

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

**Luke 24:36-49 (He opened their minds)**

**Talk by Ian Baldwin, Prayers by Julian Providence**

Good morning and welcome to our service. My name is Ian and today we will be thinking about the resurrected Jesus meeting his disciples. Our bible reading is from Luke 24v36-49

A prayer.

Father God as we come to listen to your word, and we ask your Holy Spirit be with us. That we might come to bring the needs of the world to you and to hear your word. Amen.

Now Julian will lead us in our intercessions then I will read from the bible.

### **Prayers**

Let us pray...

*"My command is this: love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:12 - 15).*

Lord, thank you for your great love for us this morning, that you King, God and Lord Almighty are our closest friend. For bringing us all together as one people, Holy and dearly loved and forgiven. As we remembered over Easter you laid down your life for us and we celebrate that with your rising you are in us and we are in you for all eternity. Help us Lord by your Spirit keep the unity of faith in you - that we can be one as you were one with your Father.

Thank you, Jesus, for your continued faithfulness to us - how you provide for us through being able to meet online, for those who organise services, give your word each week, keep our church updated with all that is going on and make practical decisions to keep our church running. Lord Jesus please would you give your sustaining power to those bearing a burden at St John's. Let them know you are near and that you carry the burden alongside them.

We pray that all of us will know of your nearness to us at this time when we are waiting for the person you have chosen to lead us. Lord, the wait can be hard because we are without a human face of leadership and pastoral care that a church leader can bring and we also long to know the plans and purposes you have for our church. And yet Lord you know our needs and you hold us safely in the palm of your hand. We trust in your perfect timing Lord, believing you know what is best for our church and knowing that in your good plans you will never abandon us disappoint us. Thank you for your guidance and the trust in you for waiting for the right person at the interviews.

And while we wait help us to know Holy Spirit that the Lord's purposes are fulfilled as we continue to meet and worship and hear your word and love one another. Lord would you use this time to teach us and build us up in you - to strengthen our faith and love for you, to love one another by continuing to meet and pray for each other and by continuing to seek and trust and praise you.

We pray for our sisters and brothers in need at St John's. We pray for Geresse who had surgery on Friday. We ask Lord that you would protect his health from anything that this growth might be and help his body heal quickly. We thank you that he has been able to have the surgery.

We pray for Will. Lord will you keep watch over him. We know that you are faithful and have not forgotten him. Please continue to bring healing in however small a step that might be. We pray for his wife Kath that you would keep her close to you and keep Sam safe. Thank you that your lovingkindness watches over each one of us.

We pray especially for those more in need this time. We remember Keith and Barbara, Anthony, Alison's sister and sister-in-law, Val and anyone else you wish to lift now before the Lord.....

We ask for your protection and your healing hand will be upon all those we have lifted to you. Thank you, God of compassion, that you hear us.

Lord thank you for how you continue to show your love to our community through St John's. We pray for those who serve you in these roles in such a committed way - for Lin, Rachael and Gareth at CAP and the foodbank; for Cherry leading Amaze Penge, for Laura and Sue from Holy Trinity leading the Bible course which started last Thursday. Lord bless them as they serve.

We pray for CAP, that your grace would be sufficient to carry Lin, Rachael and Gareth through all the hardships in other's lives that they witness. Restore them day by day.

We thank you for Amaze Penge and for the support and fellowship it gives to parents and thank you for sustaining this outreach throughout the pandemic. We pray over the course Amaze Penge is running to support the parenting of children with troubled behaviour. Lord we ask now that you would draw those who need to come and none would be ashamed or embarrassed. Please Father make this a time of support and positive change for each of these families and give them a great time learning together. We pray they would want to know more about you.

We thank you for the start of the Bible course being run our new family at Holy Trinity. Lord we pray your blessing on this time - again may your presence make this a time of joy and fun and real fellowship as well as deepening relationships with you. Lord will you also use this time to strengthen the bonds of our two churches.

