

# Luke 24:35-43

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 24 March 2015

Preacher: Stuart Cashman

[ 0 : 00 ] See, it's ten past, so we'd better get going, I guess. Great to have you here, and especially a warm welcome if you've come as part of the Council's Christianity Awareness Week.

Particularly good to have you. If you're not here for that reason, it's still good to have you. What we're doing this week, because Easter is coming up, and because our Christian friends and the Council have put this week on, we're looking particularly at Easter, because Easter is the heart of what Christianity is about.

And so today's message is, at last, some good news. That's where we're going. Because we all need good news, don't we? We all need good news. And at the heart of the Christian message is good news. In fact, the Christian message itself is called the Gospel, which is literally good news. So what I'm going to do, if you've got a Bible, you can turn to it. Or if you've got one of the little booklets I put out in the chairs, I'm going to turn to this. This has a little bit, or two chapters from the Bible. Two chapters from Luke's Gospel, Luke's account of Jesus' life.

And so what I'm going to do is read part of the account of the whole Easter story, and then we'll pray, and then we'll look at what that means for us. I should say before I start that the guy who wrote this, Luke, was a doctor.

[ 1 : 15 ] And he says at the very start of his book, you don't have the start, you don't have the end, but it's worth reading the start as well. At the start, he says he's gone to eyewitnesses to get a reliable account so that people can be sure of what they believe.

So as we read this, you might want to bear in mind it is an eyewitness account. And you might also want to bear in mind the context of what has happened. So we're going to be reading on page 21 in these little booklets.

If you've got a whole Bible there, then it's Luke chapter 24. We're starting to read at verse 35. But the context here is that the people we're about to read about had just lost a close friend, Jesus. Not only a close friend, but someone who was their leader, someone who had touched their lives in profound ways and given them hope. On a Friday, he had been crucified, a terrible, awful, hideous, humiliating death.

And we pick up the story on a Sunday. So let me read, then I'll pray, then I'll talk. And there will be time at the end for questions and hopefully answers. So if you've got any questions that come to mind while I'm speaking, do write them down.

[ 2 : 23 ] I'll do my best to deal with them in a Q&A; session at the end. Anyway, here we go. So this is Luke chapter 24, verse 35, page 21 in these booklets. Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road.

And how they had recognised him as he was breaking the bread. And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself, remember he died two days earlier. Jesus himself stood among them, was suddenly standing there among them.

Peace be with you, he said. But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost. Why are you frightened, he asked. Why are your hearts filled with doubt?

Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see there that it's really me. Touch me. And make sure that I'm not a ghost. Because ghosts don't have bodies as you see that I do.

As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet. Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, do you have anything here to eat?

[ 3 : 29 ] They gave him a piece of boiled fish, and he ate it as they watched. Then he said, when I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me and the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said, yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.

The Messiah was God's promised king. One he promised would come to rescue his people. So Jesus carries on, verse 47. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem.

There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent. You are witnesses of these things. Well, as Christians, we don't believe the Bible is any ordinary book, but it's God's book, it's God's word. And so it's right to pray for him to speak to us as we study it together. So let's pray for a moment now. Almighty God, we thank you for this reliable eyewitness account of these events.

[ 4 : 34 ] We pray that now as I speak, as we listen to it, that your word would come to us as it is, not merely as the words of a man, but as the word of God, with power and with conviction and with the Holy Spirit.

May we leave here knowing we've heard your voice. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, we could all do a good year, couldn't we?

I don't know about you but wherever I look on websites, on news websites I'm always tempted to having seen the sort of dismal headlines to then go and find a kind of humorous article or story about the lost dog that's just been found or whatever it is to kind of take my mind off the bad stuff and I found this morning I'm not the only person who does that so as I checked the BBC news website this morning with all the news of atrocities in Syria and war in Ukraine impending debates about elections in this country do you know what the top three most read news stories on the BBC website were?

number one, Angelina Jolie has had her ovaries removed number two why nine hours sleep may be bad for you number three deadly dog disease cause unclear, so typical British we're concerned about dead dogs from Crufts or whatever it was, I didn't even look at the article so you're so desperate for some good news we'll do anything to avoid reality sometimes, won't we we'll do anything to avoid facing how bad things are I don't know if you remember but last summer the comedian and actor Robin Williams tragically took his own life having been dealing with mental health problems for a long time and at the time his fellow comedian or at least alleged comedian Russell Brand wrote in the Guardian describing Williams as a hilarious stranger that we could rely on to anarchically interrupt the all-encompassing sadness of the world we looked to Robin Williams to anarchically interrupt the all-encompassing sadness of the world goes on today

