



Newcastle City Temple Connected

Reimagining Church Together

Dear Friends

I hope that you had a really blessed Easter. For those who have been following the Holy Week Meditation '*From Bethany to Galilee*' you will know that today (Sunday 11th April) is the final day, and hopefully you have found this material helpful in your personal devotions. It's certainly been interesting picking up on one or two of the conversations which have been shared as people have wondered about the significance of the various 'props' contained within the little linen bags! Hopefully it all made sense in the end!

I love Easter - and it's been good to share in ministry with you throughout this Holy season. Thankyou to Heather, Bob, Carole and David for presenting such a helpful mid week devotional via Zoom, on behalf of the Band and Songsters; with each carefully chosen item perfectly complimenting each other in the exploration of the theme '*Where love and sorrow meet*'.

Thank you to Stephen Mugford for arranging such a great Quiz on Easter Saturday and to all who supported.

Thankyou too, to all who contributed to our 'Zoom' meetings on Good Friday morning, when we gathered '*Near the Cross*' & on Easter Sunday Morning, when we celebrated the fact that '*He is Risen*', and also to the Pre-recorded meeting which premiered on YouTube on Easter Sunday evening.

This recorded service has to date been viewed 177 times - and is still available for viewing via the following link; <https://youtu.be/n1QemEt8hg>

As far as this worship bulletin is concerned; today our thoughts turn to '*The Encounter with Jesus on the Emmaus Road*'; and so there is a sense in which our journey with Jesus continues; as we turn to the account found in Luke's Gospel; I pray that Jesus, Himself will draw ever nearer to you, and...

'I ask Him to strengthen you by His Spirit - not with a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite Him in. And I ask Him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.' (Ephesians 3:15-19, The Message).

Every Blessing
Major Liz Hancock

Roadmap out of Lockdown... Visitation

With the gradual easing of restrictions - having reached Step 2 by tomorrow (Monday 12th April) in the 'Roadmap out of Lockdown' - I want to say that I am open to invitations (weather & time permitting) to meet with you at your home in your own gardens (Max group size 6) - unfortunately we still can't meet indoors! Or if you prefer to join you for a short walk locally.

I will of course be restricting the number of people I do meet with each week, as I believe that it is still important to remain cautious and not mix with too many people in the course of a single week. I will endeavour to respond favourably to all invitations - but I anticipate that this may need to be over several weeks, so would ask for your patience and understanding.

... Returning to Worship

With restrictions still in place regarding social distancing, no mixing of households, the need to wear facemasks, no congregational singing, and restrictions still in force regarding musical sections - no decision has yet been reached with regards to when we plan on returning to public worship. I am however in discussion with the clergy at Brunswick about this and will be consulting with members of our own Pastoral Care Council on this issue.

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SUNDAY 11th April 2021

Theme: Encountering Jesus on The Emmaus Road

Song: I know Thee who thou art (SASB 79) <https://youtu.be/9xTzzNCOL7w>

'Beside Thee as I walk, I will delight in Thee, in sweet communion talk of all Thou art to me; the beauty of thy face behold, and know Thy mercies manifold'. Albert Orsborn (1886-1967)

Bible Text: Luke 24:13-35

Video Link: The Appearance of Christ on the Road to Emmaus <https://youtu.be/dmmTWQn95xQ>

Video Link: I Can See (The Emmaus Road) by Steve Green <https://youtu.be/cOHrapKFmIU>

Reflection: Encountering Jesus on The Emmaus Road

Luke recounts how Jesus in His mercy reached out to His confused and deserting disciples on the road to Emmaus. Emmaus is seven miles from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the spiritual centre it was the location of the Last Supper, the Cross, the Resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit. It is the place where the drama of salvation was unfolded. So in walking away from this 'spiritual city', these two erstwhile disciples of Jesus were walking away from the 'centre of salvation'.

Luke names one of the disciples as Cleopas; no name is mentioned of the other one, so imagine for a moment that the other disciple is you.

Trudging up the road towards Emmaus, having left behind a downhearted, confused band of disciples who were afraid and bewildered over what had happened to Jesus just three days ago; you travel along sad and disillusioned, struggling to make sense of all that has happened these past few days.

The Master whom you had loved and followed had been horribly put to death – a cruel and degrading death; hung out to die on a cross—midst the cruel jeers of a hostile crowd of onlookers.

How can this be? Just a week ago, this same crowd had excitedly welcomed him, hopes had risen to fever pitch with the enthusiastic waving of palm branches and shouts of 'Hosanna!' - Jesus is dead. Your hopes have been dashed. The dream is over! His body had been laid in a borrowed tomb - and that was the end of it, or so you thought...but then some of the women had reported to you that the tomb was now empty! What? How? Where is His body now?

Are you able to get sense of how the two disciples were feeling. To the stranger who appeared and walked alongside them they despondently said "We had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free!" Note the tense that was used... 'We had hoped'.

Now, you would have thought that with the news circulating that Jesus had risen from the dead, that the two disciples would have been filled with excitement and wonder, but in fact it is the total opposite. They are full of confusion, doubt, questions, worry and anxiety. All of a sudden, Jesus appears alongside them on the road, but they do not recognise him; much as Mary at the tomb mistook Jesus for the gardener - until he called her by name.

We could explore any number of reasons why the disciples failed to recognise Jesus; Maybe there was something different about Jesus' appearance; maybe they didn't recognise Jesus because they simply weren't expecting to see him, and therefore weren't looking for him;

In 1 Kings 19 – after the prophet Elijah has had his run in with the prophets of Baal, he runs away and ends up in a cave. As Elijah waits for God, we're told that a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks, but God wasn't in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but God was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

Maybe that gentle whisper had been there all along, but Elijah had to learn to be still, to listen to that still small voice. It was only when he stilled himself, and when he looked for God, that he actually recognised God's presence with him, and heard God's voice.

