

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020  
Glynde Lutheran Church  
Sermon on Luke 24:36 – 49

Theme: “The story of your encounter with Jesus”  
“It’s not so hard to tell your story. So, go out and do it...”

- 1. The disciples encounter with Jesus**
  - 2. Our encounter with Jesus**
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### ***Introduction:***

You know, I think that a whole lot of people aren’t coping very well with this Corona Virus pandemic, and being shut in at home.... There is a lot of fear in our society for self and loved ones: fear of contracting the Corona Virus, fear of dying an awful death *struggling for breath*, and fear of death itself and what death will bring.

Above, I think, we need hope for the future: hope that this will all end *with a Covid 19 vaccine, or with the development of drugs to combat the virus....* No, more than that, we need hope in the face of death, *not a wishy washy hope, but a certain hope so that we can face death without fear.*

The wonderful news of Jesus and the Christian faith is that we *can* face the future and death without fear and with a certain hope. We can do that because we know through Jesus, God’s Son, that we are loved by God and precious to Him, we know that Jesus has rescued us by suffering and dying “for our sins” on the cross (*point to the cross*), and we know that death isn’t the end, *that just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so God will raise us from the dead when Jesus comes again in glory at the Last Day (1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Thess. 4:13).*

But the reality is that so few people around us know this wonderful good news.... How can they get to know this life transforming news?! Through you and me sharing this Good News with our friends and neighbours and work mates....

Oh, I know that most of us feel somewhat inadequate with regard to telling others what we believe. We know that we should do it, but we don’t know how to do it, and we feel guilty for not doing it!!? We tend to justify our lack of telling others about Jesus by saying that we show others our faith by the way that we live. And that’s great as far as it goes, but unless we open our

mouth and tell other people why our life is changed, they *won't know, and they will continue to face the future with fear and without hope*

I want to say to you this morning that *it is not so hard to tell others about Jesus and how your life has been changed through meeting him*. You may shake your head and disagree, but I do think that it's not so hard to talk about how your life is changed through Jesus. Let me explain.

### ***Part 1: The disciples' encounter with Jesus***

What we doing when we explain why our life is changed, and why we are a Christian, is simply telling our life story *and including our encounter with Jesus in this life story*.

Imagine what one of the disciples of Jesus would have shared with his family and friends:

**We were sure Jesus was the promised Messiah, the King that God promised He would send. But then he was crucified as a criminal on a cross. He was dead, and we thought that he had died accursed by God, and that he wasn't really the Messiah and God's Son as he said he was.**

**But then God raised him from the dead. We saw him alive!! We touched him, and he even ate some fish in front of us. He's alive!! He really is God's Son who came to suffer and to die for us: he took on himself the punishment that you and I deserve from God, and as we trust in him as our Saviour, we are forgiven by Him.**

**And not only that! When he left us and went back to God, his Father, he sent the Holy Spirit to us as he promised. And the Holy Spirit of God in us has changed us. He's given us the courage to go out and tell others about Jesus, and He's changed the way that we live. He's given us the power to follow Jesus and to live as Jesus did. I'm a changed person since I met Jesus!**

## *Part 2: Our encounter with Jesus*

Is it so hard to talk about our life, and how it's changed since Jesus came into our life!?

Maybe, if we haven't thought about the way in which Jesus has changed our life.... Let me tell you a story to help you think about how you might tell your story to another person....

This is a story from an Evangelism course entitled *Person to Person* that I have. It's a course designed to help us think about and talk about how our life has been changed since Jesus came into our life. For most of us, that was when we were baptised, but for the young man in this video, it was in 1979 or so that his life was changed because of his encounter with Jesus.

Can I share with you his story as I remember it from the video.... On this video recording, He shares honestly and openly about his life.

He relates his story as follows:

**In 1979, I was sentenced to three years imprisonment. It was the seventh time that I'd been sent to prison. I hadn't seen my family for a few years, and I had no one to contact except a young lady named Sue who I had met a couple of weeks or so before I was sentenced.**

**She came to see me in prison every two weeks for a couple of months or so. Then one week, I noticed something different about her. She told me that she'd been born again and she explained to me what a Christian was, which was totally different to what I believed: I thought that a Christian was a person who was good and went to church.**

**Sue told me that "Jesus loves you". I said to her, "What rubbish! Jesus isn't interested in a guy like me!". She visited me for the next six months or so, continually telling me that I was important and that Jesus loved me.**

**Around about that time, I was due for a weekend's home leave. I asked Sue if I could come and stay with her. She said that that wouldn't be possible. But she arranged for me to stay with friends of hers, George and his wife. George was an elder at Sue's church. I came out intent on getting drunk and getting somewhere with Sue: that was my main reason in coming out of prison.**

**None of these happened. On the Sunday morning, Sue took me to her church. I cried during parts of the church service, and afterwards I spoke to George and I asked him, "Does God really love me!?" George explained to me how much God loves me and what He has done for me and everyone through Jesus. I said a prayer. I asked God to forgive me, and I asked Jesus to come into my life.**

**The next morning, I went back to prison, and people there could see that there was something different about me. I spent another nine months in prison as a Christian. I came out 3 years ago, and Sue and I got married a few months after that. I can tell you all the exciting things that God has done for me in these 3 years.... It's been pretty exciting....**

**Someone said that my life had been turned upside down, but Nigel, our Pastor, said when we were married that rather my life had been turned the right side up to face God, rather than the way it was. My life has been turned around so that now I know that God is alive, that He is real, and that He cares for me and loves me....**

