

## Small Group Bible Notes for WB 9<sup>th</sup> June '24

### The Journey to Emmaus

This is the last of our theme based on the people who encountered Jesus after His resurrection. In all the previous examples we have seen how Jesus met people where they were and gave them new purpose and hope.

- Have you ever encountered someone who inspires positivity and hope in you just by being who they are?

#### Read ....Luke 24: 13-35

Here we read about some people returning to their village after spending the Passover celebrations in Jerusalem. It's quite possible that they were members of the wider group who followed Jesus about during His ministry because we see that they had their hopes and expectations dashed by what they saw happening to Jesus.

They seem to have heavy hearts as they talk about the events of the weekend. They were possibly sad, disappointed angry and struggling within themselves because of Jesus' arrest and death. Their hope had gone. It is very obvious, reading this story, that in spite of being with Jesus for three years, hearing His teaching and seeing the things He did, they still had limited understanding of what Jesus came to do. They were expecting freedom from the Roman yoke and, clearly, Jesus was not going in that direction. We can see that in Jesus' comment to them when He said how slow they were to believe what the prophets had written about the Messiah.

- Can you think of any descriptions about the Messiah written in the Old Testament by the prophets?

And so, they walked and talked as a stranger joined them and asked what they were talking about. Cleopas is taken aback that this stranger does not seem to have heard anything about Jesus' death and so he puts the stranger straight as they walk along the road to Emmaus, never recognising Jesus even though they knew Him. In fact we read that most of the people who encountered Jesus after His resurrection failed to recognise Him at first. It seems impossible to us when we read this but how often do we fail to recognise Jesus working alongside us in our daily lives?

- Have you met with Jesus recently? What happened?

There are three things to think about here.

1] They didn't recognise Jesus when He joined them. They are preoccupied with their worries and sorrow and not paying attention. Because of this they were so immersed in the event that they didn't recognise the planner. It was only later, when they had time to think and reflect on what the stranger had said and done that they realised it was Jesus in their midst. We are often the same. We become so overcome by a situation that we don't recognise the reality of Jesus with us. Because He comes to us like that everything can change and improve.

- Has Jesus turned a situation around to improve it for you?

2] They urged Jesus to remain by saying 'stay with us' when He seemed to be going further on. It was after they had invited Him in that they recognised Him. We need to invite Jesus in if we want to experience His presence. When He comes in it can be in the mundane things of everyday life that He works for us. How much do we miss when we only look to the spectacular? How much do we miss when we only invite Him to be with us in the bad times? We must invite Him into the good times too.

Once we have invited Jesus to come in, we must be honest with Him. We can read in many of the Psalms how the writer is so honest about his feelings and emotions, fears and hopes. Speaking honestly to Jesus opens the way for Him to help. 'Honesty is the soil in which intimacy will grow.' Every moment is an opportunity to praise God or push Him away.

- Spend a few minutes in silence together giving Jesus space to come into your midst. Allow Him to begin to encourage you. Carry on with this regularly at home if you don't already do it.
- What do you think is the difference between Jesus remaining with us when we are on our own and Jesus remaining with us as we wait on Him together?
- How can each meeting..... alone and in a group..... affect the way we reach out to those around us with the good news.

3] They said 'were our hearts not burning within us as He talked?' Their hearts were changed because of His powerful presence. He gave them hope and strength. They had already walked for seven miles but now they were inspired to turn around and walk all the way back to tell people they had seen the risen Jesus.

- Have you ever had the experience of knowing that your heart was burning in you because of something Jesus said or did?

As we spend time with Jesus, He gives us the opportunity to change us for the better and send us out to testify to Jesus. Just like them, we will have restored hope and it is hope for a purpose..... to spread the good news of Jesus because He is alive.

When we journey with Jesus, we must not be so focussed on the destination that we miss the blessing of the joy we find along the way, enjoying the 'now' with Jesus as well as appreciating the destination far much more than we could imagine. The journey can be exhilarating or tough, good or difficult when our hopes are in danger of being dashed. Jesus never promised us that everything would be wonderful on the way. He warned us that there will be troubles in the world but that He has overcome them already. We have hope for the future because He is with us now and into eternity. We have a God who smiles with us and cries with us. Jesus reshapes the disciples' whole experience of Him and gives them a revived and refreshed hope. He can do the same for us.