

Luke 24:30

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: 06 January 2013

Preacher: Dr Martin Walker

[0 : 00] Shall we now come to study what we've read from God's Word? The title of the sermon is The Bread of Life on the Road to Emmaus.

The Bread of Life on the Road to Emmaus. And the theme is about recognizing Jesus. Recognizing Jesus. Our text are a few words from Luke chapter 24 in verse 30.

It's when he's at table with the two men. And it reads, when he, that is Jesus, was at table with them. And here's the text, these words.

He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. So the text is, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

Now the sermon will be in three parts. The first part will be to look at the context of both of our readings. The second part will be the longest part.

[1 : 18] And that's where we try to understand how the two men actually recognized Jesus at that meal that they had when they got to Emmaus. And the third part will be the longest part.

And the third part will be a very short part of looking at what's the application of these scriptures to us now. Because scripture is timeless. And it has application to every generation.

Every generation. And we as living, breathing, thinking people can understand not just the words here. But the full force of how the living God wants to communicate with us through these words.

So shall we move into the first part of the sermon? And that's looking at the context of both of these readings. And we'll start with what we've read in our second reading, John chapter 6.

This is where Jesus says that he is the bread of life. One of the great I am statements that he makes. Now if we were to sum this up, this short passage we've read has something very special to say about bread.

[2 : 38] And also something very special to say about divine promises. Promises that Jesus makes. And Jesus backs with his full authority.

So in what we've read there's something about bread. And something about divine promises. Now Jesus makes these statements.

Very shortly after the feeding of the 5,000. And also walking on the water. Now both of those things. Are displays of something supernatural.

And they're displays by Jesus that he was not just a mere man. That he was divine. That he was the second person of the Godhead.

So at this point, these statements that he's made are elevated. Elevated because of what has gone before. I want us to have a thought though about why he mentions bread.

[3 : 41] Bread. Bread. Bread. Bread. Because interestingly if we understand it, Hebrew. Bread is one of the recurring themes of Jesus' ministry.

Right back to the place where he was born. People in Jesus' day thought he came from Nazareth. He was always known as Jesus of Nazareth.

But those who really knew. He knew that he'd been born somewhere else. Somewhere very special. He'd been born in David's hometown.

King David's hometown. Bethlehem. And they knew if they translated that from the Hebrew. What it means is house of bread.

So he who came and claimed to be the bread of life came from a place called the house of bread. Here then we have these statements that he then makes about being the bread of life.

[4 : 46] And what he wants us to understand there is just when he's talking about life, he's talking about eternal life. And he's talking about himself as being the giver of that eternal life.

And then he takes things right through. Right into our time in history. Because what he does in inaugurating the Last Supper.

And the services that follow on as he asks us to hold that supper again and again as a memorial to his death. What he actually does is he asks us to remember that that death then gives life.

That bread gives life. So bread is a recurring theme that comes right down to us at this time in human history. Also here are wonderful promises.

And he makes these personally to the people who initially heard them and also to us now. Now if I can just read some of them to you.

[5 : 54] Verse 35 he says, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger. And whoever believes in me shall never thirst. Verse 37.

All that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me I will never cast out. And verse 40. Wonderful promises.

He says, Said not just to that generation. Not just to that small group of people who heard him then. But right down into our service tonight. The living Lord Jesus says that to us.

He says that from heaven. And he speaks right into our lives now. Let's look at the context of the other reading.

Let's look at the context of the other reading. We read in Luke 24. And I want to focus on the two men on the road to Emmaus.

[7 : 09] These two men were grieving. They were grieving. Only a few days earlier. Someone that they respected.

Admired. And loved. Had been murdered. Brutally murdered. And these two men, like anyone who has known grief, are utterly perplexed.

Utterly perplexed. But what happens here is where grief, over a few short hours, turns to joy.

Not just a simple joy, but the ultimate joy. And they meet the very person that they thought they had lost. Someone they had thought they had lost for a lifetime.

They now find that they have found for eternal life. Their good friend, Christ Jesus. Now the event we've read about, the walk to Emmaus, occurred on that resurrection day.

[8 : 23] It was only a few hours after the resurrection. As we've read, Jesus joins them on a journey. The two men by this stage were aware that something unusual was going on.

They were aware that the women had been to the tomb. And that the tomb was empty. That the body couldn't be found. And then the woman had said something about meeting angels. And sadly, the men did not believe it.

In fact, there are two terms that are used. In verse 11, in our translation here, the apostles, when they heard what the women said, called it an idle tale.