**Most of us, I know, haven't got a conversion story like this. Most of us have had Jesus in our life since our baptism as an infant. Our story is different. But we can still talk about why we are a Christian, about what Jesus means to us, and about how he's changed our life....**

**When I'm asked, "How come you're a Christian? How come you go to church? How come you're a pastor?", I say something like this:**

**Well, I've always been a Christian. I had a mum who took me to be baptised and who took me along to Church and Sunday School, so I grew up knowing that God loves me and that Jesus, God's Son, suffered and died for me on a cross. So I was fed all that as a child, and it meant a lot to me....**

**When I got into my mid-teens, though, I started questioning all of my parents' values and beliefs: their politics, their views on this and that.... You know, like most teenagers do.... Well, I looked closely at what I had been taught about God and all that stuff, and I came to realise that it was true what I believed about God and Jesus. It mightn't have been. I examined my parent's politics, for example, and I rejected their views: my mum voted Liberal and I decided at the time that that didn't make sense, especially in the light of the Vietnam War....**

**But as far as my Christian faith was concerned, I became utterly convinced intellectually, up here, that it was true. The world around us points conclusively to the existence of God, and what Jesus says about God makes sense. In any case, God Himself has shown us that we can trust Jesus, by all the miracles that Jesus did, and supremely by raising Jesus from the dead. Of that fact, *of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead*, I'm totally convinced. The evidence for Jesus' resurrection is just overwhelming.**

**And not only do I know up here that Christianity is true, but also I know down here. You know, I went through a lot of down times in my late teens and early twenties in particular: I failed more exams than many of you will ever sit, I had no home to call my own for much of that time, and I lived from hand to mouth looking for this job and that.... And through it all, I believe that it was God who was looking after me. Put it this way, when I prayed to Him and asked His help, things happened!!**

**And not only that: God changed me!! There is no other explanation that makes sense to me. Over my early years, I was quick tempered, and self-centred in so many ways. But God has changed me over the years as His Spirit has moved in me. I can see myself becoming more like Jesus.... I don't know that my wife always sees that.... But I know that I'm a changed person, and I put that down to God working in me through His Spirit....**

Now, is it *so hard* to talk about your life, and to include, in your talking about your life, your encounter with Jesus.... Well, maybe it takes some practice, and yes it requires you thinking about your life and what Jesus has done for you and what he means to you....

And guess what!? You and I have plenty of spare time at the moment as we languish at home, and are unable to go out and do things.... Try making up a Time Line of your life from your birth to your present age, and jot on the Time Line the important events in your life and when they happened, the stages in your life *if you can divide up your life in this way*, and most importantly write in what God was doing in your life at the different points in your life.... And then start writing your Life Story, or typing it on your computer.... Start thinking about your life and how God has worked in your life, so that you can share your life story with another person, and maybe lead that person to know Jesus, and the peace and the joy *and the hope* that knowing Jesus brings.

And who can you tell your story to? Well, anyone in your circle of acquaintances who isn't a Christian....

So I want to encourage this morning to share your story with your friends and those around you, and to make a difference in their life, *and the way that they face the future*. This is not just what I want you to do. This is what God wants you to do! Listen to what Peter says in his first letter:

**Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, and do it with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15b, 16a).**

And always remember that you are not on your own as you share your life story with others: the Holy Spirit of God lives in you and he will give the strength to share your story, and even the words (*Acts 1:8; cf. Mark 13:11*).

### ***Conclusion:***

May God bless you and me as we bring hope into the lives of the people around us, *not a wishy washy hope, but a certain hope so that we and they can face the future and even death without fear*.

God be with you in this time of struggle, and in this time of opportunity....

## *Appendix:*

Let me share with you what I wrote about why I listen to the voice of Jesus (cf. *John Stott, Why I am a Christian?*):

- \* **I listen to Jesus because of who he was and is. Jesus was someone who loved and cared for the people around him, and encouraged others to do likewise.** In fact, even his closest friends confessed that they never ever saw him sin (*1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5; cf. Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:22*). And Jesus himself asked those around him, “Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?” (*John 8:46*).

I love the words of the old hymn, *Love Divine, all loves excelling (LH #164)*:

**“Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
Pure unbounded love Thou art”.**

- \* **I listen to Jesus because his words have authority: as J.B. Phillips puts it, they have “the ring of truth”.** As Matthew comments at the end of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount: **“When Jesus finished saying these things, the crowd was amazed at the way he taught. He wasn’t like the teachers of the Law: instead, he taught with authority”** (*Matt. 7:28-29*).
- \* **I listen to the voice of Jesus because of Jesus’ miracles. Each miracle that Jesus did is a sign from God of who Jesus was: God’s Son, and our promised Rescuer** (e.g., *John 2:11; 20:30-31*).

Each miracle that God empowered Jesus, His Son, to do, is a seal of approval from God as to who Jesus is (cf. *John 11:41-42*).

- \* **I listen to the voice of Jesus because God raised Jesus from the dead on that first Easter Sunday. The resurrection of Jesus is God’s gigantic shout of “yes” to Jesus!**
- \* **And finally, there’s my experience of Jesus. Listening to him has changed my life wonderfully, and there is no one else who I would rather follow!** As I’ve said, listening to Jesus reminds me that I am loved by God, that He freely forgives me, that He has a purpose for me in life, and that this life isn’t all there is...