

Where are you headed?

Scriptures: Luke 24:13-35, 1 Peter 1:17-23, Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

Good morning friends – I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ on this the 26th April 2020.

As we gather for worship on this day, we find ourselves a month into Lockdown and for many of us we are holding onto the hope of good news very soon. As we record this message today there is still no further clarity on what the future holds, although this may change by the time you are watching this - regardless I want to urge us to hang onto Hope and the promise that Jesus is with us in these unprecedented times.

Let us prepare ourselves for worship as we light our Candle and say a prayer:

I am not sure what keeps you going and motivated during these days of lockdown, but I have been finding myself dreaming of doing a few things when this season of lockdown is over. I have in mind a number of things that I really, really want to do when I am allowed too. The obvious ones are to be together with people in fellowship at church or to be around the braai just chatting and catching up with friends. The other one is to run with my team mates again – on the long open road, overlooking the beach, without turning around in circles every 10 steps on my driveway. I miss the banter and the laughs with these friends and the sense of freedom on the open road – man I hope I never take those things for granted again.

But there is one more thing that I definitely going to do – and you can quote me on this – in fact, I will post a picture on Instagram when I am allowed out of Lockdown. I am going to go down to our favourite spot and watch the Sunset. Oh man, there is nothing like watching the sunset over the ocean – it is so special to hear the sound of the waves, feel the wind through your hair (if you have it) and watch the sun sink below the horizon – oh wow, I long for that. **ANYWAY**, let me not lose focus....

So what are you going to be doing the moment you are given the freedom to be outdoors? Hold onto that thought as we progress through the message. Don't drift off and miss the sermon now – but, keep it in your mind.

Luke 24 – Reading.... (LesLee)

In our reading from Luke 24 today, we see two people walking on the road to Emmaus, which is about 11 kilometers west of Jerusalem. One of them is named as Cleopas and the other person is unnamed - Well, we are not sure who they are – but perhaps that could be Luke's clever way of putting you and I into this story – who knows. Let us imagine that it is "you and I" who have been written into the story.

v.14-16 – As they are walking along, they are speaking about the events that have just taken place – the Resurrection – and Jesus comes and walks with them. Now the bible tells us that they were kept from recognising him. And the big question for us is “Why?” Why didn’t they know it was Jesus?

- One suggestion was that because they were walking towards the West – the sun was setting and they couldn’t really see who it was. It is possible I guess – it depends on which direction Jesus came from I suppose. I have had an experience like this before – were I have been walking into the setting sun and someone has come from the other direction and they have almost been a silhouette in front of me – and I haven’t been able to see them clearly. Driving in your car –it’s hard to look into the sun and recognise something.
- Or that Jesus looked different in his resurrected body
- Or that the 2 of them were so overwhelmed with grief and despair, they were not fully there for a time.

Is this the reasons why they couldn’t see him – I honestly don’t know?

Frederick Buechner - "I believe that although the two disciples did not recognize Jesus on the road to Emmaus, Jesus recognized them, that he saw them as if they were the only two people in the world. And I believe that the reason why the resurrection is more than just an extraordinary event that took place some two thousand years ago and then was over and done with is that, even as I speak these words and you listen to them, he also sees each of us like that."

Just after this moment, Jesus asks them a very personal question. (Luke 24:17)

“You seem to be in deep discussion about something. **What are you so concerned about?**”

We know what they are concerned about, because we read it from this side of the Resurrection. We know how the story is going to end. But Cleopas and his friend don’t know. They are deeply troubled by the events they have just witnessed.

What if Jesus came to you this morning and asked you the same question:

“What are you so concerned about?” – What is troubling you today?

How would you answer that? One, two, three, four ... long list!!

Challenge you – I am not sure if you like to write things down at all. I have kept a journal for many years and I find that this helps me to express my thoughts and emotions sometimes. You see often we try to figure things out ourselves. So, let’s take Jesus’ question for us today? What am I so worried about?

Well, I start to list them in my head. One becomes two. Two becomes four. Four becomes eight – and they start to grow exponentially. But, I still haven't got anywhere. Sure, these concerns can be a form of a prayer I guess, but all that it serves to do, is make me more and more anxious. I want to challenge us to write these things done – in a private personal space. And then let each of these concerns be a definite prayer to a Loving God who is concerned for you.

- Matthew 11:28 - "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

1 Peter 5:7 - Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Psalm 116:1-5 -

- I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.
- ² Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.
- ³ The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
- ⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD: "LORD, save me!"
- ⁵ The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.

"Faith is not merely your holding on to God - It is God holding on to you. He will not let you go!" - **E. Stanley Jones.**

Let me come back to the possibility that they couldn't recognise him because of their grief.

"They stopped short, sadness written over their faces." – v.17

"With faces twisted with grief."

Jesus draws their story out of them – he wants to hear from them. He doesn't just assume things. You will find that he uses this as a clear tactic when he heals people too – he asks the blind man "Do you want to see?" Or the lame man "what can I do for you?" Jesus takes the most obvious questions and uses them to get to the heart of the matter.

In response to Jesus' question, **"What things"** (v.19) (what happened to make you so heart-broken)

Cleopas explains all the events of the last few days. If ever you wanted a brief summary of these days, Cleopas really sums it up well. (verse 19-24)

You foolish people! Meaning – not being mean or rude, but rather "Come on Guys!" How can you be so doff! "How many more clues do you need?"

Again, a misunderstanding of the role of the Messiah. Jesus still has to explain to them the idea of a suffering servant. That he had come to set up a different kingdom.

