

Sermon Notes Luke 24:36-52 (part 2)

Our Forward Focus (annual meeting) this year, as we start to come out of lockdown, is a good time to re-visit what Jesus commands us to do. So let's look at verses 47-49.

1. What we are to do.

- Many churches have different ministry priorities: work with the homeless, elderly, refugees, youth, international students and so on.
- Those can be really good ministries but what should **we** do?
- Jesus commissions his church – our task is to **preach in his name to all nations**

- That means our God-given mission/purpose/task is to deliver a message
- Notice it says: **'In Jesus' name'** – what does that mean?
- It means it is a message from Jesus with Jesus' authority.
 - Imagine a Head Teacher sends a message to be read out to their school
 - It doesn't matter if the person reading it is the deputy head, the caretaker or the youngest pupil – it is a message from the Head so it comes with his authority. The person reading it is not at liberty to change the message, simply to pass it on.
- There may be many other good things we are to do but the mission of the church, the central task we must do is deliver a message.
 - We are to take it **to the world** – to all peoples, nations, races, ethnicities, colours, ages and religions.
 - Just pause for a moment – are there people you consider you couldn't or shouldn't take the message to?
 - Jesus sends us to the world with his message

2. The message from Jesus.

- The message is in v47 – **Repentance for the forgiveness of sins**

So that means in order to be forgiven a person **must** repent – but what does it mean to repent? We need to pause on this because it is clearly very important...

What repentance **doesn't** mean...

- **Stopping being bad and starting to be good**
 - In Luke 3:8 John the Baptist calls on people to 'produce fruit in keeping with repentance' and then lists various ways people should change their lives by stopping being bad and starting to be good. So those are the **fruits** of repentance not the repentance itself.

- **Being more religious**
 - Lots think that Christianity is primarily about religious activity – prayer, church services, communion etc.
 - So they think repentance/becoming a Christian means adding in those religious activities.
 - But that isn't repentance! There were religious people Jesus met who were not ok and who needed to repent (take Nicodemus in John 3 as an example).

Repentance is far deeper than a change of behaviour or just becoming more religious.

So what is it? Jesus tells a story which shows the response he is looking for.

- It is in Luke 15 – the prodigal sons (have a read – Luke 15:11-32)
- The younger son shows us repentance when he comes to his senses and returns to his father.
- He doesn't merely stop doing bad things (sleeping with prostitutes etc) nor does he get his life together, nor does he resolve to make something of himself or start doing work for charities.
- He turns back to his father
- So to repent is humbly to turn to God.

But that is hard because we need to start by saying: **I have sinned**

- I have been wrong, I have made a mess of things, I have rebelled against you, God.
- We need to see the bad we have done but more importantly that we have lived our lives distanced from God, taking what God gives but rejecting God.
- And we need to grasp that **we can't restore the relationship ourselves**
- We need God to forgive us, to pay our debt for us
- And God gladly does, though it cost him the death of his Son.

***'Forgiveness of sin comes to those who stretch out a needy hand to Jesus, clinging to him alone and recognising without him there is no hope.'* (In Bock's commentary on Luke's Gospel)**

- But maybe you think: I don't think I'm that bad, I can't see myself in the younger son
- Then read about the older son...he felt the same as you!
- But as you read Luke 15 you see, though the older son is very good and has stayed at home, he is still distanced from his Father (he won't come into the party)
- Some distance themselves from God by being bad, others by being good and thinking that God owes them, but **all** are distant and all need to turn humbly to God.

And do you see how repentance leads to the 'fruit of repentance'

- Do you think the prodigal son lived as he had before?
- No – his life would be completely transformed
- Because of the father's grace, he now lives as his father's son
- So if we have repented we no longer live independent of God but depending on Him day by day, obedient to Him and glorifying Him.

So I need to ask:

- Have you repented? Have you turned to God? We should make sure we have responded to Jesus' message before taking it to others.
- If you are not sure, it would be best to make sure – this is far too important to leave in doubt. How about taking some time with God now, maybe using the words similar to the prodigal in Luke 15:18-19.

That is the message we are to take to the world - it is a daunting task, isn't it?

- Jesus told the disciples to wait until they were clothed with power.
- And through Acts they kept coming together to pray and were emboldened to go and proclaim
- And so we need to pray that the Holy Spirit, who all believers have, would fill us.
- So will you take some time to pray for God to strengthen you and all of us in the Emmanuel Church family to go and take this message to those we know?