

Group Notes 26 September 2010
Back to Church Sunday

Welcome - Ice Breaker

What is your favourite season of the year?

Word - Sermon Summary: Read Luke 24:13-31

Have you ever heard anyone say, "I'm not a religious person but I'm very spiritual"? Do they mean:-

- Religious = *un*spiritual, so religious people are just going through the motions?
- I want the right to make up my own beliefs as I go along, not your ready made ideas?
- I'm worried what my friends would think if I go to church?

It was Back to Church Sunday on the 26th so I decided to talk about Christianity from the point of view of spirituality as that is where so many people are coming from these days. Christian spirituality is very simple – it's just walking with the risen Lord.

- Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead and he's with us now. What happened at Easter is formative for Christians at all times and place.
- So Christian spirituality is just doing what those two disciples were doing in our reading. They were on a journey and Jesus just came along and walked with them as they went along. We are all on a journey and Jesus wants to walk with us today.

How does that work out in practice?

- **Trust** – they couldn't recognise him and we too cannot see him, so we just have to trust Him.
- **Pain and sorrow** are part of the journey – these were grieving people. Sometimes you have to come to a low point to re-evaluate your life. Your spirituality needs to be strong in bad times as well as good.
- **The Cross** – Their journey began with the Cross, they were going home because Jesus had been crucified. We have a fuller picture of what the cross was about but we still need to come to terms with it in what it says about our need for mercy. Honesty about yourself is essential.
- **The Scriptures** – Jesus explained them as they went along.
- **Breaking of bread** – could be communion but could also be sharing a meal with someone...
- **Ordinary life** – talking with a friend or with a stranger, going for a walk, welcoming a guest, having dinner: Jesus walked with them through all these very ordinary experiences and He wants to be part of our Monday to Saturday lives as well as Sundays.
- **Their hearts** were "burning within them", v.32 – the awareness of His presence and love.
- **Resurrection** – this risen spirituality continues into eternal life!
- **They invited Jesus to come in.** This is not an unconditional or wishful thinking spirituality. It is dependent on inviting Jesus into our lives. He won't come in unless and until we ask Him.

Christianity is therefore not "religious" in the sense intended by many "spiritual" people. It is not fundamentally about robes, ceremonies, hierarchies, theological disputes, liturgies etc. It is a relationship with the Risen Lord rather than a religion.

Word 2 - Discussion Questions:-

It was Back to Church Sunday but the sermon was about spirituality...

- Many forms of spirituality today can seem fictitious, self-indulgent, superstitious and escapist. In what ways is Christian spirituality different?
- Is there any truth in "spiritual" people's criticisms of "religious" people?
- Is spirituality a purely personal and private thing?
- What role does the Church (as a fellowship of believers, not as a building or an institution) have in inspiring and sustaining people's spiritual lives?
 - Can you give examples from the story of the road to Emmaus?
 - Can you give examples from your own spiritual journey?

Worship Ideas

- Make a list of the very ordinary things you do from Monday to Saturday, eg have a shower, sit down to a meal, go to sleep etc.
- Discuss whether any of them could be signs and symbols of your walk with the Risen Lord.
- Give thanks that God cares about every aspect of our daily life and wants to make Himself known to us through them.
- Invite Him to rule as Lord in your daily life through the week ahead of you.

Works / Witness

Pray for anyone you know who came along on Back to Church Sunday. Might they respond to an invitation to something else, such as the Harvest Supper or the Alpha Course?