

T GETHER

NewarkandSouthwellMethodist.org.uk

Thomas – doubting or believing

Revd Nathan Falla

Originally written for the Newark Advertiser “Credo”

Do you ever feel misunderstood? That people really do not get you, or have the completely wrong impression of you? Are you one of those people who likes proof, or with a niche joke needs it explaining to you? Well, you are in good company with one of the characters in the post-Easter story.

Easter Day was celebrated last Sunday, and although you may well have eaten by now any Easter eggs that you were given, in the church, Easter is a season that lasts for 7 weeks. During this time different post-resurrection encounters are explored, starting with Thomas. Thomas was one of Jesus’ followers, but tradition has not been kind to him and has nicknamed him doubting Thomas.

The story goes (recorded in the Bible in John’s Gospel, chapter 20 and verses 19-29) that on the evening of Easter Day Jesus appears to all the disciples for the first time, but for some reason Thomas is not there. He misses seeing Jesus risen from the dead. No doubt the others really play on this and make Thomas feel terrible that he missed the event of the century! Thomas says that unless he sees Jesus with his own eyes and sees the marks from the nails then he will not believe.

I can really sympathise with Thomas. The other disciples had seen Jesus; they had seen the scars of the crucifixion to really prove that it was Jesus, why couldn’t he?! After all, people coming back to life was not a regular occurrence, so wanting to see proof seems perfectly reasonable. The story goes on that a week later they were all gathered (including Thomas) and Jesus appears again. Thomas encounters the risen Jesus; he is invited to see the scars, and Jesus says “Do not doubt and believe.” Thomas sees, believes and then declares “My Lord, and my God.”

One of the central aspects of faith is belief. As a Christian I believe in Jesus, I believe that Jesus was a man in history and I believe that Jesus is at work in the lives of all who accept him and seek to follow him today, including my life. I would want to say that it is good to have questions, and it is not wrong to have doubts, because it is in the questioning and the wrestling with doubts where faith grows. As a minister I do not have all the answers and I am always learning more about God.

I am on a journey of learning and discovery, a journey that I travel in hope, knowing Jesus the resurrection and the life. You are invited on the journey that one day, like Thomas, we may all declare that Jesus is my Lord and my God.



Walking and eating

Online Circuit Service Sermon | Revd Peter Hibberts

Reading: Luke 24:13-35

1. Online Service

Join us from 10:30am on Sunday for our online Circuit Service which this week is led by Revd Peter Hibberts.

Find it on the 'Newark and Southwell Methodist Circuit' YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/NewarkSouthwellMethodistCircuit>) why not invite a friend to watch it with you and share the link with them on your social media or by email!

2. Zoom Opportunities

If you're feeling isolated, are not ready to be face to face yet, or can't, but are happy to meet on Zoom, there is a weekly coffee time at 3pm on a Monday run by Charles Street but open to all, email Mel Watson for more details: mellwatson42@gmail.com.

There is also still a weekly Zoom fellowship called 'The Gathering' which is part of Southwell Methodist Church and run by Philip and Francine Holmes. You'd be most welcome, contact Philip to connect: philipholmes8100@gmail.com.

3. Radio Services

BBC Radio 4 (Also [online](#).)
08:10am – 24th April

Promin Nadii – Ray of Hope

In countries which keep the Julian Calendar, which includes the Orthodox churches and churches in Ukraine today is Easter Day.

The preacher is Bishop to the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of the Holy Family of London, the Right Revd Kenneth Nowakowski, with prayers for Ukraine by senior church leaders in the UK including the Archbishop of Westminster and the Bishop of London. Can the Easter message enable Christians to cling to the hope of resurrection even in Ukraine?

4. Radio Nottingham

Listen every Sunday, at 8am, to a live church service on BBC Radio Nottingham. (Online or on 95.1-103.8 MHz FM for free.)

I recently had the opportunity to go for three nights, child-free to the Lake District, just my wife, myself and Wesley, our 11-month-old cocker spaniel. It was amazing. We'd become jaded by the last few months and badly needed a break. (Thanks must go to Katie's parents, who came and held the fort here in Southwell, allowing us to escape!)

We stayed in a beautiful spa hotel near Keswick and, on our second full day, walked up Catbells. If you've ever walked in the Lakes you'll know that they are absolutely beautiful. Catbells gives you instant views of Derwent Water from beginning to end. As Katie and I walked it (and scrambled some bits!) we had time to give our lives an airing and process some of where we found ourselves. That evening we booked an Italian restaurant in Keswick and had a beautiful meal. We've been married for nineteen years this year, but date nights are still special as that time to connect over a meal is seldom found in any other way!

