

20-04-03 PM - Beginning with Moses - Luke 24:13-35

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Preacher: Steve Brown

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 20th of April 2003.

The preacher is Steve Brown. His sermon is entitled Beginning with Moses and is based on Luke chapter 24 verses 13 to 35.

Well, most of the youth here will know that I'm a huge Lord of the Rings fan because before the movies even were known to be coming out, I'd read the book completely, all three books, and then just before the movies came out, I read it again.

And I've got a movie poster, a huge one, in my lounge room, hanging up there with Frodo there, looking very serious with the ring there in front of him.

And I've also seen the movies several times. I've seen The Fellowship of the Ring four times and I've seen the second one, The Two Towers, three times. But that's nothing special, is it?

[1 : 12] That's nothing special. Because now most people are familiar with the Lord of the Rings. Most of us. And even though most people are familiar with it now, unlike me, they don't know where the story actually started.

You see, it didn't start in the book The Lord of the Rings. It all started in a book called The Hobbit. Now, in The Hobbit, the main character is a hobbit. Don't ask me to explain what a hobbit is because I don't know what it is really.

But the main character, Bilbo, he finds a little ring, a little golden ring, sort of like my wedding ring, in the deep, dark caves under the misty mountains.

And this ring has some amazing characteristics. You see, when Bilbo puts the ring on, he slips it on. He becomes invisible.

Also, after several years of owning the ring, he realises that he's not ageing. In fact, the owner of the ring is immortal. It's quite clear that this ring is very special.

[2 : 21] But Bilbo and his special friend, his wise friend, Gandalf the Wizard, they don't recognise just how special this ring is. And all through the book, Bilbo just happily uses it to get out of hard situations where he needs to all of a sudden become invisible and escape.

You see, he doesn't recognise the ring's power. He doesn't recognise that the ring actually wants him to use it, that the ring is actually trying to get back to its dark master and it's just using him.

And Gandalf the Wizard, his wise friend, allows Bilbo to keep the ring and use it. You see, they both fail to recognise the true significance of the ring.

And when it comes to Easter, we find that these disciples fail to recognise. Have a look in verse 13.

Now on that same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking to each other about all the things that had happened.

[3 : 38] And while they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognising him. You see, for these two disciples, Easter was difficult to recognise.

They fail to recognise the significance of Easter. Because there they are, on the road, walking along, discussing.

Discussing what's just happened several days, or the last couple of days, what's happened to Jesus. They're confused and perplexed. They're wondering and questioning, debating amongst themselves, going around in circles in their discussion about what's just happened.

When all of a sudden, a stranger comes up and starts walking with them. And at this point, we're supposed to think, us the readers, are supposed to think, come on you idiots, wake up.

Don't you recognise him? Just open your eyes and see him. Look, he's walking right there with you. You see, we're supposed to feel a little bit frustrated by them.

[4 : 51] They should have recognised him. That's why the writer, Luke, gives Jesus away immediately in verse 15. He says, Jesus approached them, walked up to them.

He gives him away because he wants us, the readers, to realise just how stupid these two disciples are. He wants us, the readers, to see how these two disciples fail to recognise Jesus at Easter.

They should have recognised him immediately. They were talking about him. They were discussing the things that had happened to him over the last week. But they're unable to recognise him.

They're unable to see him. In fact, it says they're kept or prevented from seeing him for who he was. There's something blocking their ability to recognise Jesus.

And for these two disciples, you see, Easter was difficult to recognise. They failed to recognise Jesus. But today, you and me, we don't fail, do we?

[6 : 04] We don't fail like them. We don't fail to recognise the significance of Easter. I mean, Easter's quite easy to recognise, isn't it? Because I don't know about you, but I notice on Easter Friday, just gone, good Friday, there's just thousands and thousands of cars exiting Melbourne.

And I know it must be Easter. Because they're all headed to get away from it all. They pick up their homes and they sort of deposit them elsewhere with a lot of other people and they move the rat race from here and deposit it somewhere nice.

Easter's about holidays, rest and relaxation in front of the telly down at Torquay. Easter's about going fishing or surfing down the surf coast.

You see, we recognise the significance of Easter, don't we? because it's easy to recognise because it's about friends and family because they all just pop in lunch and dinner because Easter's all about children and family and friends.

It's about food and chocolate and children running around doing Easter egg hunts. It's obvious the significance of Easter because everyone's nice and generous all of a sudden.

[7 : 29] It's about charity and the Good Friday Children's Hospital appeal. Easter's about being a good bloke and giving a donation, helping those less fortunate than we are. We don't fail to recognise the significance of Easter because we go to church.