The two men, when they tell Jesus about it, in verse 22, say, the women amazed us.

What it says, actually, in the Greek there, is the women were driving us out of our minds. The women were driving us out of our minds. And to understand why this happened, why the apostles wouldn't believe the women, and why these two disciples wouldn't believe the women, it was because at that time in history, in that part of the world, if a woman told you something, your natural reaction was not to believe it.

[9 : 45] And in fact, even in a court of law, a woman's testimony was valued far less than that of a man's. So when this most wonderful news about the resurrection, this most wonderful news is given to women, the men do what they naturally do and don't believe it.

In fact, they think that the women have gone mad. They think that the women have gone mad. There's a parallel to this in 1 Corinthians 15.

When you read the list of people that Paul writes about who witnessed the resurrection, you'll find that they're all men. Because Paul was following the convention of his day.

If he was going to prove it to other people, that Jesus had risen from the dead, all the witnesses had to be men, not women. Now you might wonder, why does Luke miss out the women?

Why does Luke miss out the women? Because all the other three Gospels tell us that the women met Jesus at the tomb, in the garden.

[11 : 01] So you think either Luke got it wrong, or there must be an explanation. And as ever with the living God, there's an explanation. And it comes back to this bit about you don't believe what women tell you.

The Gospel of Luke was written for only one man. One man. If you look at the beginning, it was written for a Roman official called Theophilus, a very high-ranking official.

And he's addressed by the name, by the title, Excellency. That meant he was someone really of ambassadorial rank, someone extremely senior. Now this chap needed to be persuaded under the legal rules of the time.

So what Luke does is he actually knows that the women met Jesus at the tomb. But he then writes the Gospel in such a way that Theophilus, the senior Roman official, that the first person he comes across as witnessing the resurrection is a man.

That's why the women are overlooked. Now what else to say about these two men on this journey? The theologians tell us they were probably called zealots.

[12 : 24] These were people who opposed the Roman occupation. They saw the Romans as occupying the promised land. The land promised to God's covenant people.

And they thought that Jesus was going to come and restore the promised land to his people with him as Messiah over them as king.

And we find that in verse 21. When they're explaining to Jesus, they said, we had thought that he, that's Jesus, was the one who would come and redeem Israel. Not Israel as a place, but Israel as a covenant people.

A bit like we are part of the church of Jesus Christ. This building is called a church, but actually church means God's people.

It's the modern way of describing God's covenant people. It's interesting that they used the word redeem.

[13 : 27] They had expected that at Passover, this Passover that had just passed, this Passover would be the one when Jesus would come as king and redeem Israel.

And the parallel there is in the same way that God rescued his covenant people from Egypt, God would rescue his covenant people from the Romans. Not to rescue a place, but a people.

Something else to notice here. They called Jesus a visitor. A visitor. And you wonder why. The reason for that was it was Passover.

One of the three feasts in the year, including Pentecost and Tabernacles, when Jews from all over the known world would gather at Jerusalem. And the population of Jerusalem would rise from 50,000 in some years to 2 million people.

So there were lots and lots of visitors. Lots and lots of visitors in Jerusalem at this point. We know that those people had come from as far west as Italy and as far east as Afghanistan.

[14 : 47] Because if we read Acts chapter 2, where Luke also is writing a letter to Theophilus, he tells us where all the people had come from for the feast.

And we know that every feast people came from that range of countries. So it's quite reasonable for them to expect that there were lots of visitors in Jerusalem at that time.

And many of them would not know about Jesus of Nazareth. The interesting thing is about this walk to Emmaus that Jesus teaches them.

He teaches them. And interestingly, he does not use parables. Now that he is risen from the dead, his teaching is clear, concise.

He explains the scriptures, something which previously he deliberately concealed. The sad thing is the two men on that walk did not write down what he said.

[15 : 50] That must have been one of the best conversations to have been part of in all history. And they didn't write it down. And theologians have spent the last 2,000 years trying to reconstruct from the Old Testament what Jesus would have commented on.

We know some of the parts like Isaiah 53, but there are so many references, probably 300 at a minimum, but so many more that all point to Jesus' ministry and Jesus' work as the Messiah.

And the sad thing is those two men, they were so excited they forgot to write down what was said. Now that's the end of the first part of the sermon.

Shall we move on to the second part where we focus on our text to try and understand how did the two men recognize Jesus? It could just be that their eyes were blinded to him when they were with him on the road and then their eyes were opened when they were with him at the meal.

But we know from verse 35 it says he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. Something happened then. So what I want to do is give you one explanation.

