

Sermon Series: If Jesus Came To Dinner

#7 God made known – Luke 24:13-35

EASTER 2020

Intro

This weekend 3000 people were set free from quarantine in hotels. Imagine what an Easter Miracle that must have felt like leaving the confines of **those 5-star establishments** with fortnight's free board and rent!



I'm making **light** of their **plight**!

But let's have more of a thought for those who have actually walked away from ICU beds after contracting COVID19 to live on. They are the ones we should perhaps interview this Easter to understand how precious it is **to live!**

One can only imagine where we would be today if **COVID19** had plagued the world at a different time in our past!

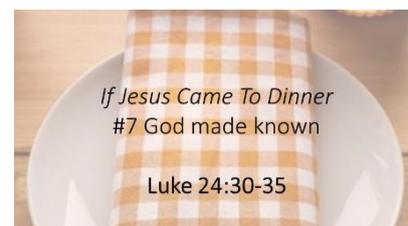


This Easter is like no other, yet the **need for Easter hope is perhaps further amplified** by so many millions world-wide most at risk of sickness and death – especially those hidden from our eyes because they don't live in cities; the many in poorer nations, or in refugee camps, or worse.

Our **captivity to Coronavirus** moves us more than ever to ponder where our hope lies in this life.

An Unexpected Guest

Our sermon series is titled "If Jesus came to dinner" and today's passage pictures a meal table **full of hope.**



When we began our journey through Luke's Gospel at the **beginning of Lent** with the controversial claim that "The Son of Man came **eating and drinking**".

Jesus welcomed this **notoriety** as he dined over and over with so-called “sinners” and **outsiders**. But their trolling showed that the religious elite and the general public had **hoped for a very different kind** of “messiah” than the one Jesus appeared to be (e.g. see verse 21).

In the last chapters of Luke’s Gospel, we the “Son of Man”¹ **still eating and drinking** with outsiders.

But something **even more unexpected** is discovered in this meal described in Luke chapter 24 – for it takes place just a few hours after Jesus was discovered to be **missing from the tomb** where his body had been laid.

An Encounter on the Road and at a Meal

Luke tells of **two disciples** who had **been gathered with all** the remaining disciples in Jerusalem after Jesus’ crucifixion.² On their journey home in the late afternoon, the two encountered **an apparent stranger**.³

It does seem curious that although the reader of the Gospel knows the identity of the stranger, these, his own disciples, **did not recognise him** on the road. Was it because of their **despondent** hearts, their **defeated faith**? Was it just the **late hour** of the day⁴, or did **God** blind them to his identity?

Would you recognise the Queen of England if she walked Hyde Park in an Iron Maiden T-shirt or dressed as a cat lady? (Here’s a tip Liz, don’t wear Green on TV again).



The risen Jesus was not ghost or spirit, as some would suggest. We know this



because we see in him eating with his friends twice before this Gospel ends. Yet he **was** changed in some manner, post-resurrection.⁵ Whatever the case, Luke only tells us in verse 16 that the eyes of these disciples were “kept from recognising the stranger.” We are invited

¹ An title adopted regularly by Jesus, most likely linking him to ‘messianic’ prophecies in Daniel and Ezekiel, yet also affirming his affinity with common humanity, though his origins are divine.

² Luke 24:9 and 33

³ Luke 24:13-27

⁴ Did the “stranger” wear a hood? Yet, surely not later at the table!

⁵ This sense of mystery is amplified when he vanishes from sight e.g. 31, 37, 51

into the mystery.

After intense discussion about the events of the day in Jerusalem, and an **Old Testament lesson** about the sort of Messiah people **should have expected**, the stranger **accepts their invitation** to dine at their table in verse 29.⁶



In Luke 24:30-31 we read...

30 When (Jesus) was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him...

Yet again, in Luke, amidst the sharing of a meal,⁷ Jesus' true identity is made **known**, and his grace is imparted to **encourage faith and hope**.



This is a pattern in Luke and the pattern of The Lord's Supper itself: In the **breaking of bread**, the **sharing** in a meal, with the insight of the **Scriptures**, the risen Jesus **makes himself known** and **encourages the faith of all who participate**.⁸

The two disciples reflected upon this immediately after Jesus had left them...

32 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?'

33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem... 34 They were saying, 'The Lord **has risen indeed**...'

Uncovering the Resurrection

⁶ Cleopas and another disciple have no other information to identify them, though many traditions try. Many assume it was two men, but the Greek does not demand such a translation, leaving the possibility it was Cleopas and his wife heading home- two ordinary outcasts due to their association with Jesus heading home.

⁷ See our sermons on Luke 22:7-20 in this series

⁸ E.g. the feeding of the five thousand in Luke 9 has similar rhythms

This oil painting from 1618 by the Spanish artist Diego Velazquez was inspired by our text in Luke 24. It's called *Kitchen maid with the Supper of Emmaus*.

For hundreds of years due to changes made by the painting's owner, no one knew the of the **deeper relationship** between the title and the text. All attention is **on the maid**. The meal she had prepared and served is all washed and tidied away. The central item is a simple washcloth.



