

Reflection – Third Sunday of Easter  
23/04/2023  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Acts 2: 14a, 36-41 Peter describes path to forgiveness - "Repent and be Baptised"

Psalms 116: 1-4, 11-18 I give thanks to the Lord for he has heard me

1 Peter 1: 13-25 A call to live holy lives in light of God's provision of Jesus

Luke 24:13-35 The walk to Emmaus

### Introduction

Today I would like us to look at a verse from Luke's Gospel - Luke 24:32

<sup>32</sup>They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

There are three aspects from the gospel reading that I would like us to explore:-

Are we open to God's presence with us?

Do our hearts burn when we accept Jesus?

How are we allowing the Scriptures to be opened into our lives?

### God is all around us – And not necessarily where we expect

In this story from Luke's Gospel of the disciples walking to Emmaus, it is quite clear that they didn't expect to see or hear from Jesus. In fact, they were shocked that Jesus didn't know that his death was the Big News in Jerusalem at the time. And to be fair to them, I don't expect someone I know who is dead to come and start talking to me either, but Jesus did come and speak to them. One of the questions before us from today's reading is - How open are we to the presence of God in our lives?

I believe we are often so absorbed by the business of life that we don't allow God into our lives. Sometimes it may be intentional, sometimes it may be unintentional, but we end up being self focused, rather than God focused. Sometimes God will speak to us, or give a message to us when we least expect it.

Are we open to God's Call on our lives?

As we go back to our gospel story for today, we hear how, eventually the eyes of those two disciples were opened. We don't know exactly how this happened, but we do know that they did realize it was Jesus they had travelled with, and they reacted by immediately returning to Jerusalem to share the Good News.

A challenge before us, as we listen to this story is- How do we make sure our eye's are open to be able to see Jesus, and hear what he is calling us to do?

When they were with Jesus their hearts were burning.

The first thing we need to do is accept what Jesus has done for us. I'd like to share with you a story about two brothers who did. It's an extract from a book called "Hearing God's Voice" by Henry and Richard Blackaby (pages 102 -103)

"John and Charles Wesley lived in England during the eighteenth century. Both were devoutly religious young men, but neither knew what it meant to be a Christian. While in college at Oxford, the two brothers habitually met with a group of students, including George Whitefield, to encourage one another to live holy lives. Their classmates dubbed them the "Holy Club". Incredibly, as devoted as they were to living pure lives, neither knew Christ.

Charles became a Christian after William Holland visited him while he lay recuperating from an illness. Holland read to Charles from Martin Luther's commentary on the Book of Galatians. The apostle Paul's words, "who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20 NASB) repeated themselves over and over in Charles's mind until on May 21, 1738, he believed these words were meant for him. He gave his life to Christ.

Upon graduation John served for a time as a missionary to the American colony in Georgia. When he returned to England John was in turmoil. He knew that despite his missionary service for God, he did not have a personal relationship with Christ. On Sunday evening, May 24, 1738, John attended a small Moravian mission church on Aldersgate Street. The layman, William Holland, was reading from the preface to Martin Luther's commentary on the book of romans. While Holland read Luther's description of the change that takes place in people when they trust Christ, Wesley claimed, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given to me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and he saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

Within a few days God spoke to both brothers. In both instances the same messenger read the words of someone who had struggled two centuries earlier with the salvation issues the Wesley's were now seeking to understand. Through the witness of William Holland, and the words of Martin Luther, God spoke to the Wesleys. Through John and Charles Wesley, God launched a tremendous revival across England through which thousands of people found salvation for their souls. "

When these two brothers heard God's Voice and put all their hope, and trust and faith in Jesus, their hearts were warmed and they were able to understand and act on God's call on their lives, and do wonderous works for God.

## The Scriptures were opened to them

Another thing we can do to be open and ready for God's call on our lives is to be open to God's Word.

We heard in the reading today how their hearts burned because Jesus was opening the Scriptures to them. If we want to know God's will for our lives, we need to be immersed in the Scriptures. There are of course many ways we can do this, but it will always be something that we have to work at. Some people like to get up early in the morning to read the bible. Others are not morning people, and they prefer spending time with the bible at night. I recall meeting a couple who were seeking to get their child baptized and I asked if they had a bible. They went and searched in a cupboard and brought out this beautiful wooden box. Then they opened the box, and brought out a magnificent old copy of the King James Version, which had belonged to one of their ancestors. I had to explain what a wonderful thing it was to have this heirloom, but for the bible to be any good to us we need to actually pick it up, day by day, and read it.

The Anglican tradition of Morning and Evening Prayer, is a wonderful discipline to assist us, and of course there are many other ways, but we each need to find a way that works best for us. As I've gone through life, and faced the various ups and downs that life brings, the bible seems to come back to me again and again to provide guidance. Often, I will not recall the exact chapter or verse, yet I feel God speaking to me, knowing that there is reassurance in the scriptures. If we intentionally set time aside each day to read the bible and reflect on the words of scripture, then it will seep into our souls and we will be nourished, challenged, and encouraged as followers of Jesus.

## Conclusion

Today we heard how the travelers on the road to Emmaus went from dejected to elated, after encountering the risen Jesus.

If we are open to God, so that we may hear his call, even in places we may not expect, if we wholeheartedly accept Jesus, and allow our hearts to be warmed, if we are diligent in engaging with God's word, in the Bible, to guide us,

then we will know God's presence in our lives, and we too, will be elated, to follow the risen Jesus in our lives. Amen