

A sermon preached by the Revd Martin Tanner in St Mary's Church, Market Drayton at 10.30am on Sunday 17th April 2016

The resurrection appearances: Facing our Fears
SS3 'Meeting Jesus though you won't be told: Cleopas'

Acts 9 v36-42 Luke 24 v1-11

My sermon title is, "*Meeting Jesus THOUGH YOU WON'T BE TOLD*" and the truth is that many of us, when told, still don't understand.

This is a true story:

When I was 11 I was first taught algebra. I can remember Mr Smith standing up in front of all the class and explaining algebra to us. Then he set us some homework. When I got home I found I couldn't do my algebra homework. So I spoke to my brother, who is more than 4 years younger than me, and I said, "I can't do my homework but Mr Smith said blah, blah, blah.." At which my brother, who at 7 had never done any algebra in his life, suddenly lit up, came alive and did my algebra homework right there in front of me and got it all right!!

When he was three times that age he did graduate from Oxford with a Degree in Mathematics BUT *I* first taught him algebra!!

I was told but I couldn't make sense of it.

YET, I must have heard correctly because I was able to pass on what I was told sufficiently well for my brother to understand.

And what was true of me and algebra is certainly true of many people with regard to the Christian faith: They hear the words but the penny doesn't drop and it doesn't make sense.

In Luke 24 this is true of Cleopas.

On the first Easter Day, Cleopas is walking, with a friend, the 7 miles from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. And as they walk, the unrecognised Jesus comes along and walks with them. The Bible says they were very sad and downcast. They speak to the incognito Jesus and tell him all about his death and expected resurrection.

And then in verse 22 we read, "***And what is more, some of women amazed us. They went to the tomb but didn't find his body but angels TOLD them Jesus was alive!***"

The women amazed them but the resurrection didn't!!
They just WOULD NOT BE TOLD!

(2)

They were told the truth.

BUT the truth did not register with them.

And they were still fearful and sad and confused.

They OUGHT to have been rejoicing, but they weren't.

To them, Jesus was still dead and not living.

So the question is:

"How do WE help people so they come to know that Jesus is risen and alive today?"

Luke 24 gives us some possibilities:

FIRST, we must use WORDS. Even if they are misunderstood.

The facts of v19 to 21 about the life and resurrection of Jesus MUST BE TOLD because there is a factual basis to our faith.

Christianity is based on historical facts and isn't just about feelings.

People MUST KNOW the story of Jesus Christ, his birth, his ministry, his death, his resurrection, his ascension and his coming again.

SECOND, we must enter into DISCUSSIONS and ask questions and even challenge people. After all Jesus, in verse 25, did not hold back

for he said, "How FOOLISH you are and HOW SLOW to believe"

It is good to prod and challenge and question assumptions.

THIRD, it may well take a protracted amount of TIME.

Verse 29 has "STAY with us" and Jesus did. He was about to continue his journey but he stop and gave Cleopas and his friend more time.

Results will often not be instant or quick. We have to be prepared "to stay" and be available and not rush away.

BUT FOURTH, at the end of the day, for many WORDS ARE NOT ENOUGH and there is a need for SIGNS. Signs which go beyond words and are proof of reality.

Verse 30 "And when he was eating with them he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them AND THEN their eyes were opened and they recognised him"

(3)

The sign may have been the breaking of the bread, or, it may have been the revealing of his scars of crucifixion in his hands as he took the bread. BUT EITHER WAY there was something MORE THAN WORDS. There was A SIGN.

And then it all MADE SENSE, "*Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked to us on the road?*" verse 32

THOUGH THEY WOULDN'T BE TOLD BY THE WOMEN
THEY MET THE RISEN JESUS THROUGH A SIGN.

Likewise, later it was Peter who gave the people of Joppa a sign when he raised Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9).

So, isn't it good to be members of a church which, every week, doesn't just talk but gives many signs?

-A sign of HOSPITALITY as refreshments are served most days to the families of prisoners as they visit their loved ones at Stoke Heath;

-A sign of COMPASSION as every Tuesday and Friday three-days-worth of food for every family member is given to those in crisis;

-A sign of HOPE as four days a week the Debt Centre helps those with unpayable debt. In the last year and three-quarters about 40 homes have managed to get their debts sorted and are actually making payments so that they will be become debt-free in due course and a few already are debt-free.

And this VERY WEEK a Release Group started to help those with addictions. **A sign of LIGHT** to those who may feel they are in a dark place.

And MENCAP is and the JOB CLUB will be further SIGNS.

Many people won't be told but signs done in Jesus's name are the key which unlocks the words we say.

Never despise good works.

They are PART of the gospel proclamation.

Which is why, down the years, it is CHRISTIANS who have founded Schools and Training Colleges and Universities, Christians have founded Hospitals and Hospices, Orphanages, Alms-houses and Christians have founded Soup Kitchens and the like.

As Jesus himself said, (Matthew 5 v16)

"Let your light so shine before others that they may see YOUR GOOD WORKS and glorify your Father in heaven"

So they may SEE the sign and believe.