Robin Williams is part of the sad narrative that we used to turn to him to disrupt in other words we wanted entertainment we looked to this man for entertainment and tragically he's gone as well he added is it melancholy to think that a world that Robin Williams can't live in must be broken is it just melancholy to think that a world that Robin Williams can't live in must be broken this man who brought so much entertainment to so many people if he can't hack it in the real world then doesn't that mean the world is broken I wonder how you feel about that statement as we look out at a world surely it is broken isn't it the wars the famines the diseases as we look at our own lives we see brokenness don't we sudden health problems sudden relationship difficulties suddenly work goes I know in the council you've been dealing with lots of uncertainty so there is a death is if you like the ultimate manifestation of the brokenness and sadness that we feel in this world and so we need some good news we're desperate for some good news and that's where the story of Easter kicks in because this is good news if we understand it if we really grasp what this is about then it is the best news ever and I want to look at as we look through this story I just read

[ 8 : 00 ] I want us to look at first of all the emotions of the people involved and how those emotions changed and secondly Jesus' explanation of what had happened and finally Jesus' invitation to all of us so if you've got that little booklet there you might like to turn to page 21 again and we'll follow it through with me as we speak about it now remember this is Sunday on the Friday Jesus had died Jesus who was their hero their lifesaver who changed their lives they'd followed him for years and to begin with they just knew grief so as Jesus was hanging on the cross all his disciples left shattered in fact when he was arrested they all ran away terrified they hid themselves in a room but as Sunday morning hit the third day Friday, Saturday Sunday, the third day strange things started to happen so first of all some women went to Jesus' tomb to embalm his body as was the custom and they found the tomb empty and they ran back they found the tomb empty and they found angels telling them why are you looking for the living among the dead he's alive so they ran back to tell all the rest of Jesus' followers that this if you turn back over the page to chapter 18 for a moment

almost at the top of the page you'll see the response of the men who heard that story verse 11 at the top of page 18 but the story sounded like nonsense to the men so they didn't believe it they were cynical they didn't believe this coming back to life stuff even though it was their friends telling them they just thought the women were talking nonsense even though they'd heard Jesus say many times he would rise again they thought it was nonsense and immediately before this excerpt we're looking at page 21 two people had just come back in having walked to a village called Ames having met Jesus there they then came back to Jerusalem straight away to tell all these followers of Jesus who were now hiding away that they'd seen Jesus but despite all this evidence that something amazing was happening look at their reaction look at their emotions when Jesus turns up verse 36 just as they the two people from Ames were telling about it

Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them peace be with you he said but the whole group was startled and frightened thinking they were seeing a ghost startled and frightened that's how they felt literally terrified and frightened why?

why do they feel like that when actually they'd already heard that Jesus was alive or they'd heard Jesus say he'd come back to life well surely the answer is simple isn't it we know dead people don't rise that is not the way it happens I was at a funeral a few weeks ago of a young woman I call her young because she was two years younger than me she was 40 and tragically similar to Robin Williams she'd committed suicide and everyone in that room would love to have had her back again but she was dead dead people don't rise do they?

that's why the disciples first reaction as they see what looks like Jesus standing there is it's a ghost not only were they terrified but they were also doubting look down to verse 38 when Jesus speaks to them why are you frightened?

Jesus asked why are your hearts filled with doubt? these guys were not likely to believe that Jesus was risen from the dead they were doubting that this could possibly be what was in front of them they needed evidence didn't they?

