

Christ Church Freemantle

Sunday 26th April; Third Sunday of Easter

Luke 24.13-35

This Sunday's Gospel is my favourite passage in the whole of the Bible – the story of the Road to Emmaus. Two disciples (we only know the name of one of them Cleopas; was the other his wife, his brother, his friend?) are trudging home dejectedly after the awful events of Jesus trial and crucifixion, and the confusing story of Easter morning. A stranger joins them in the gathering darkness and they talk together. How could they possibly have not recognised Jesus? Yet again – how could they possibly have expected to meet Jesus, whom they knew to be dead?

They share their hopes and their disappointment, and Jesus in turn explains how from the beginning of Jewish history things needed to turn out this way. But it isn't until they invite him into their home, when as the visitor he was invited to break bread with them, that they realise with startling clarity who he is – Jesus really is Risen, and has been alongside them all the way. "Their eyes were opened, and they recognised Jesus" writes Luke.



But immediately they find themselves on their own; the next move is up to them. They waste no time – no sleep, no rest, they get on the road, seven long miles walk back to Jerusalem to share their news and their joy with their friends. And they meet with a band already rejoicing - "The Lord is risen indeed, and He has appeared to Simon!"

In this time of darkness, when each of us is trudging a rather dark and lonely road, separated from family and friends – and with no certain end to this pandemic, we shall find unknown companions on the road. It may be the cheerful delivery man from Sainsbury's, it may be the thoughtful pharmacist who goes the extra mile, it may be our GP on a phone consultation, the neighbour who waves, the friend who emails or phones us up for a chat. We shall not immediately recognise Jesus alongside us, but he is indeed present in each one of us, supporting, encouraging, shining light in the gloom.

And so we need to be Jesus to each other, listening to each other's stories, sympathising with each other's worries and fears, giving words of encouragement that will spur each other on our way. Coronavirus is teaching us a realisation that we are dependent on one another as never before, from our wonderful NHS workers bringing healing and hope, to those who continue to grow and bring us our food from across the world. We are on a long journey, but Jesus IS with us even when we don't know it, and inviting him into our homes and lives daily will bring the knowledge that his love is greater than we ever appreciated before.

Ian Coomber

Beatitudes for a global pandemic

Blessed are those who stay indoors for they have protected others.

Blessed are the unemployed and the self-employed, for their need of God is great.

Blessed are the corner shopkeepers, for they are the purveyors of scarce things.

Blessed are the delivery drivers and the postal workers, for they are the bringers of essential things.

Blessed are the hospital workers; the ambulance crews, the doctors, the nurses, the care assistants, and the cleaners, for they stand between us and the grave, and the Kingdom of Heaven is surely theirs.

Blessed are the checkout workers, for they have patience and fortitude in the face of overwork and frustration.

Blessed are the refuse collectors, for they will see God despite the mountains of waste.

Blessed are the teachers, for they remain steadfast and constant in disturbing times.

Blessed are the church workers; the deacons, priests and bishops, for they are a comforting presence in a hurting world as they continue to signpost towards God.

Blessed are the single parents, for they are coping alone with their responsibilities and there is no respite.

Blessed are those who are alone, for they are children of God and with Him they will never be lonely.

Blessed are the bereaved, for whom the worst has already happened. They shall be comforted.

Blessed are those who are isolated with their abusers, for one day – we pray - they will know safety.

Blessed are all during this time who have pure hearts; all who still hunger and thirst for justice; all who work for peace and who model mercy. May you know comfort. May you know calm.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.

By Jayne Manfredi @TheWomanfredi