

This morning, we have heard that familiar and rather beautiful resurrection story.  
- the appearance of Jesus to Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus.

Cleopas and his friend, were leaving Jerusalem, no doubt disappointed and confused and they were talking about everything that had happened in the last week when the risen Jesus came to them. But they did not recognise him at all. He asked them what they'd been talking about and then he began to explain the scriptures to them, He told them everything that had been written about himself and why things had had to happen as they did.

Then they ate with Jesus, and in the breaking of the bread, they finally recognised him. They turned back to Jerusalem, fired up with power from the encounter and told everyone what had happened!

This story is immediately followed in Luke's gospel, by another familiar story. While the disciples in Jerusalem were talking about everything that had happened and what Cleopas and his companion had told them, Jesus came to them.

At first they were frightened, they did not quite dare to recognise him or believe it was really him. But Jesus reassured them, showed them his hands and side and ate with them. And he explained to them all that had been written about him in the scriptures and why things had happened the way they had. And then he left them and gave them a commission, they were to be his witnesses and to carry out his commands.

I am struck by the fact that each story includes exactly the same elements, though, in the immortal words of Eric Morecambe, not necessarily in the same order!

In each story we hear how:

Jesus comes to the disciples

They either do not recognise him or do not believe it is really him.

Jesus explains the scriptures to them and something about what his life and death mean.

Jesus eats with them.

Only then do they finally fully recognise and believe in him.

Jesus departs and they are given power to become his witnesses.

This sequence of events is, when you think about it, in the same pattern that we may experience when we meet Jesus. Whether its when we meet together for worship, for prayer or bible study, for fellowship with friends or in our own private devotions. Jesus comes to be with us but we are not always ready to see him or recognise him.

We may be too weighed down by anxieties and with all that is happening in the wider world and so we too fail to recognise Jesus. But, of course, the nature of Jesus as shown in his ministry, his life, death and resurrection, is given to us in the pages of the Bible. When we hear or read the scriptures, when we pray and reflect, when we discuss with others and even maybe when we listen to sermons we can always learn more about Jesus

And then, once we have met Jesus we too can have opportunities to fully recognise him.

In the Eucharist, like Cleopas and his companion, we can recognise him in the breaking of bread. But we can also recognise him in other acts of worship, in song and in prayer, in silence or in our fellow worshippers. We can encounter him and be given moments of revelation and understanding and of a renewed sense of believing. But of course, we don't just encounter Jesus when we meet together in church.

How sad it would be to believe in a God who was confined to church buildings and never got out into the ordinary, everyday world. Jesus will approach us, as we engage with our ordinary lives. And we are called to be open to those moments of joyful recognition

But those holy and precious moments of encounter, will not last for ever. Jesus will inevitably, at some point depart from quite such close and intimate contact. But he leaves us with a commission, to go out and be his witnesses in the world. And he gives us the power to enable us to do so.

So:

Jesus comes though we may not recognise him.

We learn about him from the Bible,

We recognise him in just a moment of special closeness

We go out into the world to tell people, in word and in action, what Jesus has done,

This is what the disciples experienced. And it is a cycle that we will experience, probably over and over again, throughout our Christian lives. - If we allow it to.

But if we are too preoccupied with things or if we are too set in our ideas of what we think Jesus is or what he wants, then we will fail to recognise him and the rest of the process will fail to unfold.

And though we may well know about the story of God's relationship to his people and of Jesus part in that, we do not always hear that voice which will relate those familiar stories, to the joys and sorrows that make up our lives and enable us to make sense of those encounters with him. and again, the process is interrupted

As the disciples fully recognised Jesus in the sharing of food, so we must endeavour, to open our minds more fully, to the presence of Jesus, not only in our worship together but also in the ordinary and everyday activities of life. Then, that God-given sequence of elements will not be broken and we will be able to enjoy what the disciples enjoyed at the end of these two stories. We will be able to harness the power of the Holy Spirit, to go out and tell everyone in word and action what Jesus has done.

We will be empowered to do what the final part of the Eucharist commissions us to do  
**Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.**

And so we respond together

**In the name of Christ**

Amen.