

26.4.20

E Sermon - Third Sunday of Easter

Readings: Zeph 3:14-20, Acts 2: 14a, 36-41, Luke 24:13-35

1. Introduction

Sometimes we just want to get away from things and have a change of scenery. To get out, see something new, speak to other people. The lockdown at the moment has driven (literally) some people to take risks, like going on very long journeys out of London to the Lake District or even just down to the South Coast. We are all learning to take a holiday in our houses, get reacquainted with the garden (if you have one) or our families. The journeys have all got quite short – outside for exercise or to go shopping. Luckily, it is Spring at the moment – the weather has been good and the buds on the plants are all maturing into beautiful flowers. Our gospel reading this morning reminds us of an important journey for two of the disciples and what it taught them about the core of their faith.

2. The Road to Emmaus

The Gospel of Luke does not state exactly why these two disciples were going to Emmaus – probably to get away from the events in Jerusalem. The important element of the account is their encounter with Jesus who they do not recognise until he breaks bread with them. At which point he mysteriously disappears. They all travel together and Jesus teaches them about the true nature of the Messiah. The disciples still fail to comprehend what is going on. Their ‘eyes fail to recognise him’ as the gospel puts it – their minds/hearts are not properly engaged in the situation. The heart was believed to be the location of the soul. So Jesus’ criticism of them is bound up with the state of their minds and souls. The answer to their sorrow was literally in front of them. Jesus was with them. We must ask ourselves how often this happens to us? How often do we overlook God’s presence in our lives because we are too concerned about other details?

3. New Birth in Jesus

As Christians we all undertake a daily journey, or pilgrimage, through life. This is started in a real way at baptism. Normally, we think of our journey as from ‘the cradle to the grave’, at baptism this is reversed. We start our journey with a death, the death of Jesus and rise up from the waters of forgiveness and healing to a new birth and new life with our risen Lord – in His resurrection power. Our journey then begins.

At baptism a seed is planted in each one of us – the imperishable seed that will mature beyond this present life in the world to come. This lifetime is only a part of the greater journey we undertake with God. He is with us each step of the way whether we recognise Him or not. Another aspect of this journey of ours and baptism is that each day becomes an opportunity to die to the self-centred aspect that is in each one of us – the legacy of Eden.

4. Yes to God

Each day is an opportunity to say ‘yes’ to God. To find Him in all our daily affairs. We have to try and say ‘no’ to some of the more stupid or selfish things we may want to do. You do not have to be a hardened sinner to put this into practice. It is as much about the little events in our lives as the big things – try helping other people a little more – whether you like them or not. For instance, sharing things out equally for a change instead of sneakily keeping the better portion for ourselves!

5. Conclusion

An anonymous twelfth century author wrote

'When bread is broken, it is in a way diminished, or emptied. By breaking understand the virtue of humility, by which Christ – even He who is the bread of life – broke , diminished and emptied Himself. And by emptying Himself He gave us knowledge of Himself.'

When we work on ourselves in this way, our eyes will be opened and we grow in the knowledge of God. Our eyes are opened. We are all on a journey through life. In Church, or out of it, we are part of the family of God and here to help each other. The risen Lord meets each one of us where we are at and helps us to say 'yes' to God's plan for us all. We have to keep our eyes, hearts and minds, open because we never know where we are going to see Him.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Amen.