

VPBC Sermon 8 October 2017. The Jesus we never knew x 41.

Luke 24:36-49. Eating with Jesus on the Edge of Tomorrow

Given that we have communion a little later today I thought for this morning's talk we would consider one of the post resurrection meal times that Jesus had with his disciples. Curiously much less thought and ink has been spilt on these events compared to the recording of the events around the Last supper as the Passover meal in the upper room. Although the Gospels do not specifically mention where this subsequent meal was held and the location of the building has been lost to history some believe that not only was this the same upper room that was the home of Mary, mother of John Mark (cf *Acts 1:13,12:12*) but it was also the subsequent hide out for the disciples (including the remaining eleven) in the aftermath of Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion.

I have called this talk "eating with Jesus on the edge of tomorrow" as this was not a memorial meal of past battles but **a culmination and a looking forward to what was now enabled to happen next**. It looks to the future breaking in of God's kingdom which has implications for us too as we meet together, embodying in our shared life together the sense of God's active presence in continuing to walk and serve him in our daily lives.

Although people call the Passover meal Jesus celebrated with bread and wine the Last Supper- it was perhaps the Last Supper -ish. From the Gospels accounts we also know Jesus sat down to eat an interrupted evening meal, a late evening snack and a breakfast at daybreak as part of his resurrection appearances.

The resurrection events and appearances

At the empty tomb outside Jerusalem	Early Sunday morning
To Mary Magdalene at the tomb	Early Sunday morning
To two travellers on the road to Emmaus 11 km from Jerusalem	Sunday afternoon
To Peter in Jerusalem	During the day on Sunday
To the ten disciples and those gathered in the upper room	Sunday evening
To the 11 disciples and those gathered in the upper room	One week later
To the seven disciples fishing on the Sea of Galilee	One day at day break
To the eleven disciples on the mountain in Galilee	Some time later
To more than 500	Some time later
To James	Some time later
At the Ascension on the Mount of Olives	Forty days after the

In this chart are simple descriptions of where and when these incidents occurred up to the day of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives and are taken from the Gospels, the book of Acts and the writing of Paul in 1 Corinthians. Paul might feel slightly miffed that his vision on the road to Damascus doesn't get included but this is limited to the first forty days and the embodied and boldly experience of meeting Jesus raised from the dead. It begins more with absences. There was no body, it had gone from the tomb. No one saw the actual resurrection occur, but several people and events met with the bodily resurrected, risen Jesus and they are recorded for us. Mary Magdalene mistook Jesus for the gardener. It was the calling of her name that opened her eyes to see who the figure in the gloom of the garden really was and embraced him. Later that day two travellers, Cleopas and perhaps his wife (the actual identity of the second traveller has been an object of speculation) meet with a figure travelling on the same road on a sabbath day's journey the 11 Km to Emmaus. They join in conversation until they get to their village and the traveller makes to carry on his journey despite the perils of night travel and bandits. They insist on inviting him in for an evening meal.

At some point at another part of the first Sunday of the resurrection Jesus met privately with Peter. The details of this are not recorded but the result of it the same as Mary Magdalene. Peter has met the risen, bodily present Jesus who is alive. He is convinced by that encounter. **Then on the Sunday evening, in the passage we are going to look at, the disciples - including ten of the remnant of the twelve** (Judas is dead in a field and Thomas is not there) **are gathered in this upper room.** *John 20* also records this event as an independent witness so there are both similarities and differences in his Gospel as well as a filling out of details. This includes the fact that they were afraid of the Jewish authorities and were gathered together behind locked doors. As known associates of Jesus in modern "FBI terms" they would have at least been classed as "persons of interest" or in UK police terms have been invited to be "interviewed under caution" at the Paddington Green police station in the old days, now likely to be Bell Marsh prison today. John gives us the detail of Thomas not being there and a week later that the disciples were again together indoors which were shut and locked. Jesus again came and stood among them and says, *"peace be with you"* and challenged Thomas directly to *"stop your doubting and believe."* (*John 20:29*) The subsequent word for him and an encouragement to us today is *"Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!"*

So why is it, in thinking about eating with the risen glorified Jesus together as God's church in this bit of the Body of Christ is it important to embrace the reality and understanding of this? To help us in this is to **remember to the other food incident of breakfast with the seven on the beach at Galilee** which was as much about reconciliation, peace-making, restoration and commissioning of role and calling. For John that included *"if I want him to live until I come."* (*John 21:22*) which was less clear

than looking after sheep and lambs given to Peter. Both, however, were invited to follow where Jesus was to lead. Paul refers to other occasions where Jesus met with his disciples. Luke describes the Ascension at the beginning of Acts and then the records stops. Yet the story of encounter, equipping, calling and following goes on to the present day. It is that sense as we share communion that we share in the future in a world that has been changed. We are not the same and neither is the world about us.

This is true too for some outside of such a Christian perspective. This week in London is a conference being hosted by **Compassion in World Farming** that unusually has got some big beast multi nationals as well as governments and NGO's attending. As they sit down to meet and eat is to reflect on the future that as people globally sit down to eat they eat desiring to eat increasing amounts of cheap meat. A fact that is contributing to the invisible costs and problems of industrial farming. This type of farming is destructive, inefficient and cruel as well as being unhealthy in putting more pressure on forests, rivers and oceans to the extent that, according to the UN, the world's soils will effectively be gone within 60 years. It has taken 50 years so far to get it onto people's agenda.

