New Kilpatrick

Podcast

18th April 2021

Luke 24:36b-48

Introduction

Many of us will have recently heard of a muon, a sub-atomic particle a bit heavier than an electron. But they aren’t behaving the way they standard model of everything predicts they should.

And this is an issue because the theory of everything has been found to be not actually the theory of everything. Most things but not everything as it doesn’t quite cover the way muons work.

So that leaves physics in the exciting place of almost understanding everything but, actually, not. What do you do with that, when the framework to your existence, the understanding you hoped explained everything, is found out to be lacking. Your theory of everything is everything but… which leads to a whole new exciting place to be as physicists now seek a new understanding of how the universe works.

Which opens the door to the upper room. A place where disciples, who had never heard of physics let alone muons had just had THEIR understanding of everything, shattered. This was probably bigger than muons: what was dead was now alive and they were having difficulty getting to grips with that: not just that their world view was wrong but that an alternative was possible.

Hello, Im Roddy Hamilton, the minister in New Kilpatrick and we join the disciples today, in the upper room, with them, and us, just having everything we understood about our world, toppled.

Prayer 1

Holy God

Found in the places we look last,

And least think of,

Found in the moments too small,

Or too vast,

Found in subjects too distant,

Or unrecognisable,

Holy God,

Alive in the transforming of them,

Always towards life,

Towards love,

Towards generosity,

May we pause in everything unknown,

Pause in the shattering of old expectations,

And recognise the places,

And moments,

And stories,

Of resurrection,

Of reconstruction,

Of reimagining.

Holy God,

Impossible God,

In such resurrection places

May we reorientate ourselves,

Dare to believe anew,

Let go that which no longer makes sense,

And grasp hold of the new adventure

That comes in faith.

And in that act of faith

That dares go with you

Into a new, unknown vision,

May we be held by that familiar love,

That never changing grace,

That constant hope,

That forever peace,

And follow you

Wherever you may go,

Into new life,

New dreams,

New relationships.

Hear us in 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

Reading: Luke 24:36b-48

36 Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” 37 They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. 38 He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate in their presence.

44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

A Retelling

Sometimes we hear new things in a fresh retelling of these stories. So come with me to the upper room.

The doors were locked but there he was, among them. The disciples had just been talking about him. It was their only conversation especially after the women has started their gossip about the tomb.

None of the disciples had found the instinct to get up and leave the room and check the story, but they certainly talked about what the women were talking about. They did that a lot: discussing what others said rather than doing something themselves.

And in the middle of the conversation of disbelief, because none of them were prepared to take the women’s stories as being reliable, they found Jesus among them. It was as if all that talk generated his presence and there was that confusion of feeling: utter shock yet humility too that none of them were prepared to believe what the women reported, yet here he was.

Had he heard what they were talking about because his first words were so everyday, “Peace be with you.” No less and no more than their own down to earth, daily “hello”.

Then there was a pause as they stared, shocked. And it was the pause that said more than his words. “Why are you frightened?” It felt like a dig because they were frightened and perhaps they shouldn’t have been, if they had believed.

“Why have these doubts?” That was a bit easier. Of course they had doubts, you just can’t change how you have experienced the world and understood how everything works overnight, or, over three days. Was he really expecting that?

And then he eased into the group more. “Look, it’s me: touch me, my wounds. Look I have muscle and skin. No ghost you’ve seen has ever looked like me.” But he was still too distant from them, too unexpected and incomprehensible.

“Do you have something to eat?” Now, that was Jesus. And as Jesus did countless times with those on the edge, they welcomed him back into community again round a table, with a meal and table fellowship. And they remembered and in remembering they bore witness to resurrection.

Anthem

Where do we look to find resurrection? Maybe a slightly better question is where do we expect to find it? Do we wait for it in the pews? But we haven’t been sitting in them recently so if that is where we expect to find resurrection, then there has been no one to witness it.

But, as people of faith, familiar with the church, resurrection there in the heart of our faith, it is the very place resurrection arrives is it not?

We’ve met every Easter Day for 2000 years and we’ve gathered in our chancels and sung the easter songs, and believed in this doctrine, and retold the stories, but have we seen resurrection?

It is just that those at the heart of it, at the centre of the movement, the disciples who had seen so much of Jesus up close and first hand, didn’t recognise resurrection when it stood right in the middle of them. Those with most invested in the movement, didn’t grasp what this was. In fact, the way it is told, it takes Luke, the gospel writer, three attempts, three stories, before the disciples begin to see what is happening.

