you ever feel dejected, don't be too harsh on yourself. Way more people than we realise suffer such feelings from time to time. Some from a mental health issue. Some as the result of a recent life circumstance. Sometimes it's just a part of our being human.

Song - What a friend we have in Jesus (3.15) sung by Charlane

Prayers led by Dave & Gloria

Message 2 - Ever feel Jesus isn't with you...? Jesus told his followers he will never leave us, so if we are one of his followers, why doubt! The disciples in this account had Jesus there in the flesh, but even they weren't aware of it. "God... is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17: 27).

Why didn't they recognise him...? Was Jesus wearing sunglasses? In another form? Did God take away the possibility of their recognising him, if so why...? Neither would've expected to be speaking with one who'd died but why didn't they recognise his voice?! Maybe they were simply too distressed to notice, too blinkered...? Or maybe it was for what they would learn on the journey...?

"Why didn't you just tell them Jesus...?!" Why doesn't God just do what we want Him to do...! Our ways are not God's ways.

The reality is we don't really know why they never twigged... all we do know was that "they were kept from recognising him" (16) which tells me there was a God-ordained purpose in their NOT knowing... at that point. It's only in v.31 that we read "Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him." This got me thinking. It's a picture of our walking by faith. Was Jesus there earlier when they were upset? Yes, but they didn't realise it. Was he with them on the journey? Yes, but they didn't realise it. They only 'felt' better when their eyes were opened! Then we can pick up their excitement, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road?" (32). But what happened immediately after that? Jesus disappeared again. Should they have then got all low again because there was no tangible presence of him? No, of course not. Our following Jesus is regardless of what we do or don't 'feel' at any one moment, and those 'eye opening' moments are usually few and far between. Why? Because our faith and our relationship are to do with our trusting him...

Song - The Lord's my Shepherd (I will trust in you alone)

Message 3 - Ever feel overwhelmed by doubt...? When I'm OK, my faith is OK, when I'm not OK, I can struggle more in my faith or God can seem distant. That's when doubts can creep in. Is that what you feel? Despite all that Jesus had done before their very eyes, the two walking here had only seen him as a 'prophet' not the Messiah (v19). They'd hope he'd be much more. What they had heard from the women had "amazed" them (v.22) but not converted them...

Jesus goes to Scripture, and helps them see they shouldn't have been surprised at all at the Messiah having to suffer etc. There's quite a blunt rebuke in his immediate response, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" (25). How would these Jews have felt having a stranger explain to them that their Scriptures, that they thought they knew so well, they had

totally misunderstood...? They don't appear to be offended in anyway. The equivalent would be for us to have someone highlight biblically how we should not worship as we do on a Sunday. We would either feel uncomfortable or get defensive! Unless we can see how big the issue is that Jesus is correcting in their minds, we will never be able to understand how the two would have felt. It's to do with the One their entire Old Testament pointed towards, and Jesus says, "Don't you know anything about the very basics?!"

Lesson for us...? Let's not think we know everything. Now we see but in part. Let's be careful when being dogmatic. Another lesson is surely that when we are unsure, or are tempted to doubt, we should go to God's Word, or at least put ourselves in a place where we will hear it explained to us – hence how vital it is to tune in weekly when it'd be far easier to do nothing... this can be the thin end of the wedge.

Doubt in itself is ok. It's what we then do with it. These dilemmas can be make or break times... we feel in a hole. Will we fall further down, or seek to climb out? Take your concerns or your pain to God. You may get your answers, you may not, but at least you're being honest about your struggle. Sometimes we may have to leave what we don't fully get with God, and trust that in His way and time things will become clearer.

Song – I speak Jesus (4.32)

Message 4 - Ever feel you're not really getting there...? Following Jesus is a journey. There's only two things that are difficult. One is getting started, the other is keeping going! Growing in our faith takes time. Time is what Jesus had with Cleopas and his friend on the journey, possibly two or three hours, and then he stayed with them. Discipleship happened on a journey, over conversation on a walk and over the dining room table – or whatever their equivalent was. Notice that Jesus doesn't force himself on them. Twice he just asks a seemingly innocent question. "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" (17) and "What things?" (19). Maybe instead of demanding answers to our questions, we might do well to pause and imagine Jesus asking us in similar fashion, "And what do you think that means?" Or, "And what do you feel about that?" Aren't the very best counsellors those who enable people to draw out answers for themselves? Jesus was expert at this.

Then when they reach Emmaus, he doesn't gatecrash but awaits an invitation. "Stay with us" (29), they urged him. There is a hunger. Maybe Jesus is awaiting our invitation...? The result...? Jesus quietly takes the bread and gives thanks. Whose house was it...? It would be the master of the house who would give thanks (do we?) Then a beautiful moment of realisation comes...

"Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him... 'were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us...?'" (v.31-32)

Even though Jesus showed them Scriptures, he had only pointed to those as being of relevance to the Jesus of Nazareth, he left the two to realise that he was this Jesus.

We won't become a great follower overnight. Takes time, but we can help ourselves by extending an invitation to Jesus.

Song – 10,000 Reasons (recorded by our worship band)

Video Clip – Dad & Daughter on chocolate

Celebrations

Jonny pic at the Swannery

Thurs 15th - Jane Fishlock's daughter, Chloe

Fri 16th – Thelma Greening, my Mum will be 83

Community Kids slot introduced by short vid clip by Laura King

... then a short vid clip based on Luke 24

Song – Guardian

Close by Roger – We've asked a number of questions today... do we ever feel low... that Jesus isn't with us...? Do we ever feel overwhelmed by doubt... or that we're not really getting anywhere...?

The truth is we ALL have a variety of questions like these at times, and that's ok. We are not weird or failures if we do, and we shouldn't think we are the only ones feeling such things.

BUT... this passage in Luke 24 does help us. It brings us back to our being on a journey, as we identify with a couple ordinary people struggling with their own questions back at that first Easter.

We may not get all the answers, but Jesus remains with us whatever we are feeling. He's there for us when we doubt and God's Word reminds us that what He has started within us HE will carry on to completion. May that act as an encouragement to you today!

Closing prayer by Roger