[11:35] they needed something to convince them and I wonder is that how you feel as you read this story? you say ok it's all very well this is something written apparently 2000 years ago I need evidence well I can understand that you're right to want evidence I'm a scientist by training I did a chemistry degree almost killed me but I did it and I'm someone who needs evidence to believe things and actually that's what the Bible does and look what Jesus does saying why are you doubting what does he say to them then?

verse 39 does he just say have faith trust me? look what he says verse 39 look at my hands look at my feet you can see it is really me he doesn't say have faith he says have a look look at the evidence it's in front of you look at my hands you can still see the nail marks where two days ago I was nailed to a cross look at my feet you can still see the marks there where I was nailed to the cross have a look but was it just a ghost?

was it just a ghost? did it just look like Jesus? well Jesus goes on he gives them more evidence doesn't he? verse 41 still they stood there in disbelief filled with joy and wonder then he asked them do you have anything here to eat?

they gave him a piece of broiled fish and he ate it as they watched now I don't know if you like the films the Pirates of the Caribbean films the first one's good they'll get worse after that but in the first film of the Pirates of the Caribbean excuse me if you're not into this but in the first film we discover some way through the movie that actually Captain Barbosa is the captain of a whole crew of ghosts on the Black Pearl and so as Captain Barbosa played by Geoffrey Rush turns to the glamorous heroine Miss Elizabeth Swan played by Keira Knightley he says you better believe in ghost stories my dear you're in one at which point he takes a flagon of rum and starts to drink it he pours it in of course the special effects are great so it always pours out on the floor going down his skeleton point being of course ghosts can't eat and drink and it wasn't just the Pirates of the Caribbean that told us that the disciples knew that as well 2,000 years before that's why Jesus says give me some fish and he eats it for these doubting people he wants them to know that he is solid he is real he is not a figment of their imagination they are all seeing him there is a lot of other evidence that convinces me that Jesus has risen from the dead that this is real history not just fantasy not just myth you might want to ask about that later

I won't go into it now but there should be time for Q&A; a bit later on but I hope you'll see that contrary to popular belief contrary to what Richard Dawkins would tell you the Christian faith is not about believing in the absence of evidence or even in the teeth of evidence the Christian faith is

about believing someone trusting someone who has shown himself to be trustworthy trusting someone who has shown himself to be trustworthy not just believing wishful thinking I suppose at this point another question might come into our heads well it's alright for then it's alright for these people in Jerusalem 2000 years ago but what's that got to do with my life today what's that got to do with me when I live in what Russell Brown described as a broken world well to understand why this is good news we need to look now at Jesus' explanation of what had happened and then the invitation he makes off the back of that explanation so let's look at the explanation in verses 44 to 46 then Jesus said when I was with you before that is before he died

[15:17] I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures and he said yes it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day now what's that what in the world is that about what's the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms Jesus is talking about what we call the Old Testament the Hebrew scriptures the Old Testament the first part of the Bible now I don't know what you think about the Bible many people think the Bible is just a whole bunch of myths put together or maybe it's a rule book for life or maybe it's a nice religious teaching to give us a philosophy the Bible isn't really any of those things primarily the Bible is God's word to us and it's a story it's a great rescue story it's a great rescue story or a great love story which is about rescue if you like and like any classic heroic rescue story it starts with everything being good

God made a perfect world where everyone was happy and then disaster strikes and everything goes wrong in the Bible that's the disaster is people turning away from God people no longer treating God as ruler in his world but the story doesn't end there because it's a rescue story because God loves his world he loves what he's made and he's committed to it and so the Old Testament is full of promises of God coming to fix what was broken that one day God would mend what we had corrupted that one day the creator would come and put back everything we'd unraveled and Jesus says that is fulfilled in him in what he had done now there are two things I want to say briefly about that why does it matter that Jesus was fulfilling everything that happened in the Old Testament well it tells us two things at least first of all it tells us we cannot say that God doesn't care about us we cannot say God doesn't care about his world because there in the Bible we read this record of promises that he'd come and deal with the pain deal with death deal with the brokenness deal with the dysfunction and the disease and the sadness we cannot say God doesn't care if he's fulfilled those promises and we also cannot say that God isn't powerful some people say there's suffering in the world because God doesn't care or because God isn't powerful not true he's powerful enough to keep his promises we all know how hard that is don't we and if we're in any doubt I had two election manifesto things on my table this morning as I was having my lunch promises from the Tories promises from labour tick when we've kept our pledges oh yeah right because it's very we're the best will in the world it's very hard to keep promises isn't it but God is powerful enough we cannot say he doesn't care we cannot say he's not powerful he has done everything he said and that leads us on to Jesus' invitation that's his explanation of what's happened look at his invitation verse 46 he says yes it was written long ago that the Messiah God's king would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day it was also written that this message here comes the invitation would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations beginning in