We pray for our world. We thank you now that we are coming out of lockdown and we ask Lord that you will allow this to continue. We thank you for the caution that our government has shown in recent months to bring us out of lockdown safely. We thank you for our freedoms and stable democracy. We pray for continued wisdom for our government in managing this pandemic. We particularly pray for your wisdom in rebuilding our nation - in supporting business and employment, rebuilding the NHS, keeping schools safe and restarting our social and cultural life.

We pray for our society coming out of the pandemic that Lord you lead our government to provide for people. We think of those who've lost jobs and livelihoods, who are struggling with debt, who are fearful and fragile after months of isolation, for the futures and emotional well-being of our young people.

God of compassion, lead our government to be compassionate and may your church Lord be ready to serve those in need, not only with practical help but also through sharing your new life - the reason the hope that is within us.

We remember other countries even in Europe struggling intensely with the spread of the virus and some without the resources to effectively fight it. Please Lord come to the aid of those nations and we pray again for your compassion to rule wealthier nations to share with those who have little.

We pray for nations in conflict remembering the suffering of so many so unjustly. We remember Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, Congo, Sudan and Somalia and governments who oppress their people - North Korea, China, Myanmar and places across the Middle East.

Lord as people blessed with peace and prosperity and safety may we never forget those who are deprived and mistreated. Lead your church to continue pray and to know that you are the Light that has shone in the darkness that the darkness will never overcome.

We thank you for all that you give us Lord in the changing of seasons and for nature now bursting into life. For the blue of the sky and the warmth of sunshine. For the blessing of rain. For family, friendship and food and all that we love. For giving us life in all its fullness.

So we pray as you taught us Lord.

**Our Father in heaven**

**Hallowed be your name**

**Your kingdom come**

**Your will be done earth as in heaven**

**Give us today our daily bread**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil**

**For thine is Kingdom, the Power and the Glory.**

**Amen.**

## **Reading**

The reading is from Luke ch24 v36-49

<sup>36</sup>While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

<sup>37</sup>They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. <sup>38</sup>He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? <sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

<sup>40</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

<sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate it in their presence.

<sup>44</sup> He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

## Talk

The passage this week from Luke 24 has similarities with last week’s passage from John 20. We could re-run Laura’s talk from last week but, in order to avoid copyright issues, we won’t. Instead I want to look at the first disciples and think about those who followed which is us.

Our reading happens after the story of the two followers of Jesus who were on the road to Damascus. They met Jesus although they did not recognise him until he broke bread with them. They returned to Jerusalem and told the disciples about it and it is this that they are talking about when our reading begins.

For a moment let’s imagine the room and what was happening. If the disciples were like me it may have sounded like this.

We find the disciples hiding away all their hopes dashed as their leader Jesus had been crucified, died and was buried. They loved and trusted him and he had been killed but now there were these stories that he had been seen! They were confused, what were they supposed to do? Should they stick together? what happens now? Will they be hunted down? Perhaps it is best to lay low and let the women get food supplies because the authorities won’t suspect them.

The conversations were all about dashed hope and questions never asked. Are the sightings real? Why did they feel so scared? Why had he let them down? Why had they run away? Peter is saying why did I deny him and he knew I would. I feel terrible and now I can’t say sorry. The feelings of anger, sorrow and denial are typical of bereavement

Then suddenly Jesus is there! “Peace be with you” Jesus says.

“Yeah right” said a disciple. They were startled and frightened thinking he was a ghost. A disciple says “Did anyone hear him knock?” “No he didn’t come through the door” comes a reply “Then how did he get here?” said a worried voice

Jesus says as calm as you like “Why are you troubled?”

A scared disciple at the back says “Are you for real – do you really need to ask that”

Jesus continues “Why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have”

Well can you imagine that. Who is brave enough to go first? Then one of them nudges John “He likes you so you go first” and John thinks “Come on Peter this is your chance you always dive in”

But as always Jesus understands the problem and he says, “Do you have anything here to eat?”