Rather, it is grasped first by those outside the circle, those on the edge. It is grasped by the women, then the unnamed disciples, before the 11 who are left. Those in the centre were last to be able to let go the traditional narrative of life and found it most difficult to imagine another possibility.

Perhaps they thought resurrection would be a return to things as they were, but resurrection is not resuscitation (and the church needs to not just know that, but believe that); perhaps they wanted resurrection to be the happy ending to a sad story. They seem to be furthest from being able to grasp the paradigm-changing event resurrection is.

Those on the edge, however, away from the centre, had least to lose and they got it quickly: the women, the unnamed disciples. They see a lot quicker that the traditional model had failed. The things we’ve always been brought up to believe, have found to be lacking, limiting, and they experience the alternative outcome of the good news of Jesus Christ: that is resurrection, before those in the centre who have most invested in a return to things as they were.

You see, perhaps the story is an invitation, to listen to the stories on the edge, the women at the tomb, and not hearing them as idle gossip. It is an invitation to hear the stories of those in our parish and communities we don’t usually listen to, without imaging that is US who are the ones to get this story. An invitation to hear the tales of those who have walked beside love without knowing it, on the edges of life. That’s where resurrection begins: where it is not limited in institutions imaging they control the interpretation of this story of new life, vision and being in the world.

So this story is a challenge to us at the centre, to look beyond ourselves, to the places that see and trust this alternative outcome to death, dullness, despondency, not for some hereafter, but for now. We are challenged to hear it on the streets, in the least places, among the most forgotten, those sometimes furthest away from us and our traditions, for resurrection is a promise and a vision and a way of living, not just in upper rooms but in the world.

Prayers for Others

Loving God,

In this crossover place

Between life and resurrection,

Between belief and reality,

We pray,

Longing for a more generous world,

Fairer,

Just,

And believing it to become true,

To renew itself,

Resurrect itself,

Amid the pain and injustice of so many.

And may we dare believe

That belief itself

Gives us new eyes,

New vision,

New journeys to take

Towards each other,

Towards life,

Towards justice and balance,

And so we pray.

We pray for a nation beginning to open up,

Adjusting to a new kind of responsibility towards each other,

For those who have been hurt so much

Losing jobs, experiencing loneliness,

Those now able to seek help

From abuse,

From mental ill-health,

And isolation.

We pray for this limbo time

Between lockdown,

And what life will be like without any restrictions,

And how institutions and economies,

Churches and patterns of behaviour,

Have been unsettled and shifted,

And not yet resolved:

The between time, between tombs and resurrection.

And we pray also for daring belief,

To believe beyond what has always been,

Believe beyond the traditional patterns and outcomes,

Of politics and trade,

Environment and care,

And trust in truth,

And believe into justice,

And long for food for everyone,

And vaccines for all,

And hope the least, and those on the edges,

Find good news and new life.

And in our praying

And believing,

We hold our families and friends,

Our community and parish,

Those ill and those grieving,

Those lost and those unable to find an anchor,

Those worried about life and employment, and health

We pray for all people

Every one.

Our prayers are’t ever big enough to hold all we pray for

But we want them to

And believe you hear the thoughts of our hearts

Hear them now

(Pause)

So be it

Amen

Benediction

Go in peace

And may that be our greeting

One filled with hope and impossibility

And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

The Love of God

And the common-life of the Holy Spirit

Be with us all

Evermore

Announcements

Thank you for the time today to be together. And to Ali for reading the passage. Next time we share communion together here own the podcast as we would normally have ben a formal communion in the sanctuary that Sunday. So please do bring bread and wine to your coffee table or bedside table or wherever you listen o this and we will bread bread together.

In the evening of the 25th, instead of our usual songs of praise, we have a special zoom service to remember those we have lost over the last six months. We will remember those whose names are very much still on our lips and whom we will miss now all the more. That will be at 7pm on zoom on Sunday 25th. Details on the website and bulletin.

Also formal notice for those who are formal members of the congregation that a ballot of all members is being held on the future of the Old Halls. You will receive a letter outlining the decision of the Kirk Session to seek disposal of said halls and their reasoning, along with a ballot paper, which will be issued on 19th April 2021, and you will receive that from your elder, and this must be returned no later than 5pm on Monday 3rd of May 2021. Please see the website, or the bulletin, which you can download from the website, for further information, or wait for your letter to be delivered.

Thank you for letting us be with you today. Please take care and let us catch up next time.