You know, there are a lot more cars in church parking lots at Easter. At Easter the churches are full.

We all go there because the family says, well, we go to Easter, we go to church on Easter. Easter's obvious, you can't miss the significance of Easter and we don't. But for these two disciples, they fail to recognise and they should have known better.

They should have recognised Jesus immediately because it's obvious. It's obvious to everyone. Just like it's obvious to Gandalf, the wise wizard in The Lord of the Rings.

You see, he should have recognised the ring straight off. It's obvious that Bilbo's ring has these special characteristics, these special qualities, these special characteristics and qualities that sort of give it away as the most significant weapon in Middle Earth.

[8 : 54] and Gandalf should have recognised the obvious because he had all the facts at his disposal. You see, there was libraries all over the land of Middle Earth full of information about the ring, about the history of it, how it was used and its power and he'd read them all.

And he had other wise wizards to go and ask who were steeped in the law of the ring. You see, it's obvious but he fails to recognise that this is the ring of power, that this is the one ring to rule them all.

And when he finally, after 60 years of missing the point, he realises the significance of the ring and he curses himself for his stupidity and he realises that he's missed it all along for 60 years until it's almost too late.

And that's what the Lord of the Rings is all about. You see, for Cleopas and his mate on the road to Emmaus, they should have recognised Jesus immediately because it's obvious.

It's obvious to everyone. Just listen to how obvious it is from verse 17. And Jesus said to them, what are you discussing with each other while you walk along?

[10 : 20] And they stood still and looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?

He asked them, what things? Don't you just love the way Jesus just brings them in? He's great at asking questions. And they replied, and look how obvious it is.

The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet in word and deed, deed and word before God and all the people, mighty in word and deed, and how the chief priests and leaders had handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.

God and he had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things have taken place. Moreover, some of the women of our group astounded us.

They were at the tomb early this morning and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who had said that he was alive.

[11 : 24] Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found that it was just as the women had said, but they did not see him. They were seeing him.

They had all the facts, you see. It's even on their own lips, all the facts about Jesus, all the information required. They had all the pieces about Jesus' death and resurrection.

They had no excuses. for not recognising Jesus because it's obvious. Last year, I had no excuse.

I forgot Melissa's birthday. You see, I've been married to Melissa now for four years and you'd think by now that I'd know better, wouldn't you?

Because the thing is, I always get reminders from Melissa at least two months before about her birthday coming up every week at least, probably more often, about my birthday's coming up and I want this.

[12 : 36] And I even know the date off by heart. It's November 7. And I know this because my mum's birthday is November 5 and I didn't forget her birthday. Okay. big mistake.

But last year I forgot. It was very embarrassing. I missed her birthday altogether and it was obvious because I had all the info required.

There's just no excuse for that. I knew the date. I'd been reminded by Melissa many times I should have known. I'd missed the obvious.

You see, the disciples, they have no excuse either, do they? See, they have all the facts about Jesus. They have all the pieces about his death and his resurrection.

Just look. We'll go through all the facts in that passage. Look at the passage from verse 19.

[13 : 48] They knew that Jesus was a prophet, mighty in word and deed before God, and they didn't recognise him. They knew that Jesus was betrayed by the chief priests and leaders and that Jesus had actually predicted this all through the gospel of Luke, and they didn't recognise him.

They knew that he had died on a cross, but they didn't recognise as he hung there he was doing it for them. They didn't recognise him. They knew that he had come to redeem Israel, but they didn't realise that he was doing that on the cross, redeeming them from their sin.

They knew it was the third day since his death, and that Jesus had said, on the third day I'll rise. You see, they should have been expecting him to turn up, waiting for him on that third day.

They didn't recognise him. And they knew that his body was missing. That should have just let the light go on, shouldn't it? Surely. They didn't recognise him.

They knew that angels had appeared to the women and said, he's alive, and they still don't get it. And they knew that some of the others had gone to check out the story of the women and said, well, it seems to be right.

[15 : 06] And they still don't get it. They miss the obvious, don't they? And Jesus himself approached them and walked with them and they didn't recognise him.

And even Jesus himself thinks, come on, you should know. Because look at verse 25. This is what he says to them. Oh, oh, in absolute exasperation, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared.

Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter his glory? Then, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Easter's obvious. It's just like the one ring to rule them all and Gandalf missing it. It's just like Melissa's birthday and me missing that. There's no excuse for missing the significance of Easter.

There's no excuse for missing the significance of Jesus' death on the cross for us. There's no excuse for missing the significance of Jesus' resurrection to bring us eternal life.