Did you forget? Have we forgotten God's promises? (Can I be honest with you? This week has been tough for me – harder than the last few weeks – days I have felt like I have been hanging on by a thread.)

Jesus goes back to the Word – to the scriptures to explain to them these truths.

David Lose – “It's not a bad pattern to emulate, is it? Meet people where they are. Open up the Scriptures so that they can make sense of their lives in light of God's mercy. Gather them to the meal that they might behold and be nourished by Christ's own presence. And send them on their way, back into the world to share God's grace.”

Go back to the Scriptures. If we don't find the time now, then I am afraid you may never get a better time to start reading the Word in a focused way. We need to do our own reading also, not just rely on some bald preachers to share a few words on a Sunday morning.

Jesus makes sense of it all.

This is perhaps another struggle many of us are having at this point in lockdown – trying to make sense of it all. Trying to process information that is out there – there is so much. How do we make sense of this all. As well as the impact on our economy, schooling, work, tourism, feeding schemes, homeless....

- Faith is like radar that sees through the fog-the reality of things at a distance that the human eye cannot see.- Corrie Ten Boom

Jesus makes sense of it all.

Proverbs 3:5-6 – Trust in the LORD with all your heart

and lean not on your own understanding;

⁶in all your ways submit/acknowledge to him,

and he will make your paths straight.

- 1 Peter 1:21 – *“Through Jesus Christ you have come to trust in God. And because God raised Christ from the dead and gave him great glory, your faith and hope can be placed confidently in God.”*

v.28 – The end of the journey and Jesus made as if he was going to carry on.

Lovely picture of Jesus not wanting to impose himself on these two. Jesus doesn't want to impose on you either – he is waiting for the invitation.

Gift of Grace. Also the gift of Free-will – some of you listening today...

v.29 They begged him to stay. They realised there was something unique about this man.

Do we invite Christ to stay in our lives?

Or do we just keep him on the outside until we need him.

v.30 – It was during the breaking of the bread that they realised who he truly was. I don't think this was a communion service as we know it today, but it was always custom that when Jewish people gathered for meals, they would say a blessing over the food and break the bread. This is what we would call "Grace".

It is in the ordinary moments of our days that Jesus is present. We must look out for this.

This is true for lockdown friends. We must invite Christ into our homes and make space for him. It doesn't have to be in "religiously contrived" moments, but during the everyday events. Often we make space for the Sacred – this can be even true in our homes – and this is the time that Jesus will show up. And then the rest of the week is confined to the "secular" section. There can be no such thing. God is in all.

v.33 – Within the hour, they were heading back to Jerusalem. **In the right direction this time. Facing the rising sun. the son of God. Sunrise!!!**

Their tired bodies barely made it to Emmaus, but renewed with hope and their encounter with Jesus, they hurry back to tell others.

So, a moment with the Lord can give us energy to tell others and to carry on.

They found the other disciples and they shared with them their experiences.

We will do the same friends – we will be able to share of how God has been with us during Lockdown. I am not sure how long the road will be – it may not be 11 kilometers or 7 days. But, we must believe in a day when we can come out of lockdown and rejoice with friends and believers – God was with me. Tell me how God was with you.

Conclusion: Remember at the beginning of the sermon today I asked you what you were planning on doing when you are released from Lockdown. And I said that one of the things I want to do is go and watch the sunset at my favourite spot. Well, maybe I need to change that. Maybe I need to make an effort to wake up early and go and watch the sunrise over False Bay, which is equally special and absolutely beautiful. There is a deeper message in that for me. One of hope and a promise that the Son of God will bring us new life. Sunrise – it is harder to wake up earlier. It is more of a mission. It takes discipline.

After the darkness there is Light!

Which direction are we heading in? Sunset – the end. Sunrise – the promise of Dawn and new things.

This story is one of movement. It contains at least nine verbs describing movement. The two men "are going" (24:13), Jesus "came near and went with them" (24:15), they "came near" Emmaus (24:28), Jesus "walked ahead of them" (24:28), "he went in to stay with them" (24:29), "he vanished from their sight" (24:31), and "they got up and returned to Jerusalem" (24:33). Some of the verbs tell of movements made by Jesus; others tell of the two men. Either way, both Jesus and his followers are on the move. But it is not movement for its own sake. The moves being made have a purpose, and that is to tell the story of Jesus, to interpret it, to have fellowship (communion) with Jesus and others, and to share it all with others. That is what it means to be the church. (Arland Hultgren)

We are all on some kind of journey – what journey are you on? Where are you headed?

- Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.- **Corrie Ten Boom**

Prayer – Guide us through uncertain times dear Lord ...

Benediction:

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
The Love of God
And the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with you
Now and always. Amen.*

Announcements:

1. Check out the website for ministry for Teens and Kids, as well worship songs.
2. Audio Bible Study – also uploaded
3. Message from some of our Supernumerary ministers and Local Preachers
4. Daily blogpost

¹⁻⁶ I love GOD because he listened to me, listened as I begged for mercy.

He listened so intently as I laid out my case before him.

Death stared me in the face, hell was hard on my heels.

Up against it, I didn't know which way to turn;

then I called out to GOD for help:

"Please, GOD!" I cried out. "Save my life!"

GOD is gracious—it is he who makes things right,

our most compassionate God.

GOD takes the side of the helpless;

when I was at the end of my rope, he saved me. *Psalm 116 (Message)*