

Sermon

19 April 2015

West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Text: Luke 24:36-49

Luke wanted to tell the story of Jesus to as many people as possible, and he wanted them to realise that every single thing he was telling them is true. So he *starts* his Gospel by saying, in Luke 1:2, that what he is writing about Jesus is an eye witness account, it's not just some story he heard somewhere. And then he also *ends* his Gospel with the passage we just read, where his 11 disciples (Judas wasn't there anymore after he betrayed Jesus) met the risen Jesus.

In Biblical times an account of something was only regarded as true if there were at least 2 eye witnesses. And because meeting someone who was raised from the dead was not something that happened every day, Luke made sure to mention that this time there were 11 witnesses, which meant that *nobody* who would read his account of the life of Jesus would doubt that it really happened...

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The disciples were together, discussing everything that happened in Jerusalem that weekend. It was hard to come to terms with the fact that Jesus died on the cross, and they didn't know what to make of the

rumours that he was alive. And all of a sudden Jesus himself was standing there with them.

At first they thought they saw a ghost. I think I would probably have thought the exact same thing if I was there. If the last thing you saw with your own eyes was someone you loved being buried, and the next minute, sitting around a table with your friends and family and talking about your deceased friend, that very same person appeared in your company... Of course you'd think it's a ghost!

Jesus calmed them down and said: "Look, it's me! Touch me!" But the disciples were still too confused to realise what was happening to them. So Jesus said: "Do you have anything to eat?"

And it was only when they gave him a piece of fish and he ate it, that they knew it was really him. They recognised him when he did something very ordinary, something they always did together, namely *eat*.

That's something else that was really important in Biblical times – eating. By eating with them Jesus not only proved to them that he was really alive and therefore needed food, but he also reinforced that they were important to him. In those days you would never share a meal with people you did not want to be associated with. Eating together was like shouting out to the world: "These are my people!"

So Jesus validated his relationship with his friends, and he told them to go out and tell the whole world that he was alive. God kept his promise.

So after all the drama and the emotional turmoil the disciples have been through, revelation occurs in the very ordinary and necessary activity of eating.

Jesus comes as an ordinary person, to share food and a familiar story, but at the same time as an extraordinary person, raised from death. Somehow the ordinariness of this action allows the extraordinariness of God to break through and reassures the disciples.

Where is the extraordinariness of God breaking through the ordinariness of *our* lives?



On the 4th of June 2014 there was an article in the London Evening Standard about a motor mechanic called Errol McKellar.

In 2010 his wife sent him to the GP because his snoring was keeping her awake at night. While he was sitting in the waiting room at the surgery, he picked up a leaflet about prostate cancer, read it and decided to ask for a test. Despite having no symptoms, the test showed that he had the disease. He was treated and made a full recovery.

McKellar realised that a simple, spur-of-the-moment decision not only saved his life, but changed it forever. This made him determined to share this news with anyone who would listen, so he vowed to speak to every single man who came into his garage, encouraging them to get checked. He even offered special discounts to customers who agreed to request a test!

When a press reporter asked him if it wasn't a bit embarrassing to talk to all these people about prostate cancer, he replied that it was *too important not to share*.

By 2014, McKellar had spoken to over 3000 people, and 23 of his customers has been diagnosed and successfully treated. His determination to talk to people about the thing that saved his life has saved the lives of 23 others.

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I think that this is the kind of witnesses Jesus calls us to be. This is the kind of witnesses the disciples were, and it's the kind of witnesses we have to be today.

We live in a world where lots of people frown upon Christianity, where coming to church on a Sunday is not the "in" thing to do. But then, neither is telling 3000 strangers that you had prostate cancer and that you want them to get tested too. And look at the difference that's made!!

Jesus is alive! *Our message is too important not to share*. It doesn't matter what other people might think of us. McKellar found a way to share his message within the context of his ordinary life, and he made an extraordinary gesture to do that.

Can you identify an ordinary part of your life that can accommodate an extraordinary message?

You don't have to be perfect to tell others about Jesus.

The disciples definitely didn't have it all sorted. They didn't fully understand what happened or what it meant, but nevertheless, Jesus trusted them to be his witnesses.

It's easy to think that we have to have it all sorted, but to be honest – if only people who understood everything that happened to them and have a perfect faith were to bear witness to Jesus, nobody would ever know about him...

Jesus wants to use us just as we are, in our certainty *and* our confusion, in our joy *and* our despair. He challenges us to bear witness to what God is *still* doing in our world. And to do that with passion!

The risen Jesus himself may not appear at your dinner table tonight, but he makes himself known to us in millions of different ways every day. In big things and in small things. In extraordinary things, but also in ordinary things: In that letter from the surgery saying that you've got the all clear, in a new born baby, in that "yes" I will share the rest of my life with you, "yes" you've got the job, "yes" your mortgage has been approved; but also in the flowers budding in the spring, in a spider spinning a perfect web, in that encouraging look from someone who knows you are going through a hard time, in the food on your table and the safety of this country.

God is there, standing next to you, encouraging you, supporting you, holding your hand, carrying you...

Just open your eyes, and you *will* see him. And then, when you do, go tell it to the world!

Amen