

ETHOS OF WALKING THE WAY (2): SERMON

Aim: God is with us, he is on our side and we need to respond.

Passages: Luke 24: 13 -35. The Road to Emmaus

Opening Comment: The reason this passage is related to “Walking the Way, living the life of Jesus today” is that Christ is with us even when we think he is not. He will engage with us if we engage with him, he will not force himself upon us and we need to take the initiative in our discipleship.

N.B. This is a long passage but please don't be tempted to shorten it.

LUKE: The Road to Emmaus

The following are points that you may wish to pull out of the passage: After each point there is a reflection for the congregation to think through so that the sermon has biblical reference with life relevance. These reflections are for you, the preacher, to help in your preparation. Alternatively you could ask some of these questions to form a dialogue but be careful of time. If you don't have a Sunday free in February it can be used as a midweek bible study.

Verse 14 -16

- a) They engaged with each other over what they had seen and heard sharing their thoughts openly in safety and privacy amongst friends but they remained open enough for sincere people to join them in the conversation (They spoke to Jesus and let him join them)
- b) Do we have people we can share with, to reflect on what God is doing or not doing in our lives – maybe home groups, which others can join, this could be an option. If your church doesn't have a home group why not start one.

Verse 16 -18

- a) They weren't the “main players” not the 12 just normal people following Jesus and he seemed to have failed them and been crucified - but others were saying that Jesus was alive. Out of all the people Jesus could have spent more time with, he is with these lonely two walking to Emmaus.
- b) We may not feel that we're the important ones, we may feel confused at times but Jesus is interested in us. In his Kingdom there are no “main players” all of us are children of God.

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Verse 19 – 24

- a) Christ is interested in what they were thinking and feeling. He could have told them what they were thinking but he respects them – he is not being cruel but forcing them to articulate their feelings – when they were honest Christ could help them.
- b) Do we too often cover up our disappointments, our concerns – putting on a brave face, ‘stiff upper lip’ etc. It’s very difficult to help when people say they are ‘fine’ when they are not.

Verse 25 – 27

- a) “How foolish you are...” does seem a bit harsh but Jesus takes them back to the basics of their faith and shows them where it has led to. He also lets them talk first and unburden their worries.
- b) Don’t we sometimes feel relieved when someone new to faith asks the Minister a question which we wish we had the answer to; we feel we should know but don’t so we keep quiet? These followers of Christ were happy to listen to the basics of their faith – are we so proud that we won’t attend a Christian basics course as a refresher or a bible study group?
- c) “How foolish you are.” They were willing to be retrained. Part of the problem, for some of us, is that we need to retrain our minds as well. Our anxiety, stress or past bad experiences can lead us to negative assumptions which in turn close down options. We end up seeing why things can’t be done, we end up with pessimistic thought rather than optimistic action. Our negative outlook creates “self-fulfilled prophecy.” The cry goes out from the church meeting ‘that won’t work here’ and ‘no one will come’ and ‘it didn’t work’ and ‘no one came.’ Well maybe no one tried and no one invited. Maybe they did but that was then and this is now. Some people will need to retrain their minds, especially if they have been fed with negative thoughts from people around them; always looking at glasses half empty. One reason why people become negative is because of past experiences. For many people the biggest change we need in our minds is to see that God is interested in us.

Verse 28 – 32

- a) Jesus didn’t force himself into the conversation he came and asked a question and they answered it honestly. They invited him to hear what they were thinking and feeling. As they came to the end of the journey Jesus didn’t force his way into their home, didn’t loiter about but looked as if he was going on. They invited him in, they wanted him to stay.
- b) Christ isn’t going to force himself on us but is willing to share with us, it’s us who have to make the move.

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Verse 33- 35

- a) Verse 35 records an action which might be lost on us. It was an action of stupidity and with many dangers. The Sun was setting before they went into the house, in the dark they went back to Jerusalem 7 miles away!
- b) An encounter with the living Christ does make us do 'foolish' things. People taking the risk in sharing their faith, to 'walk across the road', to help people in need rather than 'cross the road to avoid them' as some may do. Or do others around us encourage us to 'play it safe' and 'not get involved'. However small (in our mind) what 'foolish' thing are you going to do this week out of a response to Christ's love for us? Remember it doesn't have to be alone, there were two on the road to Emmaus and two returned to Jerusalem.

RECOMMENDATION

London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC) have created a very useful activity which can be used in your church services. I recommend you try this once a month during this coming year. It's called **This Time Tomorrow** and can be found on the LICC website. <https://www.licc.org.uk/resources/this-time-tomorrow/>

For your convenience I have highlighted parts of their explanation.

General outline

Once a month, during a normal worship service, the leader interviews a member of the congregation for two minutes asking these questions:

- 1) Where will you be 'This Time Tomorrow'?
- 2) What do you do there?
- 3) What are your challenges and joys?
- 4) How can we pray for you?

The interviewees don't need to be high-flying professionals. It's usually best to start with people doing ordinary work or activities in ordinary places. Make sure you include people whose daily occupation may not be paid, such as stay-at-home mums and dads, or retirees.

Why is TTT so powerful?

It acknowledges, affirms, and honours the interviewee. It tells them that what they do every day is important to the leader, the church, and important to God. It makes the ordinary person the hero – you can tell a church's culture by its heroes.

TTT not only triggers new conversations, it triggers a new kind of conversation. Issues that are often considered to be off the spiritual agenda – work, futility, failure, success, relationships, mission in daily life – are validated as legitimate topics for conversation and prayer.

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