

St Marc, Grenoble  
Sunday 23rd April (Easter 3)  
Luke 24: 13 - 35  
Acts 2: 14A, 36 - 41  
**'Risen Indeed'**

Good morning everyone, both here in Church and those joining by Zoom, you are very welcome. Let's Pray ...

Now, as usual, let's begin by hearing what attracted your attention in this morning's readings?? What did you notice?? What seemed special?? ... Thank you

For me, today's story of the two disciples travelling to Emmaus is captivating. It begins by reflecting the prevailing mood of the time. We need to try and put ourselves in the shoes (or sandals) of the disciples – a rag-tag bunch, but totally committed to following Jesus – Why did they follow Him??

Well, Jesus offered hope; a brighter future. The longer they spent with Him, the more their hopes for change grew – here was someone who really seemed to care for them, in a way no-one else had ever done!!

But, on the previous Thursday, Jesus was betrayed, by one of His close friends, one of the twelve; and, on Friday, He was brutally crucified, and totally humiliated. It seemed along with Jesus, their hopes of a fairer, brighter future were crucified too.

Can you imagine how the disciples felt?? – Shattered, devastated – totally gutted? Their dreams lay in ruins at the foot of the cross. So often, we tend to think of just the twelve – or eleven; but there must have been dozens, scores, possibly hundreds who'd been following Jesus, day by day, especially in recent months and weeks.

Remember Jesus was the 'radical rabbi', the teacher who taught love, joy, peace and hope. He was like a father to the fatherless, a champion for the downtrodden and the oppressed; and a light shining in the darkness. Yet he'd been betrayed, tried by a kangaroo court, found guilty of - what? Then humiliated and destroyed right before their eyes.

Can you imagine the sense of devastation, despair – of complete hopelessness??

So, perhaps it wasn't entirely surprising that Jesus' followers were starting to fade away, quietly slipping out of Jerusalem, going home. This was the first day after the Sabbath, no doubt they were hoping to slip away and avoid any 'clean-up' by the Romans, or even worse, by the Jewish religious authorities.

And, that's where we happen upon these two travellers Cleopas and, very likely, Mary his wife, walking home to Emmaus, a village seven miles outside Jerusalem. They were scared, sad, dejected and as they walked, were chewing over all the things that had happened over recent days.

As they went, they were met by a 'stranger' who seemed quite oblivious of the things they were talking about "Don't you know?" they asked him – "Know? Know what??" And so they poured out their hearts; their disappointment, their fears to Him.

It amazed them that, as they walked together, this 'stranger' was able to comfort and encourage them – He explained how they'd actually missed the point of what had happened; and how it had all been foretold by the prophets. That it was necessary for the Messiah to die, before He could enter his true glory. He walked them through the scriptures, patiently explaining many of the prophecies.

Then of course, after they'd persuaded him to join them for the night it turned out that this was ... Jesus himself. They eventually recognised Him, as He said a blessing as they sat down to supper. **(Why not before?)** Then, as the penny dropped, we're told Jesus disappeared from their sight!

In their amazement and delight, completely disregarding all the dangers of travelling at night, they ran all the way back to Jerusalem (7 miles!!) to share the amazing news with the other disciples. But, when they arrived, they found the eleven saying that Peter had also seen Jesus.

Suddenly, as the two were recounting their story, Jesus appeared in the room and said: 'Peace be with you!' In the verses that follow, we read that they overcame their fear, disbelief, amazement and delight, so Jesus was able to explain to them again, from scripture, why this had needed to happen.

Jesus promised them the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, to support and encourage them as they shared the Good News. Jesus said: 'You are witnesses of these things'. And, in the very last words of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus promised: 'Look, I am with you, every single day, to the very end of the age'. (Matthew 28: 20)

For me, those words transform a fascinating and remarkable story, into a life-giving promise and a call to action. They assure us that the same divine gift, the presence of the Holy Spirit is for all of us too. This isn't just a story about something in the past - it is an ongoing, death defying, life giving, promise for all eternity!

Jesus understands all our emotions of fear, pain and apprehension. He has lived through the trauma of a violent death, and risen again to conquer our fear. He promises to be with us 'every single day', to encourage and comfort us on life's journey; and to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

That is truly life giving; it helps me look forward to the future with hope - knowing, whatever happens in life, I can depend on Jesus to support me – even when the going gets lonely and tough.

We all need to repent of the times we mess up and let Jesus down, then we can accept His gift of forgiveness and love and learn to trust Him throughout our life.

That same message is clearly confirmed in the reading from Acts this morning. When the Judeans heard Peter and realised they had crucified the Messiah, they were cut to the heart and asked: "What should we do?" Peter responded; "Repent and be baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ **so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Him.**'

But, there is more! ... Jesus commissioned His friends, His disciples in Jerusalem to share the Good News that Jesus is alive, and to proclaim the need for repentance to all the nations, beginning right where they were - in Jerusalem - then to spread the Gospel throughout the world. Which is what Peter and the disciples were doing in the Temple (despite being told not to by the religious authorities)

And He calls us, having been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, to share the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus, beginning right where we are, right now, in Grenoble!

You see, God's amazing gift always comes with a commission - every one of us is called to share the Good News of His love, His call to repentance, and His forgiveness - starting right here and right now!

So as I close, let's pray:

Let's ask Jesus to help and encourage all of us and to take away our fear, so we may know and be able to accept His gift of unconditional love. And to accept His call to share the Good News like Peter and the disciples ... Come Holy Spirit, refresh us, renew us and strengthen us Amen

And, before we go any further ... let's try that out right now:

Please turn to the person next to you you - smile and say to them:

'Jesus loves you, Jesus forgives you and Jesus promises you the Holy Spirit to help you share the Good News of His Love'

Thank you Lord ... **Amen**