[17 : 14] It's only one probable explanation, but something for you to take with you into this coming week to think upon and see does this make sense to you? Because scripture is lovely to think upon.

It doesn't have to be a whole chapter. It can be just a few words to think upon and then ask yourself what's Jesus trying to tell me? What's Jesus trying to tell me?

So let's focus on our text which is he took bread blessed and broke it and gave it to them. Now at first sight these are very similar to the way that the last supper is recorded.

We know that these two men were not there but they must have known what happened that night which was only a few evenings earlier. At this point when they meet Jesus they know of the empty tomb.

They know of the angels. They know of the women at the tomb. So they probably had a full account given to them of the last supper as well. So when it says he took bread blessed and broke it and gave it to them that's actually what happened at the last supper even right down to the type of bread that was used because that supper began using the unleavened bread which was then used for the next seven or eight days through festival time.

[18 : 44] A special bread only used at that festival. so that gives us a picture and gave them a picture that something unusual was happening with this mysterious stranger.

But we need to drill down further into our text and focus on one word and it's the word blessed. Blessed. Now if you're following this in other translations you might find it says and he gave thanks. He gave thanks. In the original it says blessed. but the question we've got to ask is what did he bless?

We often make the mistake of thinking that this is like a modern grace because we thank God for the food at the beginning of our meal before we eat it. But this is a Jewish scene and Jewish people don't do that.

They give thanks to God for the food after the meal and they do something different at the beginning. This word blessed if it's expressed in Hebrew is make baraka which means make a blessing.

[20 : 05] And what you don't do is you don't bless the food. You don't bless the food in front of you. What Jewish people do at the beginning of a meal depending on what is in the meal is that they look to God they focus on God and they bless him.

So that's why it doesn't say he blessed it. It just said he blessed and broke it. The interesting thing is Jews nowadays use exactly the same words as they did two or even three thousand years ago for that blessing at the beginning of a meal.

So Jewish readers reading this know exactly what Jesus said. Where it says blessed they say oh we know exactly what's said there because we say it before every meal.

And what I'll do is I'll say it to you now what Jewish people say before a meal where bread is part of the meal. Remember they're not focusing on the bread they're focusing on God. what they say is praise be to you Lord our God King of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth.

I'll say it again. Praise be to you Lord our God King of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth. Now I want you to picture yourself as one of those two men.

[21 : 38] You're at that lovely meal meal. You've had the most remarkable talk on the road. You're at this meal and this mysterious stranger takes the initiative. You're grieving for your friend who was buried laid in the earth.

And here's someone in front of you the bread of life who says and these are the very words Jesus used with them. Praise be to you Lord our God King of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth.

What would they have been thinking at that point? They first got a scene that sounds like the last supper. They've now got this mysterious stranger blessing the bread, blessing God for the bread and actually saying who brings forth bread from the earth.

Was recognition beginning to happen? Remember it says and he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. So that's one thing to hang on to.

The words Jesus would have used as the blessing. Something else happened though. Something else. It says he gave the bread to them.

[23 : 00] And I'd like to explain to you that they saw something at that point which they hadn't seen earlier. For the first time they saw the nail holes that had been made in his hands.

Now I used to often think as a little boy when this story was read to me, I used to think these two men on the road, why didn't they see the nail holes? It must have been obvious. They must have seen the nail holes in his hands.

And like a little boy trying to get someone's attention, you'd say, they must have seen them. Why didn't they see them? The thing is, that's not where the nail holes were.

The nail holes were not in the palm of the hand. It's actually not possible to crucify someone by putting a nail through a hand. If I can explain, and I have a little bit of, if you'll excuse, a visual aid. There's a Roman army nail from the first century dug up in Scotland.

[24 : 19] It's about eight inches long. It's a square nail, and I'll use this for the illustration. genuine Roman army nail.

If a nail is put through a hand, the trouble is, in crucifixion, a body sags downwards on the nail, and there is not enough tissue here that's tough enough to hold the weight, and over a few hours the nail would cut out.

So the place where the nail was put by the Romans was one of two places. It was either through the wrist there, or between the two long bones of the forearm there.

So it's either wrist or forearm. So it's at that level that the nail went through.

Now, you might doubt me, but I want to prove it to you that the nail went through the hands, but it was actually the wrist. can you look up for me Acts chapter 12?

[25 : 40] And I want to read you just a few verses, because I realize I may be challenging some people's long-held belief about where the nails were.

I'm going to read verses 6 and 7 of Acts chapter 12. this is when Peter is in prison.

