New Kilpatrick

Podcast

Luke 24:13-35 - Emmaus

2nd May

Introduction

Imagine the sun is setting

It is the end of the day

The air is cooling

And the shadows lengthening

Tinged with peach and stories

But might we pause the day here

Take a breath?

Maybe you have to go on

Maybe you have a journey still to make

But, if you can,

Let’s create community together

Pause in this pausing place called Emmaus

Emmaus which can be found nowhere on a map

Because Emmaus is no where

For Emmaus is everywhere

Hello

I’m Roddy Hamilton

The minister in New Kilpatrick Parish Church

Let us pause and sit together in our own Emmaus’

And share some stories

Of doubt, confusion, surprise

And resurrection

A Parable

It had started out as the strangest of days. News had reached them that the tomb, that contained their friend Jesus, had been broken open and there was no body to find. It was both a shock and a hope, and they couldn’t work out which emotion was winning.

They were walking the seven miles to Emmaus, a village somewhere outside Jerusalem that no one has ever found. And Cleopas and his wife, or companion, or friend, we don’t know as she is given no name, were deep in conversation over what had happened earlier in the day.

In the middle of their conversation, a stranger joined them, and they were glad of his company. “What is it you are talking about so intently, with your long faces” he asked.

The two of them looked at each other, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard of the things that have happened?”

The whole of Jerusalem?? Not just the small band of Jesus followers? Who knows but the stranger hadn’t heard, so they began telling him. Cleopas started with one story which morphed into another that his companion took up, and bounced back to Cleopas about high priests, and betrayal and death sentences and crucifixion and then this strangest of rumours which they couldn’t work out whether to believe of not, that early that morning, some women came back to the upper room with a story of a rolled stone and a disappeared body.

Some of their friends went to the tomb on the strength of the tale and they didn’t see Jesus either.

The stranger walking with them, paused and looked at them. “Slow of heart are you not? Why not just believe? Do you not see such thing all had to happen? Look, here’s a way of making sense of all you are feeling.”

And the stranger began at the beginning, going through everything, way back from the story of Exodus and the prophets pointing out everything that referred to what had happened.

The seven miles disappeared and all too soon they arrived at Emmaus and he was about to say goodbye and carry on when the two of them pleaded: “Please stay. It’s late, you’ll be tired. At least have supper with us.”

So he went into the inn with them. They rested at the table and they asked if he might bless and break bread with them. He did so and as he tore the bread, did they not see a great rush of light, shards of brightness twirled through the air, and landed on the table and scattered across it. In fact the whole loaf fell that way, twisted through the air in slow motion, and bounced on the table surface, because the hands that had held it, and the voice that had blessed it, had disappeared. The stranger was gone.

But in the breaking of bread, in the welcome and generosity of hospitality, in the telling of story they recognised who it was. “Were not our hearts burning!” They said. “Duh, of course we knew who it was, we couldn’t see then. Now we can.”

And before they thought about anything else, they ran, all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the others, who, they had seen.

Prayer 1

Holy one

Beyond the words we have

And the explanations we can imagine

Yet alive in the story

May we find ourselves,

Storytellers.

May we live our faith

Beyond doctrine

And on the paths of life instead,

Beyond the confessions of churches

And within the experience of renewal,

Beyond the certainties of some

And within the wonder and doubt of many

Who follow you,

With equal amounts of confusion and hope.

Living Jesus,

Living word,

Alive in our stories,

May we meet you among us,

In the telling of those stories,

The sharing of hospitality,

And the invitation to strangers.

May we live our faith like that,

Trust resurrection like that,

Follow your vision like that,

And find the meeting places

Everywhere we share life.

Holy God,

Resurrected Jesus,

Living Spirit,

May our eyes be opened,

Our hearts burn,

Our table set,

For your presence among us,

Alive with the stories of life.

Hear us in the sharing of the family prayer

Our father who is in heaven

Hallowed be your name

Your kingdom come

Your will be done on earth

As it is in heaven

Give us this day our daily bread

And forgive us our debt

As we forgive our debtors

Lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil

For yours is the kingdom

The power and the glory forever

Amen

Resurrection Stories

Emmaus is a fabulous story and we haven’t told it directly from the bible today because this story is not some kind of proof text: it is a story, to be told and retold, for it is in the retelling of our own versions, we find the power of it, and experience the hope in it.

It is the strangest of tales that explains or proves nothing about resurrection. But if you want to know how it feels, what it is like to meet Jesus, what is feels like to encounter him again, well here’s a story that will make you feel: shock, confusion, surprise, wonder, mystery. If you need resurrection to be proved, you won’t find much of it in the bible to help with that. If you want an experience of resurrection, there are plenty of stories, travellers and journeys.

