

Sunday 18th April 2021 - Thoughts and a Prayer

Luke 24:28-48 - NIV

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. ²⁹ 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.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴ He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Memorable meals

Think for a moment of those meals that have been memorable for you either because something had happened or because of the people who were present.

Last week the meal I had outside, wrapped up warm because of the cold, in my sister's garden in North Essex was particularly memorable. It was the first time I'd seen my sister since August and my mum since October because of the coronavirus restrictions.

Prince Harry in his tribute to his grandfather described him as 'master of the barbecue, legend of banter, and cheeky right 'til the end.' He must have been thinking of some memorable meals with his grandfather.

The meals described in this reading from Luke would have been memorable too. The two travellers to Emmaus would never have forgotten Jesus at the table with them, and then later when they had returned to Jerusalem and told their story to the disciples, Jesus appeared again and ate a piece of broiled fish in front of them all to prove to them that he was real and not a ghost. There are echoes there of the barbecue on the beach from John's gospel.

Most meals though, like most sermons, we probably won't remember. It's just the few here and there that stick in our minds for ever because of something special that happened. However

we soon start to notice if we haven't been fed, or haven't fed ourselves, and that's true both physically and spiritually.

Physically we would usually notice straight away if we haven't had a meal, but spiritually it can take longer before we start to see the effects of not feeding ourselves with the scriptures.

Reading the scriptures on a regular and frequent basis though is vital for our spiritual health and it's fascinating that twice in this passage we see the scriptures mentioned. First of all at verse 32 the two travellers to Emmaus marvelled at how Jesus had opened the scriptures to them while he talked with them on the road, and then at verse 45 we hear of Jesus opening the minds of the disciples so that they too could understand the scriptures.

The Holy Spirit uses the scriptures to get through to us and speak to us. There are times when we see new things revealed in the words of scripture or he brings the words of scripture into our minds to prompt us to act or speak or refrain from acting or speaking, so let us continue to read the scriptures, ideally each and every day, to allow God's word to sink into us.

There are a number of scripture reading programmes around and the new copies of UCB's 'Word for Today' for May, June and July have arrived so I will put some out at the different churches. If you would prefer me to put a copy in the post to you do let me know.

If you have a copy of Singing the Faith why don't you turn to StF 470 (Lord For The Years) a magnificent hymn by Timothy Dudley-Smith. The second verse talks about the 'Word of life which fires us, speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze.' There is a version recorded for Songs of Praise, with verses 1-2 and 4-5 at <https://youtu.be/MkTrFQLy6js>. There is also an interesting YouTube clip recorded at the end of 2020 of Timothy Dudley-Smith himself reading and explaining the words of the hymn that he wrote over 50 years ago at <https://youtu.be/WPrvURlxI54>

Prayer

Almighty God we ask you to help us to read the scriptures day by day, listening out for your voice and allowing your words to sink deep into us.

Loving God we pray for all those who have lost loved ones over the past few weeks and months. We pray especially for Ann, Adam and Hannah Wells after the funeral of Ann's Mum this past Monday. We also pray for the Royal Family after the funeral of Prince Philip at Windsor Castle yesterday, and pray too for the friends and family of Cheryl Gillan, the MP for the Chesham and Amersham constituency, who died over the Easter weekend.
Nigel

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

Lord, for our land in this our generation,
spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:
for young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, of our world where men disown and doubt you,
loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,
hungry and helpless, lost indeed without you;
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, of ourselves, in living power remake us
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us;
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.