

Dear Friends,

Luke 24: 36-49

What happened on the evening of the day of the resurrection? We have been looking at what John's gospel says about that evening. Luke also tells the story. There are some things which are similar in both accounts. There are some which are different.

One of the big differences is in how the gift of the Holy Spirit is given. In John, on the day of the resurrection, Jesus breathes on his friends and says, "receive the Holy Spirit". They are given the Spirit straight away. In Luke, Jesus tells his friends that they are to wait for the Spirit. For Luke, the Spirit is given later on the day of Pentecost. He writes about that in his second book, The Acts of the Apostles.

The two versions remind us of two things both of which are important. John's story reminds you that Jesus has breathed upon and given you the Spirit. You have been baptised and filled with the Spirit. You look back on the experience of being given the Spirit as something that has happened in the past. You can be confident that the Spirit is with you now as a present reality.

By contrast, Luke's story reminds you that you need to stay open and ready to receive the Holy Spirit. You are always a beginner with the Spirit. There is always more of the Spirit to be given to you. You are always waiting to be filled as if for the very first time.

Your mission, therefore, should you choose to accept it, is to stay close to the source of the Spirit. That's where God wants to keep you. In one of the Psalms, God is described as the shepherd who leads you beside the still waters. Notice that, the shepherd does not lead you to the water and then away from the water. If the shepherd did that there would be times when you would be some distance from the water. What would happen then if you were thirsty and needed a drink? No, the shepherd leads you beside the still waters, keeping you close to the water, next to the water, so that whenever you are thirsty, whenever you need a drink, the water is immediately there for you. The shepherd therefore gets to know the geography of the area well. The shepherd carefully plans the route with your safety and needs as a priority. The shepherd is constantly thinking about how to make you flourish, about what will lead you to life in all of its fulness.

This is particularly true when it comes to keeping you close to the rivers of living water that are the Holy Spirit. God wants you to stay close to the source of the Spirit so that at every moment you may be filled with the Spirit.

In John's gospel, that means staying close to Jesus, close enough so that you can feel his breath and breathe it in yourself, so that his breath and yours mingle within you.

Luke gives instructions that will help you to ready yourself to receive the Spirit. He hears Jesus tell his friends to “wait in the city until they are clothed with power from on high”. What does it mean for you to wait for the Holy Spirit?

God bless you,

Tony