And this is one, bread always breaking, table always set for we can never know when the stranger among us, is revealed to be Jesus.

There is a slight twist on that story, however. We share with everyone, not because one of those we share with might turn out to be Jesus. We share with everyone because everyone is Jesus: each person is Messiah, from the least to the most powerful, and in sharing we become Jesus, the kingdom, the renewal of life, to them. Such is the body of Christ. Let’s pause as we reflect on those resurrection stories where we meet and are ready to recognise Jesus.

Music

Epilogue

Things feel as if they are now perhaps, moving towards a more stable time of increasing ‘normality’. But ‘normality’ wasn’t fair before the pandemic, and COVID has exaggerated how unfair ‘normal’ is. The inequality of health, economy, job losses, self-worth, assets, has stretch so much further. And those like myself, have had a generous cushion so far from the worst of the pandemic, perhaps, need to go on a walk to Emmaus for maybe there is something in the story that might help us all.

It has always fascinated me that on the journey to Emmaus, Jesus, as yet unrecognisable, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, interpreted to the two of them, the things about himself in all the scriptures.

They couldn’t see Jesus because Jesus was resurrected and they were still seeing things in the old older. Jesus retold the stories in a different way because he saw things differently, resurrection does that. These old stories were actually about renewal and life and possibility.

This is a bit of a blow to those who read the resurrection stories as simply life after death proof texts, that nothing in this world is of particular value because we are all in a waiting room before going through the gateway of death into a higher realm, leaving it all behind. But that’s not what the travellers hear in Jesus translation of the old stories. No longer were they events that happened once and don’t any more. Jesus enabled the travellers to see these stories as ongoing promises, covenants, truths, that continue to happen because God lives.

And that was the way now to see the world after resurrection. Indeed early Christians found resurrection to be the power that disarmed the Roman Empire’s culture of death. In the same way, the truth, power, vision, reality of resurrection today defeats the powers that threaten to lessen us, dull us, numb us, diminish us and life itself.

The power of resurrection is what it brings life to ‘now’ because we can see through this lens of possibility, or impossibility. Resurrection: the power of its story, enables us to see things renewed after the chaos, the pandemic. Resurrection is the lens that leads us to believe we can disable the greed dangerously reshaping our environment, enables us to disarm inequality, invalidate the imbalance of wealth, subdue the prejudice and bluster of our politics, neutralise our racism: the power of its power is its vision to defeat the powers that delude us that we want ‘normal’ again, and bring a richer vision of the possibility, indeed promise of a resurrected way of life.

Prayer 2

Traveling God

In that place of resurrection

That we don’t always see

May we have eyes now

To witness you

To witness that possibility

Of new life,

Among us all.

In this place of pandemics,

Where, for us, there is a growing confidence we are coming through this,

May we pause to recognise the millions where that is not the case,

From India to Brazil.

On this journey,

We pause,

And remember,

And pray.

And as we move through covid,

May we do so, together,

Recognising the huge inequalities

In our own communities and around the world,

That those inequalities now,

Call us to reshape and reimagine our values,

Our intent,

Our priorities.

And as elections are held,

We pray not for winners, or parties, or systems,

But for the value of people,

For a country reshaped,

Resurrected around the worth of our neighbours,

Where our humanity is valued

More than our property, or economy.

Loving God,

On this Emmaus journey,

May we always pause,

Always find the time to break bread with the stranger,

That we might find you again,

In everyone.

May we pause with those grieving,

Those who are ill, or worried, or on waiting lists,

Those whose mental health has suffered,

Whose physical health is now worse,

Pause with those we journey with

In family and friends,

In church and community,

In young folk struggling without contact,

And older folk knowing loneliness.

Here is our resurrection story,

To join all the others,

Of a possibility to see ‘now’,

Through the promises of life.

May we trust those promises,

Believe them,

Live as if they are true,

And find you at every table,

In every conversation,

In every journey we take.

So be it

Amen

Benediction

Announcements

Thank you that we can travel together, this journey. Thank you for the connections we make as we travel. This week we focus again towards Christian Aid. We have supported the kilt walk and you have been hugely generous once again. Christian Aid week is approaching and while there are no envelopes going out, Bearsden Christian Aid Committee are leafletting all the districts instead with information on the appeal an dhow we can respond.

We have worship in the sanctuary now at 10.30 each Sunday. At the moment we are keeping the cap of 50 people and booking is required so please phone the church answering machine on 0141 942 8827 with your name and phone number by the Thursday evening before the Sunday you wish to attend, and the secretary will phone you back to confirm your place. But YouTube, podcast and phone line service will continue you worship can still be experienced with coffee or in your bed, or both.

Take care everyone and see you next time.