When restorers went to work in on the canvas in 1933 they found in the **top left corner** of the painting a scene that **had been covered over** for years. Behind the maid, were the **two disciples** eating and drinking with the risen Christ at a table.⁹ A previous owner had covered over the resurrection scene.



In the restored painting, the maid's **astonished face makes sense** – she's realized that a **previously dead man** has just eaten her food!

There's a meeting between the "**modern**" world and the **ancient hope** of the Scriptures; a **hope** Jesus brings to the **lowliest servants** of every age.

The maid in the painting is a symbol of the **status of slaves** in Spain in the 17th Century. She's like many of the **hidden ones** in **our world** today. The artist gives her dignity by depicting her **eager attention** given to the words of Jesus being spoken at the table.

Tim Chester comments,

"She may be **unnoticed by the world** around her, but she **dominates** the painting and therefore our attention. The **last shall be first**. This is God's way. God's kingdom **grows unnoticed** by the world. It's yeast in the dough. It is seed that grows unseen. It's **through the cross** that Christ **reigns** in the world."

⁹ The original canvas had been cropped so that one of the disciples could no longer be seen

The **message of the resurrection** is often **covered over** in our world. Our contemporary captains of industry and politics like to elevate **the economy above everything**. A screen is placed to obscure anything potentially transcendent, divine, eschatological, or spiritual.

So too, the hope Jesus offers is often **hidden away**; kept at a **safe social distance**...

- Sometimes the resurrection hope is **covered over** because it **seems intellectually embarrassing to contemporary minds**.
 - We should note that Luke uses the word “**amazed**” again and again (14 times), knowing that what he writes about is **beyond our expectations** and challenging to our view of the universe.
- Sometimes the resurrection is **covered over** because it **challenges our want to control the destiny** of our lives.
 - Like many of Jesus’ first disciples, we hoped God would rid us of those we don’t like and **put us in charge** with wealth and comfort to burn.

Conclusion

This Easter be sure to uncover the hope of the resurrection. Be sure to recognise the risen Jesus in your story. We can think of ourselves **as like those two disciples** on the road to Emmaus...

- We too live **between the resurrection** of Jesus and **the time when our own resurrection** will be realized in a **world made new by God**.¹⁰
- For now, our life too is lived by **the way of the cross**: a way of sacrifice and service in the pattern Jesus, yet with the **Holy Spirit** as our comfort, guide and strength, and each other as companions on the road.¹¹

We could also align ourselves with the maid in the painting...

- Picture yourself with the **servants** in a broken world, not the overlords. Our deeds, like hers, may often be **unseen** and **unrewarded**. As the Apostle Paul put it, we are “**hidden with Christ in God**” for now. He said

¹⁰ As Paul says in Romans 8:22-25

¹¹ As the disciples of Jesus would soon come to learn, see Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8

“when Christ who is your life appears, then you **shall also appear** with him in glory” (Col. 3:3-4).

- Like her, let’s **be eager to turn your ear**, while serving, to hear the word of hope Jesus speaks into our lives.

In 1966, poet Natasha Trethewey put words to that 17th century painting as follows...

She is the vessels on the table before her:

the copper pot tipped toward us, the white pitcher

clutched in her hand, the black one edged in red

and upside down.

Bent over, she is the mortar

and the pestle at rest in the mortar—still angled in its posture of use.

She is the stack of bowls and the bulb of garlic beside it,

the basket hung by a nail on the wall

and the white cloth bundled in it,

the rag in the foreground recalling her hand.

She's the stain on the wall the size of her shadow—

the color of blood, the shape of a thumb.

She is echo of Jesus at table, framed in the scene behind her:

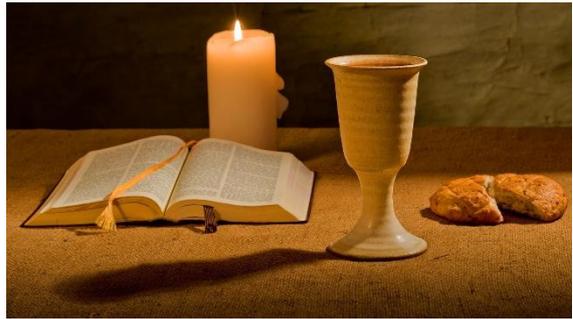
his white corona, her white cap.

Listening, she leans into what she knows.

Light falls on half her face.



In the first ever Easter address last night, Queen Elizabeth II, not dressed in Green, spoke about the **light that shines into our dark world** due to the first Easter and the discovery of **the risen Christ**. Calling people to stay apart from each other to save lives, she stated that **Easter is not cancelled**. She said, “Though the darkness of death can be great indeed,” she said (especially for those in grief), “**light and life are much greater.**”



Rev'd Steve Webster, St Michaels North Carlton

Text

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[f] from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.^[g] ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' ¹⁹ He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth,^[h] who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.^[i] Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' ²⁵ Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah^[j] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with

them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us^[k] while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.