

Luke 24.13-35

Don't give up

Christ Church Selly Park

Wednesday 17 May 2023

Funeral of Kitty Kendall

When I spoke to Karen and Manda they told me how Kitty's favourite gospel was Luke – so I thought a reading from Luke would be appropriate, especially this one as we are in the season of Easter when we remember Jesus rising from the dead.

In the reading two of his disciples – one named Cleopas – were walking away from Jerusalem towards the village of Emmaus, sad and confused. They hadn't expected Jesus to die, especially in the way he had. They were disappointed too; they'd hoped he was the anointed leader promised by God, the one who would save and rescue God's people – yet he had been killed.

Then that first Easter morning some of the women disciples had visited Jesus' tomb – and found it empty! Peter and John later confirmed their story, but Cleopas and his friend still gave up and left Jerusalem, walking to Emmaus, disappointed and disheartened, wondering what they would do.

But they gave up too early. If they had stayed a bit longer they would have heard the rest of the story – that Mary had met Jesus himself in the garden outside the tomb, risen from the dead, and that he had appeared to Peter as well.

It's easy to give up, especially on faith. God is at once glorious, confusing, frustrating, tender, demanding, loving shepherd and almighty king of glory. Like Cleopas and his friend, we can't understand, so we give up. But a god we can fully understand is not a god worthy of our worship. And he does not abandon us to our confusion or troubles.

The conversation between Jesus and these two disciples on the road to Emmaus is one I wish I could have been part of – to hear Jesus' own teaching on the Scriptures, showing how all the Law and the Prophets were pointing to *him*. As the two of them said later, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'

Jesus is not physically present with us any more, but he sends something better – his Spirit to live in our hearts, to show and teach us the truth, to help us see what he showed those two disciples on the road leading – so they thought – to Emmaus: because actually that road led them to Jesus.

They listened, they recognised him, and their lives changed forever. We will never fully understand, we will never grasp the greatness of God in all his fullness and might – but we can know him, and we can trust that he is with us always.

Kitty knew the same risen Lord they did, she received the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, she travelled her life's road with the same man these two walked and talked with 2,000 years ago. She believed the words of those first disciples: 'It is true! The Lord has risen!'

My friends, I know many of you here today believe and know that to be true as Kitty did. It is the cornerstone, the beating heart of the Christian faith – which is why we greet each other during the Easter season with these words: Alleluia, Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed, Alleluia!).

Christ is risen – those three words mean Jesus is who he said he was, he is God's Son, he is the one and only Saviour of the world. Those three words mean we can be forgiven, we don't need to be ashamed any more, we can be part of God's family, filled with new life and hope and love that come only from God. Those three words give us hope that there is more, that in Jesus there is life beyond and through even death itself.

It is my prayer that every one of us might know for ourselves that life, the life Kitty knew and lived and now lives: safe in Christ forever.