They give him some fish to eat and finally they realise he is not a ghost but he is alive just as the others had told them.

Well that is enough of my imagination - let’s think about what happened next.

Whilst they see Jesus is alive they still don’t understand what is going on. They have no idea what they are supposed to do or what happens next.

Then Jesus reminds them of what he has already told them.

V44 “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

Then Jesus opened their minds so that they could understand.

They realise that this is the same Jesus only different. What I mean by that is that Jesus is the same man in that they recognised his features, he bore the scars on his hands and side, he ate and drank and could be touched. However in his resurrected form he is no longer bound by our physical and time constraints. How else can he be on the Emmaus road then appear with the disciples and then be in Galilee before them. Finally he ascended into heaven. Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians 15v42 onwards “what is born a natural body is raised as a spiritual body”. It is an attempt to explain why it is different but not how it is different. That is one of God’s mysteries.

Jesus now explains things to the disciples just as he told them before in ch18v31-33, and as he told the followers on the Emmaus road in ch24v6-7. All things would be as foretold in scripture.

More than just telling them he opens their minds so that they can understand. It is like a three-point sermon v46 &47:

- Point 1 - Jesus will suffer on the cross.
- Point 2 - Jesus will die and rise, and
- Point 3 - repentance and forgiveness will be preached in his name to the ends of the earth.

This is exactly what was prophesied by Isaiah in ch49v6 when Isaiah speaking of Gods servant.

*“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”*

And Jesus at his ascension to heaven gave the disciples confirmation when in Acts ch1v8 he told them. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus explains to them the past and the future showing that everything that happened was necessary for our salvation. All as foretold in the scriptures which we call the Old Testament

These disciples have moved from scared people with no hope to people with understanding and an expectation. They knew that Jesus had promised to send some sort of power and they had a task but at this point they didn’t understand exactly what either were.

We find ourselves in a similar position to the disciples. Do we sometimes feel confusion or doubts? What are we to do? Which direction are we to go? Thank you, Thomas, for showing that it is normal! However we believe that it is God’s plan for St Johns and Holy Trinity to join together but we are not sure how all the details will work out. We believe that God has appointed a new vicar but as yet we do not know who that is so we have to wait and pray.

Despite our current situation we know that the gospel gives us, for are Gods people, a plan and a purpose which is explained in the bible. Thinking about that 3 point sermon in our reading today.

v46 states “it is written” referring to the Old Testament promises and prophecies about Jesus, “The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,” This is who we proclaim and worship. This is who we testify about.

v47 states “repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”. This is what we proclaim in order to bring glory to his name and demonstrate his love by giving people the message of hope.

V48 states “You are witnesses of these things”. The disciples were the first to tell people about Jesus and in John 20v21 Jesus said to the disciples “As the Father has sent me even so I send you” and that task has been handed down from the disciples through generations to us and this is our authority to go out to the people of Penge. We have no need to add things for the bible has all we need to explain about Jesus.

V49 reads “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” We must realise that without the power of the Holy spirit we will get nowhere for he is the means by which we have our eyes and minds opened to the truth and are enabled to witness to who Jesus is.

The disciple’s testimony about Jesus is powerful because they had been witnesses to what Jesus said and did and also because they have had their minds opened to understand especially about the cross and the resurrection. For knowing the bare facts is not enough for us because they remain a head fact not a heartfelt truth. The facts have to be interpreted in the light of the bible as the Holy Spirit opens our minds to God’s truth. This is what changes us from those who know about Jesus to those who believe in Jesus as our Lord and saviour.

The gospel demonstrates the way in which God and humanity can be reunited and we the church are the means by which God has chosen to tell the world. This can be scary but Jesus assured his disciples when he said “do not be worried or upset believe in me for I believe in you.” and that is true for us today. He was with the disciples all the way and he is with us today. So, to our confusion and doubts and fears Jesus says “Peace be with you. I am with you always to the end of the age”.

Amen.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and may God bless you this coming week.