Actually, as I reflect on this week's passage, framed very soon after the resurrection of Jesus, this is exactly what happens: the two disciples walk...and eat. (Actually, they too may have been husband and wife! One is called Cleopas and in John's gospel Mary the wife of Cleopas is mentioned as being at the crucifixion - were they the two that walked to Emmaus?) They must have been jaded from the preceding few weeks. What a whirlwind and what a crescendo! They had probably followed Jesus' ministry for a while, seen amazing things and then witnessed the revolutionary excitement of Palm Sunday, the action in the temple, then the devastation of the cross; and now the rumour is that Jesus has been seen - alive again! Perhaps they needed time to take it all out and give it an airing. They needed to make sense of it all, reflect, process. Actually, you hear them explain to Jesus (although they don't yet know it's him) how they are trying to fit this into their existing thoughts, dreams and expectations, 'we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel,' they say.

I would love to have walked with them on this journey. What happens next must have been the most incredible Bible study of all time, "...beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Wouldn't you love to have heard what was said, how it fitted together, what emphasis Jesus gave? It makes me wonder if we should Bible study as we walk!

Actually, what it tells me is that when we struggle to process what goes on around us and when we feel we're losing sight of where Jesus is in it all we first need to walk again with Him for a while.

You may ask, 'how?' and I'm sorry, I don't have a silver bullet solution. Some do so in meditation (breathing, being silent, asking God's Holy Spirit to speak with them) some through scripture (reading aloud, re-reading, studying commentaries) some through listening to teaching (on the internet for example) - some simply walk in expectation that Jesus is with them and see what happens! Actually, I don't think there's any substitute

for meeting with another Christian and simply unpacking the confusion. The beauty here is that neither is a the teacher or knowledgeable one (how could they be?) they are simply meeting in mutual confusion - Christ does the rest.

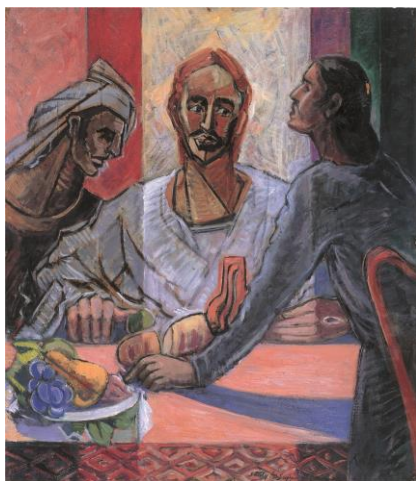
During the lockdown, meetings were difficult to hold and in one of my churches it was clear that we had some challenges of direction that I couldn't handle on my own. I called a member of the church who I had felt somehow drawn to and we simply agreed to walk together. We talked a great many things over and prayed together (though we didn't close our eyes as we walked) and I found that process really spirit-filled. I believe Jesus walked with us on that track and it was both restorative and informative to us both.

What are you struggling with at the moment? What in your life, or the world, is causing you to lose sight of Christ, his plan for you or the world or perhaps there are things that are growing up around you and crowding your ability to process it all in the framework of your faith in God. Maybe you need to find a Christian friend and go for a walk!

The end of this account is also beautiful. In *'The Miracle Maker'* the animated account of Jesus' ministry, they show this event and have the two experiencing a flash-back at the point when Jesus breaks the bread. He holds it really high, and in doing so they remember Jesus holding it high previously; they recognise him again and in an instant, he's gone.

When was the last time you ate with a Christian brother or sister? That too has been a rarity in this time. Many of us have become estranged and perhaps we need to eat together again. (I don't think Katie and I had become estranged but as parents of four, our exchanges are often amidst the semi-chaos of family life and our one-to-one exchanges only come in over-tiredness of late evenings, after the kids are in bed. Our meals on our recent trip could have been life a reconnection. They were precious.)

Perhaps you need to reconnect with Jesus. Take some time out. Ask God's Holy Spirit to reveal what Jesus would say to you on the walk, then perhaps you can break your own bread and as you take it and eat it, know that he is with you, often unseen; he is always with us.



Goodness, what if we all had an experience of the resurrected Jesus like the one during that meal, following the road to Emmaus? What if our hearts burned within us? What if next time we gathered, we found each other, assembled together and said, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to [us]." Look at what happened next - the world was never the same again

The Supper at Emmaus by Roy de Maistre from The Methodist Modern Art Collection.

