

### **Luke 24:35**

**Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.**

Quite often I might people who are obviously interested in and open to spirituality but not formally religious

- There is little doubt that a considerable number of people are open to spiritual things
- But these often seem to be expressed outside of a religious tradition, challenging Christians to ask
- Is there a divine being, an objective reality, that we may legitimately call 'God'?
- If there is a God can we know or experience him in a personal way?
- If God can be known and experienced in a personal way, in what way would that normally happen?

Some years ago I was at a meeting in London regarding Billy Graham Missions

- On discovering that I was a Methodist minister, one of the ministers there said
- Wasn't it your founder John Wesley who said he felt a warm glow inside?
- I replied, "He said he felt his heart 'strangely warmed'," "That's it!" He said, "Most odd thing to say."
- To which I replied "You might think so but it is entirely New Testament Christianity"

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32)

It is fundamental to the Christian faith that there is a divine being that we call 'God'

- And that God can be known and experienced in a personal way
- And that being the case we must be clear how that would normally happen
- And in the story commonly called 'The Walk to Emmaus' I think we have it

The story begins on the first Easter Day and is unique to Luke's gospel

- That same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus (a location lost in the mists of time)
- we are even uncertain about the identity of the two walkers
- 'two of them' is vague but seems to refer back to v. 9 which mentions 'the Eleven and all the others'
- from which we conclude that these two were others from the wider circle of followers
- but the fact that there were two is important as the Jews required two witnesses, for valid testimony
- No clue is given as to why these two men were kept from recognising Jesus
- though if they had been allowed to recognise him immediately
- they would have missed out on what might be termed 'the greatest sermon of all time'
- but the grammar suggests that it is God who keeps them from recognising Jesus

The theme of walking (or the journey) is very important in the writings of Luke

- and we find such travels not only in the Gospel but also the sequel, the book of Acts
- but when Jesus asked them, 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?'
- they stood still, their faces downcast, but the report Cleopas gives is not inaccurate
- He rightly says, 'Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people'
- He rightly recaps his fate, 'the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death'
- He rightly tells of his death, 'And they crucified him' but adds the hope of many disciples
- We had hoped that he was the one who was going to Redeem Israel
- Reference to the third day implies that they knew Jesus had said about the third day
- They had even heard the testimony of the women concerning the empty tomb and the angelic vision
- They were sad, bewildered and disappointed – Jesus met them where they were and replied with:

## I SCRIPTURAL EXPOSITION

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

In bringing the disciples to his own self-revelation to them, Jesus opened and expounded the scriptures

- In Acts, we find Peter, Stephen and Paul doing the same
- Jesus begins with the sufferings of the Messiah (the Christ) and shows he had to endure these things
- The unexpected element in his Messiahship was suffering but Jesus shows that the cross was necessary
- Jesus drew on all the scriptures, the Law (Gen.-Deut.) and the Prophets (both former and latter)
- but the central subject of his exposition was himself – it’s a reminder that the whole Bible is important
- the New Testament writers used the Old Testament writings in the same way that Jesus had done

It is foolish to speculate in too much detail as to what Jesus said about himself

- But by unfolding the scriptures to them, surely they would have seen
- He was a prophet like Moses but greater; A king like David, but greater
- The suffering servant of whom the prophet Isaiah had spoken
- The Son of Man of whom Daniel had spoken; all wrapped together in one person
- His ministry involved both suffering and victory and the bridge between the two was the resurrection
- The character of the person they would recognise was the crucified and risen Lord
- it is this that leads to:

## II SCRIPTURAL EXPERIENCE

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight (Luke 24:28-31).

The invitation for Jesus to stay with the two follows the ancient custom of hospitality

- the stranger would need food and lodging, only out of politeness did Jesus act if he were going on
- but Cleopas and his companion urged him strongly to stay, but this was not just hospitality
- They had been not only on a physical journey but also on a spiritual journey
- The two disciples had felt that the cross ended their hope in Jesus; the empty tomb did not change that
- but as Jesus opened expounded the scriptures to them things began to change
- at the table inside the house Jesus took the exceptional step of taking the role of host in saying grace
- while there are hints of the Last Supper, these two disciples would not have been there
- but after his exposition of the scriptures, they suddenly saw him, the crucified one had risen
- Their meeting with Jesus ended abruptly as Jesus disappeared but left them asking each other

Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24:32)

This vital text points to the importance both of scriptural exposition and scriptural experience

- Which together move into

### III SCRIPTURAL EVANGELISM

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread (Luke 24:33-35).

The transformation in the two disciples is plain to see:

- Before Jesus opened the scriptures to them and they saw him for who he is
- Their best response had been to stand still, looking sad
- But their hearts had burned within them while he talked with them on the road and opened the Scriptures
- Now they got up at once, to return to Jerusalem – their return journey undoubtedly quicker

Interestingly, Luke records that, for the first time since the Garden of Gethsemane

- The disciples refer to Jesus as ‘the Lord’ - it is the resurrection that seals his Lordship
- For by that resurrection Jesus now sits at the right hand of God (Rom. 1:3-4);
- he rules along with the Father (Ps. 110:1; Dan. 7:13–14); he intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:2)
- he mediates the blessings that God gives his children (Hebrews 5–10)
- he bestows the many blessings of grace that God gives his children (1 Peter 1:3-6)
- including forgiveness of sins, the promised Holy Spirit and eternal life, as the Apostle Paul wrote:

If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (Romans 10:9)

Here we first find the disciples confessing Jesus as Lord and risen Saviour

- by scriptural exposition, through scriptural experience and by scriptural evangelism
- and if this is the pattern that Jesus followed himself, it seems like the right pattern for us
- and it is a pattern that is effectively a virtuous circle, one that continues with good results
- but it is also a pattern that readily shows the limitations of so much contemporary ‘church’

Some years ago, a retired ministerial colleague asked me, ‘do you always preach expository sermons?’

- my answer, somewhat joking was, ‘I did not know there was any other kind’
- expository sermons are those which take a passage of the Bible and ask, ‘what does the Bible say?’
- this is technically called ‘exegesis’, ‘what does the Bible mean?’ This is technically called ‘exposition’
- and ‘what does the Bible mean to me/us today?’ This is simply ‘application’.
- I am committed only to preaching and, by choice, only to listening to this kind of sermon

Today many people are looking for some kind of emotional occasion but not necessarily scriptural experience

- I call these ‘fuzzy feelings’ – I am not particularly susceptible to these but I do have them
- It is possible ‘fuzzy feelings’ in a Cathedral singing hymns, or with a crowd singing worship songs
- But fuzzy feelings are no substitute for scriptural experience which is always rooted in the Bible
- I am not knocking being in touch with our emotions but we need good roots in God’s Word

Scriptural exposition and scriptural experience will also spill out in scriptural evangelism

- Having listened to the scriptural exposition Jesus gave and had a scriptural experience of their Lord
- The two on the road to Emmaus, hurried back to Jerusalem to tell others the good news