[16 : 18] There's just no excuse because it's obvious. And it's obvious because Jesus' death and his resurrection is foretold in the prophets.

in the writings of Moses. That's the Old Testament part of our Bible. And it's obvious because Jesus himself testifies about himself.

That's the New Testament part of our Bible. The point is if you read Moses and the prophets, the Old Testament, if you read Jesus' words in the Gospels and to his church, that's the New Testament.

If you read the Bible, it's obvious that Jesus had to come and suffer for us. It's obvious that he had to rise to new life to give us eternal life.

But today, we think Easter is pretty easy to recognise without the Bible, don't we? We think we never miss the significance of Easter.

[17 : 25] Easter is about going on holidays or enjoying friends and family or being nice and generous that Easter is about attending church. You see, often we're just like these disciples, aren't we?

We fail to recognise the obvious. We fail to recognise Jesus at Easter. Because we've got a similar problem to them.

we're kept from recognising or restrained from recognising because of our sinfulness. Because our eyes are always closed to God's revelation about himself.

Our gaze is always focused on earthly things rather than on God's plan and what God is telling us. That's just our natural state. We always do that.

we fail to understand God's plan in our finite human thinking and therefore we limit Easter as just a holiday or as just a time for friends and family or as just a time for being nice and generous or just going to church even.

[18 : 43] It takes more than human thinking to recognise Easter. you see just like Cleo and his mate on the road to Emmaus we need Jesus to open up the scriptures for us so that we recognise him.

Just like Cleo and his mate we need it takes Jesus walking with us revealing himself through God's word in our lives so that we recognise him and just like Cleo and his mate on the road to Emmaus it takes a personal encounter with Jesus face to face if you like so that we truly do recognise him.

we need the scriptures. We need Jesus to reveal himself through the scriptures because by ourselves we're blind.

We turn away from them naturally and Easter has no significance. Christianity for Christians becomes just a part of our lives rather than the whole of our lives.

verse 28 as they came near the village to which they were going he walked ahead as if he was going on but they urged him strongly saying stay with us because it's almost evening and the day is nearly over but he went so he went in to stay with them and when he was at the table with them he broke he took bread blessed it and broke it and gave it to them and then their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he vanished from their sight and they said to each other were not our hearts burning within us as he was talking to us on the road while he was opening the scriptures to us.

[20 : 41] You see the question tonight for us is this has Jesus opened the scriptures to you? has Jesus walked with you interpreting the things about himself in God's word?

Has Jesus come and broke bread with you? Has he fellowshiped with you in your life through his word?

Because if he has then you know what it's like to have your heart burn with passion for God because the disciples hearts burned didn't they?

Were not our hearts burning within us when he was talking to us on the road while he was opening the scriptures to us? Don't you want a burning heart?

The question tonight is has Jesus opened the scriptures? Has he walked with you? interpreting the things about himself has he come and broke bread with you?

[21 : 48] Fellowshiping with you? If he has then your eyes would have been opened because the disciples eyes were opened weren't they? Stay with us.

So he went in and he broke bread and gave it to them and their eyes were opened and they recognised him. Do you recognise the obvious at Easter?

That Jesus died for your sins and he raised a new life to give you eternal life? Tonight we've got no excuses.

We're just like the disciples. We know all the facts. We know he's a prophet mighty in word and deed. We know he was handed over to be crucified. We know he redeemed his people.

We know his body is still missing. We know the angels appeared to the women and said he's alive. We know that when people go and check it out today the facts they keep coming back and saying well it seems true.

[23 : 02] We have the Bible. We have Moses and the prophets and Jesus' own words to us. we have all the pieces. We have no excuse.

So tonight if you say you're a Christian but Easter has become a bit of a holiday opportunity or it's become just friends and family or an opportunity to be nice and generous or even worse Easter is just church.

If it's become like that then tonight you need to start reading again. Get your hands on your Bible. Ask Jesus to open the scriptures to you.

Ask him to make them understandable. Ask him to make himself obvious to you again. And don't be surprised if your heart starts to burn within you.

If you're not a Christian tonight, if you've been thinking about it perhaps, you might suspect that Easter is a little bit more than a holiday opportunity or friends and family.

[24 : 14] You might suspect that it's a bit more than being nice and generous or just going to church. I hope. If you suspect this then what you need to do tonight is to start reading.

get your hands on a Bible. And if you don't have one, just ask me after the service, I'll give you one because the church has Bibles to give away.

Get your hands on a Bible. Ask Jesus to open the scriptures to you. To make himself understandable, to make himself obvious to you.

And don't be surprised to feel your heart burning within you. And you placing your trust in the one who died for your sins. And the one who was raised so that you could have eternal life.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.