Jerusalem there is forgiveness of sins for all who repent you are witnesses of all these things do you hear the invitation it's an invitation for everyone for the whole world it's an invitation to receive forgiveness of sins in the authority of Jesus who died and rose again now at this point you might be thinking well sins so what we've got two completely wrong ideas about sins haven't we sometimes in popular culture at least sin is a little bit of naughty indulgence so sin this Easter will be eating too much chocolate but that's not what the Bible describes as sin on the other hand we can go to the other extreme can't we so you know sin is Jimmy Savile and all that terrible child abuse sin is what IS are doing to people in Iraq and Syria and even Libya sin is those terrible things I'm not like that but the Bible says that that's not how the Bible talks about sin it's not some little thing that doesn't matter it's not just horrible horrible horrendous things that other people do the Bible describes sin as the cause of all the problems in the world and it describes it essentially as ignoring God in the world he made or not treating God as ruler in the world he made some people do that by using God we all hate being used don't we some use God to try and control others some use God

to try and boost their own self esteem or their own identity through their religious behaviour so some use God they don't treat him as ruler that way many other people ignore God and don't treat him as ruler in his world no I hate being used and ignored don't you a few years ago I was cycling home from work one day and cycling through Hampton Hill if you know Hampton Hill and I came to some traffic lights in the middle of Hampton Hill High Street and as I cycled towards them I noticed three things first there were red traffic going in my direction second the pedestrian crossing going in my direction was green that meant it was safe to go over the red lights on my bike because I knew no traffic was going to come third

[ 20 : 59 ] I noticed a policeman standing on the opposite side of the junction but the thought went through my mind it's safe it's not going to harm anyone the policeman will understand so I ignored the policeman there I ignored the red light and went straight through it as soon as I done and he stepped out waved me down with his hand I said oh no so I said yes officer did you see the red light there sir yes officer do you have a driving licence sir yes officer so you know what a red light means then sir yes officer did you see me standing here sir yes officer what's the world coming to you saw me standing here a police officer and you still went through the red light of course he's absolutely right isn't it what is the world coming to if everyone sees the rightful authority standing there on the street corner and still disobeys traffic laws it'd be carnage on the road it'd be gridlock out there on Broadway but yet that's a picture of our world where does the carnage come from where does death and disease and breakdown and envy and hatred where does it all come from it comes to the fact we ignore God the rightful ruler in the world he made and like me going through that traffic lights we can rationalise it for ourselves

I'm alright I'm not that bad I'm not hurting anyone God will understand he knows I'm a nice person so we try and rationalise it but actually we're ignoring God like I was ignoring that police officer he is there for our good and we ignore him he is the rightful ruler and that's why the world is in a mess that is why we live in a broken world to use Russell Brand's line again and we're all in that boat naturally we all use or ignore God in different ways that's why we all need what Jesus invites us to here in verse 47 there is forgiveness of sins for all who repent Jesus paid for sin by dying on the cross the one innocent person who'd ever lived died in place of others so if we will repent trust in him then we can be forgiven too now that word repent means to turn around to go the other way instead of living for ourselves to say no Jesus is king

I'm going to live under his rule instead Jesus died so we didn't have to Jesus rose to life again to show that one day the brokenness can be fully mended there can be wholeness again because God's rescue is complete this is his invitation this is why it's good news to all of us who are in trouble to all of us who face God's right judgment for our rebellion for our ignoring and using him Jesus says I have paid the price come believe in me turn around and you can have life and forgiveness and the hope of the brokenness being mended and you see again how these disciples attitudes emotions were changed during this whole encounter they started off fearful they started off grieving when Jesus was dead they then moved to cynicism he can't really be alive to doubting is this real and if you turn over to the very last page well not the very last page of the gospel account page 22 those last lines what happened after Jesus had gone back to heaven verse 52 so they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy hopelessness despair grief fear turned to joy why because Jesus is alive that's the invitation he makes to us

I'm going to pray for us we've got a few minutes for questions before everyone has to run off and leave let's pray heavenly father we thank you that you love a broken world so much you came in the person of your son god the son came to put it right thank you that Jesus is alive thank you for the hope that gives to those of us who know him we pray you'll help us now as we perhaps ask some questions give me wisdom to be able to answer faithfully in Jesus name Amen