

St Peter, Mount Park, Ealing
Sunday 23rd April 2023
Easter 3

Let the entire house of Israel know.

Between the readings today from The Acts of the Apostle and the First Letter of Peter we have two aspects of the story of salvation. In the First Letter of Peter salvation is concerned or identified with an internal, personal engagement with God. The pericope from Acts reflects the public response to our salvation. Both of which are drawn together in the fabulous story of the conversation on the road to Emmaus.

The First letter of Peter is reflecting on the change within us which results in a change of lifestyle, a change in attitude to both the world and our neighbour. The writer of Peter is concerned with expressing what happens to us when we accept the Lord into our lives as Lord and Saviour, when we accept his saving love into our own hearts.

I feel very fortunate. I can remember when this happened to me. I remember that very night when I opened my heart to the Lord back in April 1977 and I can remember the feeling of renewal within me; the release of the old self into a new being. This is not a one off thing either. There are other occasions I can cite like the time I stood in the car park of Plymouth Polytechnic and challenged God, "Lord, you want me to be a priest...do something about it!" And here I am. When we realise God is with us these things happen all the time. We ask and in his way God answers.

On the road to Emmaus, the travellers invited the stranger on the road to join them. They listened to his words and recognised him, not just in the breaking of the bread but in the way their hearts burnt with passion for the good news as the scriptures were unfolded for them and they understood what the life, death and resurrection of Jesus meant for them and for all the world.

From the Acts of the Apostles we hear how the crowd asked Peter what they should do when they had listened to his words. "Repent and be baptised" was his reply. He didn't stop there. This outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace is accompanied with witnessing to the truth of God's love for us. For Peter the question is what good is it to receive the saving love of God if you don't proclaim it? So he tells the crowd, "Let the entire nation of Israel know with certainty that God has made Jesus Christ both Lord and Messiah."

The Emmaus travellers, realising what had happened to them, wasted no time and left for Jerusalem to tell the disciples there what had happened to them. This burning within their own hearts fired them to go with immediacy to share this good news. They knew in themselves that Jesus had risen from the dead. They had been told how this fulfilled the words of God given us in the Old Covenant and now, firmly in the New they had to tell in Peter's words, 'The entire nation'.

One of the first female Salvationists, Pamela Shepherd, had had a hard start to life, when she joined the Salvation Army she was sent back to her native Wales to set up Salvation Army work in Aberdare. She remonstrated, "I can't preach, what shall I say?" and she was told, "just tell the people what the Lord has done for you." This is what Peter told the crowds to do, this is what Cleopas and his fellow traveller did. This is what Jesus wants us to do. Following on from Peter, Cleopas and his fellow traveller and the many Christians that have gone before us like Pamela Shepherd these words are for us too.

Through the blood of Jesus we are born again – daily. As we live the life of Faith we are changed daily, from glory to glory. It is this truth, this power we are called to witness to. And it is through this change, however gentle and gradual, however dramatic and immediate, we are encouraged to share this story with others. If you accept Jesus as Lord, if you receive him into your life as your saviour, if your relationship with Jesus means anything, in the words of Peter, "let the entire nation know"