

Luke 24:36-48

Resurrection Vision

How many times have you heard (or spoken) the words “we need to get the full picture”? It’s a common expression. It rather suggests that even in ordinary life we find it quite difficult to get a totally comprehensive understanding of things. Yet many of us hanker after that especially if the matter is significant or important. **More** information helps as long as it doesn’t overwhelm us, **better** information especially if it comes from a reliable source (and we generally appreciate help from those who have had first-hand experience). But sometimes we simply must wait. Paul, writing to the Corinthians in that famous passage in Chapter 13 about faith, hope and love says “what we see now is like a dim image in a mirror, then we shall see face to face.” None of us has a complete knowledge of God (to get the full picture we will have to wait for heaven!). But living as we do this side of the resurrection we are fortunate to have a deeper understanding of God than those living in Jerusalem before God raised his Son from the dead. (It’s no coincidence that Paul goes on in the later chapters of 1st Corinthians to talk more about resurrection and its implications for us).

I want to suggest to you that the turning point in the disciples’ understanding of Jesus (and his love for them) and of their discipleship (their willingness to follow him and share in his work) came when they met with him, risen and alive after Easter, when they knew, for sure, that his seeming defeat on the cross was a thing of the past, that he had triumphed over death. Of course, many had been slow to pick up on his promise that he would rise on the third day; even his closest friends had run away, fearful for their own lives BUT bit by bit the word got out – Jesus was alive, he had risen from the dead. Ones and twos to begin with, small groups, and then large crowds met with the risen Jesus and openly proclaimed him to be their Lord and Saviour. They had seen Jesus – and that encounter made sense of all that had happened on Good Friday, it squared with what they had begun to believe (prior to his crucifixion) that Jesus was the Son of God, their Saviour. Their meeting with the risen Jesus enabled them to take in the “bigger picture”, to set all the events of Holy Week in perspective. We were not at the empty tomb, nor present when Jesus appeared to the disciples or out on the streets of Jerusalem when he appeared to large crowds, but we are among those who believe because of their witness, we have the Holy Spirit working in our hearts to bring home the reality of the risen Christ in our lives. We cannot see him with our eyes or touch his wounds but the Spirit of God brings home to us that “the Saviour died but rose again, triumphant from the grave!” We have a resurrection vision.

Some way to go

Don’t become too disheartened if you feel that you have some way to go. The Luke passage makes it plain that many of Jesus’ early followers didn’t just rush to praise him as their risen Lord. Initially, their reaction was one of fear. Time and again, they needed to be reassured. “Do not be afraid.” Doubts abounded – perhaps fuelled by the thought – “Are we dreaming?” But they weren’t dreaming, and no dream was going to change the frightened, fearful, doubting followers, locked away from the

authorities, wondering if a knock at the door would lead to their arrest and execution into bold, confident, heralds of the gospel, proclaiming Jesus as Saviour and Lord openly on the streets. They had met with Jesus; they had been touched by his Spirit and set free to speak for him and live out their lives for him. But that did not mean that they didn't have some way to go. They had met with the risen Jesus, that was the key turning point in their lives, but they had to go beyond that. It began to dawn on them that they were now witnesses to the good news of salvation in Jesus and THEY and not their friend were the ones tasked with sharing that marvellous news with their neighbour. Jesus was the bigger picture, but as they began to see him more clearly as the Saviour Son of God, as the one who had conquered death they began to see that he had a job for them – a mission that was opening before their eyes, they were to pass on the message, tell it and show it, let everyone know that Jesus was alive!

Resurrection Vision

We could pretend that Jesus isn't risen – but that would make a nonsense of more than 2000 years of Christian witness, it would mean as Paul puts it in 1st Corinthians that we have no hope, that Jesus had achieved nothing that first Easter, that we still stand in need of salvation. But he is risen – and that is wonderful and needs to be celebrated. But having a sense of the reality of the resurrection, knowing Jesus to be alive and with us now, knowing him to be the Son of God, OUR Saviour as well as the Saviour of the world, having had that vision, having our eyes opened to that means that we need to go forward taking that into account. We can't turn the clock back to before the resurrection – we have had a resurrection vision. I don't know how much TV you watch. It's OK to watch an old film that was made in black and white but nowadays we know there is something desperately wrong with the picture if we're watching a live sports event and our TV isn't portraying the scene with bright contrasting colours but in dull shades of grey. Resurrection vision is not just SEEING Jesus as risen Lord (although that is a great start), it is to see things in the light of his resurrection, to appreciate (with the eyes of faith) that a whole array of possibilities is now open to us because “the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is given to us.” We are not limited by the constraints of what WE can do, we have the confident assurance that Jesus will be with us always to the end of the age, as we engage in his mission to the world. Where are we going as a congregation? The answer lies less with which constitution we adopt or how the forthcoming transition to one united congregation pans out, and more with how ready we are to share with our risen Lord in meeting the challenges of reaching out to the people of Montrose, and beyond, in our day and age. Rather than locking ourselves away in our upper rooms and of being fearful of the reception we may get, unsure that we have the ability to do much we need to begin not with ourselves and our inadequacies but with the risen Jesus. If Jesus is risen from the dead, then he will enable us to do all that he requires of us, we too will be equipped to do all things through Christ who strengthens us. If he isn't risen then we have no gospel to proclaim and are to be pitied above all.

Get the resurrection vision – come and meet the risen Jesus here in Montrose today, in 2023, and in the light of that meeting begin to grasp the vision of what we could do for Jesus in our town, in our day and age, to see what God is already doing in our

midst and get behind him. The bigger picture begins with Jesus - not the Jesus laid in the tomb, but the risen Lord, the Saviour Son of God. What lies ahead of us as a congregation – in detail, none of us knows, but I genuinely hope and pray that it will involve a truly resurrection vision that will lead to practical and tangible as well as spiritual benefits of meeting, knowing and loving our risen Lord.

He is risen, he is risen indeed!

May the Lord bless you! Amen.