Yet as we eat and share together it can be informed by what is happening in our world, but we are also shaped by the fact that the future is already here in Jesus death and resurrection. As God's new creation,¹ and spoken of in *Romans 8* by Paul, which has been launched upon a surprised world pointing ahead to the renewal, the redemption and rebirth of the entire creation and cosmos. The resurrection completes the work of the incarnation, the suffering and death of Jesus. Now Jesus is present everywhere and always. His physical body is transformed and now transcends the limitations of space and time. It has introduced into human history a new possibility for all human beings, including creation itself. We are taken into God's life. Our work, our world is not to be lost or thrown away but transformed. There is work for us to do in the power of the Holy Spirit that inspires, reveals, and guide us to God's new things.

In the resurrection story of Emmaus, the two humble, quite unknown disciples are overtaken by a traveller who questions the subject of their conversion. Surprised at his ignorance, because it is the talk of the town, was what they had hoped was the one to redeem Israel to set it free he has been delivered up to be crucified instead. Then we are given some the details of what the women encountered earlier that day, a vision of angels followed by a search of the empty tomb. They knew Peter had not been alone as he searched but that they had not seen Jesus so that for them that threw some doubt on what the women had said. So, with this comes a sharp rebuke from Jesus that we need to remember as we consider the place of the future in the present (*Luke 24:25,26*) *"How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything that the prophets said. That Jesus must suffer these things of rejection and suffering and then enter into his glory."* To highlight the importance, of dealing with the wrong ideas that are imported from the Old Testament and to understand that they actually point to the necessity and

1 Tom Wright Surprised by Hope SPCK 2007 p306

reality of the cross. **As they sit down to eat in the house at Emmaus this is not a re-enactment of the Lord's Supper but a simple meal.** It is normal to take bread and give a thanksgiving prayer. What is slightly unusual is that it is Jesus as the guest who does this rather than the host. As they recognise who it is giving them this deeply inspiring and wonderful bible over view he disappears.

Switching now to the upper room of the reading back in Jerusalem as the chaos and the confusion of the day's events unfold brings the stories together as Jesus appears by surprise and catching everyone unawares. It underlines a definite break has taken place, things are not as they were before. These sudden appearances would stop but the reality that led to such a break remains. The Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets and the Psalms had come true- and that there was no part of the Old Testament that did not bear witness to Jesus and he opened their minds to understand the scriptures as he had done with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. No one except the Risen Jesus could convince the perplexed and fearful followers that he had risen and that with that would come the responsibility of bearing the news and reality of this together with the *(Luke 24:47)* message about the repentance and forgiveness of sins that must be preached to all nations beginning in Jerusalem. Yet they had to wait and be willing to be sent. Jesus said *"I myself will send you what my father has promised. But you must wait in the city until power from above comes down on you...."* *(Luke 24:49)* They were not to attempt this by their own meagre resources but God's enabling of heaven to earth. Yet in these meals and eating together by Jesus, it was not all one way. Yes, Jesus acted as a host in the house at Emmaus and was to do the same on the beach at Galilee. Yet even here the disciples were encouraged to bring something to the table from the fish they had caught. I do not think that this was to calm down the room full of disciples who were overwhelmed by the experience of the boldly presence of Jesus that he asked for some left over broiled fish. I do not know if Jesus had to pick the bones out as he ate it but the simple sense of an embodied presence, not just an idea, or a vision, or believing a piece of teaching but an embodied presence eating with his friends after the resurrection is the introduction of the new - and of course more was to come with the Holy Spirit falling at Pentecost. As we eat together we express something of the embodied nature of faith that we encounter and must deal with the particular fact of our differences and what it means to be the Body of Christ in this new reality. Jesus has opened this up because he died for our sins and is risen from the dead. That means that it is in the here and now where experience embodies these changes is also in encountering God together through food and sharing and us changing because of it.

So, it was for them. **Jesus had done away with some of the patterns of exclusion. The dietary laws had gone. There was no clean or unclean food. There was no distinction between slave and free, Gentile or Jew.** That means having to work it out by facing the issues and not ignoring them. What the status quo had allowed for but now for us be willing to change it. It would not be easy. It was not for them and it will not

be easy for us. There were arguments over who got what as far as the Greek widows were concerned who were traditionally looked down on as less important than Jewish widows. They had the pain of facing that and the wisdom learned to resolve it by ongoing renewal and decisions through prayer, dialogue and consensus because they were in the future of the new and no longer in the reality of the old.

The leap into eating with the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. The discovering of the limits of accountability and acceptability across cultures established in the **Council of Jerusalem** where food wars could have torn the church apart. Dealing with mistakes and lapses in judgement as Paul called Peter out from separating himself from Gentle believers once some believing Jews turned up to eat and swapping tables. (*Galatians 2:11-14*).

The **challenge of the runaway slave Onesimus, sitting down at table with Philemon** as his former slave owner and to be received as a brother. (*Philemon 16*)

We, as we eat together, with Jesus on the edge of tomorrow, we bring something too to the table as well. As we eat together as if the resurrection really mattered. For something for God to chew on that we have provided as people who live in the present but who are made complete in the future. Our increasing wholeness that demonstrates the bridge of one reality to the other which is love. The old world passes and ends, a new one begins. **The resurrection is a real event that happened in history as an anticipation of the end of history, the end has begun, and the future is present.** So, get on with your work says Paul. In *1 Cor 15:57,58* Paul writes “*stand firm and steady. Keep busy in your work for the Lord, since you know that nothing you do in the Lord’s service is ever useless.*”

Yet this is an embodied faith. Every act of love, every deed done in Jesus by the Spirit, every work of creativity, every act of justice, of peace made, of healed lives, of temptation resisted illustrates the reality of Jesus resurrection and anticipates the final new creation as sign posts of hope.

So, **what you do in and with your body together with others on the edge of tomorrow in eating and sharing with Jesus matters** - for we are in his presence within the mundane and the everyday and not just at the Eucharist.