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Sermon  
***Resurrection and Science***  
**Luke 24:36-48**

18<sup>th</sup> April 2021

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It is early in the morning after a long and stressful night. You have seen or heard of the way in which your most respected friend and mentor has died. You have heard some of your friends say they have seen Him alive again. You have been discussing it into the wee small hours. You are frightened and puzzled because all your hopes died with Him and yet there is still the faint stirring of half believing hope. Is He alive? He can't be.

Suddenly there is a knock on the door. All heads jerk up. Is that the authorities? Are they coming for us now? But a moments reflection leads you to see that they would not have knocked. They would have just burst in.

So, who can it be? The door is opened to reveal two out of breath frazzled looking friends, last seen heading for Emmaus nearly 15 Kms away. They burst out with the news, "We have seen the Lord ALIVE!" And they tell the story of that incredible Emmaus Road journey that is so familiar to us here.

Can you imagine what the disciples felt? It is interesting to note what the Gospels record:

Matthew 28: 8. "Fear and great joy."

Mark 16: 8. "Terror and amazement."

Luke 24: 41 "Joy and still disbelieving."

John 20: 20. "Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord."

Fear, amazement, joy, disbelief, are all recorded for us by the Gospel writers. Emotions and reactions that we would all have experienced if we had been there with them.

Or to put it another way, just the reactions you would think most ordinary people would have.

This is one of the reasons that the stories of the NT ring true. Remember (as C S Lewis says) that the realistic novel is a comparatively modern invention. This was not fiction ancient or modern. This is eyewitness stuff.

The world of the disciples was little different to our world in that respect: neither expects that Resurrection really happens or happened. In Jesus' day resurrection was to happen at the END of all things. Not now, not in the middle of time. In our world it is simply not possible.

What has caused the change in our world? Only a century ago there would have been little doubt in the minds of most people that the Resurrection was at least possible. This is now reversed; large numbers of people would at least question if it could and a smaller (but very vocal) group would say it was impossible.

What caused the change?

We are often told that science has made the belief in miracles impossible and tried to pitch science against religion. Yet many eminent scientists are religious in outlook.

“Many sane, deeply intelligent, thoughtful intellectuals, within and without of science take God seriously. Sixty-eight percent of Nobel science prize winners from the past 75 years have been practicing Christians, almost ten percent have been practicing Jews, and five percent were strong theists of an unrevealed denomination. This means that at least 82% of the greatest scientists in the world over the past 75 years are or were active theists.”

So obviously we either have a lot of very dishonest or deluded scientists or there are other reasons for the change in our Society.

And there are!

Two or three Centuries ago there was a movement in the world of philosophy called the Enlightenment. There are many reasons why this movement arose some political others financial and still others at the injustice of the difference between the living standards of the poor and the rich.

In short, the Enlightenment philosophers began their thinking by deliberately leaving God and particularly the Christian God, out of their thinking. Human reason was exalted above any idea of a revelation from God. Reason and experience were the way to truth, NOT revelation.

The aim of this was to have an objective view of everything. Let's just empty our minds of every preconceived idea and only accept as true what can be proved by experiment. Further, only those things that can be proved by scientific method can be accepted as true. Everything else is opinion. Your opinion is equal to anyone else's.

So, religion is relegated to what the private individual does and believes in his leisure time. It cannot and must not be expected that my religious convictions can be exalted to the heights of truth.

So, when it comes to matters of moral choice, all opinions are equal, and we decide by the voice of the majority how we will act as a Society. Hence the two referenda held recently.

As far as which religion is the right one, the question simply can't be raised. Everyone knows that all religions teach the same things. Faith is believing without any evidence.

This the opposite of what the Church has taught down the millennia. Faith is always based on something. It is an ordinary everyday word. It simply means we trust the information we have discovered or the person we know.

**It is not science that has caused the changes in the way we think. It is the way we think that has caused the changes.**

Having said all that scientific discovery does pose some questions for us. When it does, we need to take those questions seriously and see if we have got things right. Every ounce of our reasoning ability will come into play.

What we will NOT do is relegate religious ideas to the scrapheap of opinion nor claim that they are inferior to beliefs arrived at by experiments.

What we will do is insist that when truths arrived at by scientists' conflict with truths arrived at from revelation, we will expect TRUTH to win.

Finally, please do not imagine that it is only Believers that fight against the findings of science. Scientists fight against ideas that threaten their belief systems too. When the “Big Bang” theory was postulated, some scientists objected to it despite all the evidence for it because it seemed to add weight to the religious idea that there was a beginning to the cosmos.

When then we return to our readings for today, we need not be intellectually embarrassed. What the two disciples experienced on the road to Emmaus was a meeting with a man they had seen die only a few days ago. That He died is beyond dispute but not beyond the questioning of some. That He is alive is as assured as the fact that on D day 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 the Allies landed in Normandy. If you have not read or listened to Ian's

sermon a couple of weeks ago you will see the evidence for believing the Resurrection is very strong, as strong as many other events in history and much stronger than some others.

When Scientific discovery and religious truth appear to collide, we have no reason to fear, for we follow the One who said, "I am the truth." And if we listen carefully and do our homework properly, we will find what Our Lord Himself told us, "The truth will set you free."

What then will you do with this Man? His claims are outrageous; His teaching unsurpassed; unless He is who He claimed to be. What is your response when the still small voice comes to you and says, "Follow Me."

