

The Emmaus story as a model for All Saints. **Jo's Sermon preached 23/4/2023 (Luke 24.13-35)**

A teacher once asked "What do you think were Jesus first words when He came out of that tomb?" A little boy leapt up and shouted excitedly "I know!" Extending his arms high into the air he said: "Taa Daa! I'm back!"

But this is not how Jesus appears to his disciples, he walks gently **alongside them and listens**. Jesus never forces his ways on us, and on the journey to Emmaus he says 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?' (Luke 24:13-35) - Tell me about it; what's your story?

The disciples tell their own story, including their disillusionment and all their dashed hopes. Then Jesus begins to explore their story in the light of the Scriptures and the promises concerning the Messiah. Finally, he sits down to eat with them, where they recognise him at the breaking of bread and respond joyfully by returning to Jerusalem to share what they have learnt with the rest of the disciples.

For many people life is a long journey through experiences and places where God is close but may seem hidden and they may feel lost. This is the journey that the risen Christ shared with those two companions. We can build on the model Jesus presents to us on the road to Emmaus.

Here is a model for our ministry and involvement in the mission of Christ. Understanding people, sharing their joys and concerns, drawing on our own experience of living the life that our friends and neighbours also live. But we are also able to speak of how our faith in God's love has supported and strengthened us through all this, and given us peace. How our love of the prayer, music, the worship, the fellowship and different Church activities has helped us in our lives and then inviting others to join us.

Thus we can all share in the mission of the local church, for we all share the same life as our neighbours or colleagues and we each have an opportunity – and responsibility - to be the Church's evangelists.

At All Saints let's follow the model of the Emmaus road:

So let us **first listen to people**; invite them to tell us their story; to recount their experiences of life and the world; to tell us what they understand about those experiences; what they mean to them and for them.

Secondly let us share with them what we know of Jesus; how his story and God's story in the Bible makes sense; how his word to us has made sense of our lives; how we have experienced Christ in the various areas and aspects of our life.

Thirdly we stay with people whatever they think or believe; we are not put off; we demonstrate our care, interest and love; we eat with them. Jesus accepts their invitation, and joins them for supper in their home. Perhaps the best way of getting to know people is around a meal table.

The Emmaus Road story provides a pathway for anyone who wishes to move from disillusion to hope. So "Let Christ Easter in us" Gerard Manley Hopkins says in his poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, making *Easter* a verb, an action and yet also a state of being, going on to say "a dayspring to the dimness in us".

And finally our challenge is to put this into action in our lives. In his book *Taking Flight*, Anthony de Mello tells the story of a woman who enters a shop and finds God behind the counter. "What do you have here?" she asks. "Everything your heart desires," God replies. So she asks for peace, love, freedom from fear, and happiness for all humanity. God smiles: "I'm afraid you misunderstood. We don't have fruits here. Only seeds."