Prayer Space

Almighty Father,
in your great mercy
you gladdened the disciples
with the sight of the risen Lord:
give us such knowledge
of his presence with us,
that we may be strengthened
and sustained by his risen life
and serve you continually
in righteousness and truth;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Common Worship – slightly adapted

Gracious God, reveal your presence
to all who need you right now.
Those who are struggling;
those who are confused;
those who are alone.
We think of those place in the world
where despair looms
and people may struggle to find you,
but we know that you are there,
in the midst, and you hold them.
Hold us too when we need you.
Reveal to us where you would have us walk
as your feet, serve as your hands,
encourage as your voice. Amen.

Lord God,
you promise to be our fellow traveller
through life and to meet us
in the face of friend and stranger.
We confess that we are lost
if we do not walk this road with you.
We are not made to be
without your company on the journey.
Lord God, make us ever aware of your
missing presence and draw near to us.
Help us to see you,
in the faces of the friends and strangers
that travel with us.
Help us to hear you,
speaking words of peace
and unfolding your truth from the Bible.
Help us to welcome you,
into all our conversations
and into our homes.
Lord God, most of all, we ask you to stay
with us and become our lifelong guest,
to break bread at our table and to remind
us of your everlasting love.

Lord God, may we not miss you on our
journey, but see you,
at every turn of the road,
in every unfolding of the story,
and with every breaking of bread.

from Roots

Hymns and worship songs

Songs chosen for inclusion in the YouTube service by Ian Walker of Southwell Methodist Church:

See, what a morning – SOF 2020, StF 309

O Lord, the clouds are gathering – SOF 429

The Spirit lives to set us free – SOF 1555, StF 397

Will you come and follow me – SOF 1120, StF 673

Please click on the song title to access YouTube clip of each song.

Discussion Questions

Church is best done together but we know that this isn't always possible - particularly if you're housebound, isolated or even shielding. But why not contact a friend and arrange to watch the church service online or read the newsletter simultaneously and get in touch by telephone afterwards to talk about it. Below are some questions that might help you to reflect together!

1. Where is the most interesting, exciting or picturesque place you've ever walked?
2. Who is your favourite person to walk with and why? (Or do you prefer to walk alone?)
3. How do you make space to walk with Jesus?
4. When have you felt Jesus with you or speaking to you as you've walked or reflected? Or what are you trying to process at the moment?
5. Who might you need to re-connect with after a while?
6. How can you make space to connect with Jesus?

Pray that God will walk with you by His spirit in the coming weeks/months to reveal his heart to you.

EMAIL PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like to join a prayer chain and receive prayer requests or to submit a prayer request (with permission of the recipient) please get in touch with Colin Beckett colin1244@gmail.com. It is for those of any church or none!



In person worship across the Circuit during the next four weeks...

March - May 2022		24th Apr 2nd of Easter	1st May 3rd of Easter	8th May 4th of Easter Vocations Sunday	15th May 5th of Easter Christian Aid
Balderton	8:30 am				
	10:30 am	Ward T	K Trowbridge	LA	Bates
	6:00 pm		4pm TBC		
Charles Street	8:30 am				
	10:30 am	LA	A Trowbridge	L Blatherwick	Mathews
	6:00 pm	Falla	Gibson	Bates	Hibberts
Collingham	10:45 am	Pearce	Hall	Bates	Morley ChAid / US
Elston	10:45 am	at Long Bennington JS / 10.30am		Hibberts HC	
Hope Community	10:30 am	Falla at B'gate	Gibson at B'gate	Falla Breakfast at H'ville / 9am	Dalby at B'gate
Long Bennington	10:30 am	Hibberts JS	LA	Dalby T	L Blatherwick
North End	6:00 pm	Hart	Mathews	Falla	Bates
North Muskham	10:30 am	Dalby T		Hart HC	
	2:00 pm		Falla Café		Hibberts Café
Southwell	10:30 am	Hart	Falla	LA	Hibberts HC
	Other	Hibberts Fringe / 6pm	Adams 4pm	Hibberts PicC / 2pm	Morley HC / 4pm
Sutton-on-Trent	10:30 am	Hardy US	Winnington	LA Breakfast / 9am	Falla HC

For full plan, visit the Circuit Website:
<https://www.newarkandsouthwellmethodist.org.uk/newsroom/march-may-plan.html>
 or contact your local church

District News | Thank you & Bon voyage

Please hold Revd Loraine Mellor and her family in your prayers as they prepare to move to Cornwall. Loraine has been Chair of the Nottingham and Derby District for 12 years and has served with great energy, passion, wisdom, and distinction.

Loraine is to be stationed early to her next post as Chair of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly District.

From the end of April until September our Deputy Chairs Revd Kate Strange and Rev Andrew Charlesworth, will offer leadership in the District, together with the District team and supported by Rev Dr Helen Cameron, the Chair of Northampton District.