

**Sermon by Canon Jim Holbeck at the Healing Service, St Andrew's Cathedral Sydney,
Wed 26 April 2006**

Reading: Luke 24:13-35. Topic: "The Jesus Who Brings Hope"

Have you ever had your dreams shattered? Someone let you down and your dreams never came true. Have you ever been surprised at some turn of events that left you confused and hurt? If you have, then you will be able to identify with the two disciples of Jesus we read about, walking home to Emmaus on that first Easter evening. As we meet them, we see them as:-

1. CONFUSED DISCIPLES. (Lk 24:14-16)

i. They were confused about the events of that first Easter.

The Jesus they had followed, Who claimed to be the Son of God, and the long-promised Messiah, was now dead. Rejected by the religious leaders. Rejected by the common people who preferred a murderer to be set free. Betrayed by Judas, one of His own apostles. Forsaken by His disciples. Crucified in weakness on a cross. Seemingly rejected by God Himself because Jesus had cried out on the cross, *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"* He must have felt forsaken. Was He an impostor after all, some religious charlatan? Had the religious leaders been right after all, in their rejection of Jesus?

ii. They were confused as to why Jesus died.

They knew that Jesus had three times predicted that He would go to Jerusalem and be rejected and killed. He did say something else about being raised on the third day, but it was now almost the end of the third day, and His body was still missing. God had allowed Him to be crucified and to die. Why? There was no doubt that God had turned His back on Jesus. He must have been under the curse of God when He died, because God didn't save Him from such an ugly shameful death

iii. They were confused as to their own futures.

Had they been deceived by a religious impostor? Had the miracles be real or just deceptions? Did it mean starting life over again vowing never again to be taken in by someone so plausible and attractive as Jesus had been? (Some of us might be thinking, "I can understand how they felt. I too was taken in by someone whom I felt would never deceive me. But they did. It hurt and it still hurts.")

2. DISAPPOINTED DISCIPLES 24:17-24.

We see that disillusionment in:-

i. - Their downcast faces. V.17

It may have been a combination of grief that Jesus their friend was dead, and the disappointment He had failed to be what He appeared to be. Did it mean that evil would always overcome good. That sin and death could not be defeated? Did it mean that there would be no resurrection after all, when Jesus promised that His followers would be raised in the resurrection?

ii. - Their inability to recognise Him.

When the stranger joined them, they didn't recognise Him as Jesus. It seems they weren't expecting Him to rise from the dead. So you have the ludicrous picture of the disciples of Christ telling the living Christ about a dead Christ.

iii. - Their lament. "We HAD hoped".

- As far as they were concerned, Jesus was past history.
- *"We had been hoping"* sounds so final. "We were hoping He was the Messiah who had come to set us free, but obviously we were wrong."
- No doubt they felt that their faith had been misplaced, and their hopes were shattered.

iv. - There was not even His body as a reminder.

The final disappointment was that the body was missing. There would be no trips to Jesus' tomb to honour someone who meant so much to them. People who had heard Him had exclaimed *"You speak the words of eternal life", "NO man ever spoke like this man"*. But now He was dead.

(Yet they told Jesus there had been rumours just that morning.

From the women who went to the tomb and had found the stone rolled away, and the body missing. There had even been a report that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that He was alive. Others who went to the tomb, found it empty.)

But a number of things happened that turned them from confused and disappointed disciples to enthused disciples. The truths they discovered can turn our own scepticism, unbelief, disappointment, disillusionment and despair into faith and commitment as we act on them.

3. ENTHUSED DISCIPLES. Changes In Their Thinking. Vs. 25-33.

i. Jesus challenged their slowness of heart to believe. V 25, *"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

They had failed to grasp what He had said in His teaching. He had often pointed to the Scriptures to show that He had come to fulfil the role of the Messiah, in His preaching and teaching, and in the miracles He performed. He had acknowledged Peter's affirmation that Jesus was *"the Christ, the Son of the Living God"*.

(Almost all of us have access to a Bible. We all have enough evidence to discover who Jesus is. So often it is not lack of evidence, but lack of willingness to look at the evidence that is there. Jesus expects us to believe Him and to believe God's word.

ii. Jesus explained why the Messiah had to suffer.

As they walked along the road to Emmaus, Jesus opened the Scriptures to them. He began with Moses and went through the Scriptures pointing out how He was the Messiah, the Christ, and how it was necessary for the Christ to suffer as part of His role in redeeming the people of God.

Eg., Deut 18 where Moses declares that God would *"raise up a prophet like unto me"*, in the days ahead.

From King David would come a greater Son, whose kingdom would last for ever. There were many such prophecies in the OT.

There were the servant songs of Isaiah where the suffering role of the Messiah was outlined in detail. Espec, in Is 53, *3 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. AND v 10, 10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief;

Or the graphic detailed description of the crucifixion given hundreds of years before, in Ps 22. We might imagine the light beginning to dawn in their minds, as they began to understand that Jesus had come to fulfil the prophecies of the Christ, the Redeemer, the One who had come to set His people free.

It meant that Jesus' death wasn't a great tragedy, but a glorious victory by Jesus over sin, death, and evil.

iii. Jesus revealed Himself through His words and actions. (vv 30-33)

By now it had become quite late, and when they arrived in Emmaus the 2 disciples asked Jesus to join them for the evening. He sat with them to eat. Then He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then it says, *31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.* We're not told how they recognised Him? His words? His actions? The nail prints in His hands? But they knew! Jesus was risen from the dead. Sin and death had been defeated.

The stranger who had joined them on the road had been the Risen Jesus Himself. Jesus risen from the dead, had expounded the Bible to them as they walked along the road home. He had shown them why the Christ had to die. The Risen Jesus had broken the bread before their eyes. Only then had they recognised Him.

We read what followed as the 2 disciples raced back to Jerusalem to share their discovery with the other disciples. But before they could share, the other disciples greeted them with the news that Christ was risen and had appeared to Simon.

As they shared together their experiences of the Risen Christ, He appeared to them. *"While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."* The man Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah (the Christ) had indeed risen from the dead and was alive evermore.

4. ACTING ON THE TRUTH THAT JESUS IS ALIVE TODAY

Jesus promised He would be present wherever His people gather in His name.

That's what we believe as we come together in our Healing Services.

We act on the promise of Jesus, that as we gather in His name, He is in our midst. Jesus said,

Mat 18: 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

We can "practise the presence of God" by thanking Him for His presence amongst us.

We don't have to feel His presence necessarily. We can take Jesus at His word. If He said He would be where His people gather in His name, He will be here.

We act on the other part of His promise in that same passage in Mat 18:19, "If two of you agree on earth about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven.

The agreement is not agreeing to ask that our wants are met but that our needs are met.

The agreement is not agreeing to command God to do what we want done but asking Him to do what He wants done in our situation.

The agreement has to be in accord with God's will in His word and not contrary to it.

The agreement has to be to allow God to do as He alone can do, as Paul wrote in Eph 3: 20

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us

We can agree together in prayer for God's blessing, and in faith thank Him for His provision for our need.

Let's ask Him tonight to bring such blessing and healing in the lives of those in need without putting any limits on what He can do.