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Continued...

The same is true for ourselves of course, if we want to recognise God's presence with us, we actually need to still ourselves, and search for him.

In spite of all the frustration and challenges, there is a sense in which these past twelve months of 'Social Restrictions', 'Self Isolation' and 'Social Distancing' has been a gift to us.

Like never before, because of an enforced inactivity, confined to our own homes, except for essential journeys and daily exercise, we perhaps have had more time to be still. More time to spend in prayer and the study of God's Word, more time to read and listen to Christian music. More time to enjoy His presence, whilst soaking in the richness and beauty of creation, listening for His voice, allowing Him space to speak to us.

There is another possible reason why the two disciples failed to recognise the one who walked with them as being Jesus; and that's because they were so caught up in their own problems and fears, they simply did not recognise him.

Sometimes our own worries and fears prevent us from seeing God at work in our lives; we focus on our problems, the things that concern us, rather than on God. But even though there may be times in our lives when we don't feel the presence of God, it doesn't mean that He is not there.

The late Sir Captain Tom Moore - has been hailed as one of the heroes of this pandemic. Raising in excess of 32 million pounds for NHS Charities after challenging himself to walk 100 times around his Bedfordshire garden before his 100th birthday. In one interview - Captain Tom offered these words of optimism;

*"At the end of the day we shall all be okay again;
for all those people who are finding it difficult at the moment:
the sun will shine on you again and the clouds will go away,"*

His daughter reminded people of those wise words during a televised interview earlier this week - as she spoke of a new fundraising initiative launched in his honour.

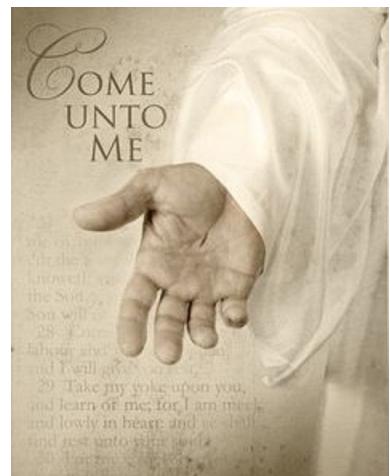
As I reflected on Sir Captain Tom's words in light of preparing this weeks worship bulletin, I considered this;

Just as on a cloudy day, when we cannot see the sun, it doesn't mean that the sun is not there, it is just hidden from our view. The same is true of God; God is always with us, always walking alongside us, even if we are unaware of His presence. God doesn't abandon us, even when the path we are following becomes difficult, He is right there beside us - with us to the very end; and just as the eyes of the disciples were opened so that they recognised Jesus as He shared in close communion with them - so too will our eyes be made open.

And so, I pray that for those who continue to find these days difficult, and especially for those for whom God feels distant - that you will find comfort in these words of Joy Webb;

*When I'm alone and nothing's getting through to me –
An isolation that increases day by day,
When closest friends can seem a thousand miles away,
It's then I long to hear Him say:*

*Share My yoke and find that I am joined with you;
Your slightest movement I shall feel and be there too!
Share My yoke and come the way that I must go!
In our 'togetherness' My peace you'll know;
The world beholding us will see it so!"*



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Continued...

Band Piece: Share My Yolk <https://youtu.be/BMqdkoJwCiY>

Songster Piece: Jesus Himself Drew Near <https://youtu.be/G1OmhW1-8TY>

Suggested Songs: Break Thou the Bread of Life (SASB 802), I Serve a Risen Saviour (SASB 847), Saviour of light, I look now to thee (SASB 274), Come, Holy Spirit (SASB 297), Abide with me (SASB 529), I need Thee every hour (SASB 707)

A Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
Stay with us, too, we pray
in every part of our journey,
no matter how full of doubt or fear we may be today.
Through your Holy Spirit,
we pray that you will open our eyes, too
Help us see you as our risen Lord
in all your beauty,
and in all your loving power.
Amen.

John Witvliet (re:Worship)

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

[COG & YOUTH ACTIVITIES TO BE NOTIFIED SEPARATELY TO THOSE CONCERNED]

Tues 13th April 1100 Weekly Coffee & Chat via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/94036559399?pwd=S3ICVFU1QkIkcvVsQnJrRUpWNDINDz09>

Meeting ID: 940 3655 9399

Passcode: Coffee

Tues 13th April 1900 Major Liz's House Group - Final Part of '*From the Ram to the Lamb'*

<https://zoom.us/j/97310952190?pwd=U2krZTRXeFd4KzNNbkZYeGlDMk1iUT09>

Meeting ID: 973 1095 2190

Passcode: Lyfe

Thurs 15th April 1900 Heather's House Group - Session of *Spirit LYFE*

Meeting log-in will be emailed to those concerned by Heather

Sunday 18th April 1000 Morning Worship on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/97311064719?pwd=VXJxWEFBVGU1WFpPSjk2UUFWNWlvdz09>

Meeting ID: 973 1106 4719

Passcode: Worship

Tues 20th April 1100 Weekly Coffee & Chat via Zoom

Meeting Log in as Tues 13th April above

Tues 20th April 1900 Major Liz's House Group - Session 1 of *Spirit LYFE*

Meeting Log in as Tues 13th April above

Thurs 22nd April 1900 Bob's House Group - Session 1 of *Spirit LYFE*

Meeting log-in will be emailed to those concerned by Bob

Sunday 25th April 1000 Morning Worship on Zoom

The new housegroup material *Spirit LYFE* will be delivered to each house group member in time for the start of your group. If anyone else would like to join a house group - or receive copies of the material to work through independently, please let Major Liz know as soon as possible. Thank you.