

“Going somewhere” a sermon based on Luke 24:13-35 and Acts 2:14a, 36-41 preached by Kerry Enright of Knox Church, Dunedin, New Zealand on 26 April 2020.

It can be accessed from the Knox Church YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYksSjG0llf00NeogNIGs7A>.

or from the Knox Church website – <https://knoxchurch.net/>

I have a hunch that if Jesus asked each of us now “what are you discussing”, we could talk for a while - COVID-19 and its impact.

Some people are anguished— we worked hard to build up our business, long hours, tight budgets, and we had hoped. Some are disappointed – we planned this project or this trip or this extension for months if not years ... we had hoped. Some are frustrated – we want to visit our relative in the retirement village or friend in the hospital or person in prison, and we know they feel alone ... we had hoped. Some feel unsafe – we know we can carry a virus without knowing and it can come into our homes and our workplaces ... we had hoped. Some are reflecting – so if this virus spreads so quickly and causes this level of disruption, and we are told that this is not the big one, will the next virus cause more disruption, more loss ... we had hoped. And the church wondering what kind of church we will be after lockdown.

The two on the road to Emmaus were so absorbed in conversation, they didn’t recognise the one who joined them. They had hoped Jesus was the rescuer of Israel, but now he was dead and his body had gone – we had hoped. On the way, they tried to make sense of what had happened and of the strange news of his appearance. They were walking and talking, but going nowhere. What happened did not fit how they assumed life would be. Much of how we live relies on assumptions that are increasingly being questioned. That scientific knowledge will solve our biggest problems. That our economic system is good enough to keep people in work and share wealth equitably. That our political systems will produce the best decisions. That here in Aotearoa our distance from trouble-spots keeps us safe. And if we are careful, we can be safe at home.

Climate change raises the same kind of questions. It challenges the idea that if we individually live ethically and responsibly, we'll be ok. Instead we have learned again that it is how we live together than makes for safety. That how people live in Wuhan or New York or ... affects our wellbeing. That is how connected we are. A wider world.

Jesus is determined to help us see wider. He opens out the people walking to Emmaus to the wider picture, the long story, the God story. He reminds them that God has walked with them over hundreds of years, and he puts himself in that story. Koyama calls God a three mile an hour God, one who has always walked with us, at our pace, always an Emmaus God. Jesus confronts their narrow reference points that trap them, that cause them to go round and round, saying the same things time after time, going nowhere. Reread your Bibles, you fools, he says. God has always been reaching out to you, entering darkness, opening tombs, raising people up. This is not god as part of your story; see yourself as part of God's story, a very different perspective. It was an exciting view. And it was liberating and energising, because it released what they had been holding on to and what had been holding on to them. Didn't our hearts burn with us?

They longed for him to stay, and they uttered three significant words. Stay with us ... There is much in those three words. The Christian faith is about learning to live with God all our days. Stay with us. Three words that open us to the divine presence, to wider insight and deeper connection – a walk that goes somewhere. Stay with us so that what traps us bursts open. He breaks the bread and they recognise him. Perhaps because they recognise their own brokenness. Perhaps because it represents the way he has already broken open their worlds. Recognising him, releases their pent-up energy. So they walk back to where they came from, with a different spirit. To the place that represented darkness and fear. They had the courage to go back there, Jerusalem. And to find others – different people, different place, different way, but who had encountered the living Christ. Isn't this what church is? Very different people encountering the same risen Christ.

I find it startling that the next step, according to the book of Acts, is baptism. If this is the new world of Jesus feels like, why not be immersed in it. Baptizo. Live in it, with the Jesus who walks with us and stays with us and takes us somewhere as people of the long story. May Jesus stay with you, that you may live with God all your days.

KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

*Captivated by the vision of the realm of God,
made known in Jesus, given in grace*



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