His friend, the apostle James, has been executed by Herod with the sword. Peter is going to be executed. The church is praying for him. Peter is in chains in Herod's prison, and there are chains on his ankles, around his wrists.

And then it says, now reading at verse 6, now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers bound with chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison.

And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He, the angel, struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, get up quickly.

[26 : 53] And the chains fell off his hands. That tells us that the underlying Greek word that we translate hands refers to more than just what in modern English is a hand.

It refers to a hand and part of an arm. And the problem we've got here is that one language doesn't translate its anatomical terms well into another.

And those of you who have Gaelic will have an advantage here because you know that the description of parts of the human body are different compared to English. You've got a term that encompasses a foot and a leg.

It puts the two together. And Greek does the same with the hand. It talks about a hand and an arm. So that's why the translation always comes out as the nails was in the hands when actually it was in the wrist.

Now crucifixion was finally got rid of as a form of execution by the emperor Constantine in 327 AD. So about 300 years after Jesus.

[28 : 10] So the trouble is it has not been used as a form of legal execution in 1700 years. So even theologians hundreds of years later did not actually have personal experience of how crucifixion was done.

But just so you know it's the wrists. Now if we come back to our reading why is that important? Why is that important? Remember as Jesus walked along the road he was wearing some outer garment and as his hands hung down his wrists were covered but his hands were free.

When he went in for the meal and remember the crucial bit is it was in the breaking of the bread that Jesus was known to them. And what I want to offer you tonight is that it was in the breaking of the bread they saw the nail holes.

Now watch what happens. My wrists are covered at this point. If I break something but then hand it to you the wrists appear. And for the first time they would have seen the nail holes.

Try that yourself later right? Breaking bread the wrists are covered and you hand it to someone and the wrists are revealed. And it says they recognised him at that point.

[29 : 42] Their lives had changed forever. They thought they had lost Jesus for a lifetime and now they had found him for an eternal lifetime.

They had started off grieving for one who they loved dearly, their best friend on that journey. By the end of what we've read here they had gone from the deepest grief to the highest joy and been

reunited with the very one they were grieving for.

They had met the risen Lord Jesus and they had been, and this is the wonderment, they had been taught by the living Lord Jesus. So in summary about the recognition what I want to say to you is that the recognition and this is only a suggestion, something for you to think about, the recognition comes down to the fact that there was something that Jesus said and that was in the blessing and there was something in what Jesus did in revealing the nail holes.

So there was something that he said and something that he did. that's the end of the second part of the sermon and now for the brief third part and that's in a way what I want you to take forward into this coming week.

With Jesus it's always down to something that he said and something that he did. Jesus makes promises and then he backs them up, backs them up completely with his own authority, backs them up with his own authority, an authority confirmed by giving his life on the cross, giving his life on the cross and that in the same way that he spoke to the people of his day about being the bread of life and about welcoming any who believed in him and welcoming them and saying that they would never be cast out, that they would never be hungry, they would never be thirsty and on the last day they would be raised up in resurrection as well.

[32 : 06] Those are promises he makes to us now. This is living word from a living Lord Jesus, a risen Lord Jesus to living beings, us, men, women, boys and girls, but not just words with words are also action, something that he said and something that he did.

The something that he did, think always of the nail holes, track that back to the cross, see what he did there and notice something that he said, one of the last things he said on the cross, remember when he said, it is finished, finished, it loses something in English, but in the Greek it uses a tense we don't use in English, something called the perfect tense, which means it is finished and remains and forever will remain completely and utterly finished.

This can never be undone. The trouble is modern languages don't have the same force that the original has, but this is what he then offers to you.

a right relationship with the living God through himself, with all those things in our lives, all those sins that would separate us from the living God, properly accounted for and paid for by him, paid for completely, and all that's asked of us, and this is where the transaction is so remarkable, all that's asked of us is for us to confess our sin, repent for it, and call upon Jesus as our own personal Saviour and Lord.

Amen. And that's the end of the sermon. Shall we stand for a very short prayer? Amen. Sovereign Lord, we thank you that we have been found in this place this night.

[34 : 18] Please inspire us from your word and inspire us with your very self and help us that as we study your word, as we think upon your word, that we discover you through these most remarkable words, and help us, Lord, to see that this is not a dry, dusty book that we have on our shelves, that here is living word from the living God to living beings, even the likes of us.

May all that we have done in this place this night have honoured and blessed you. And Lord, please, as we make our final singing and go our separate ways to our homes, please may your blessing go with us.

We ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.