



E-Read



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Bournemouth Church Closing Sermon

Revd Clifford Curry writes:

I have been asked to send this sermon which is an approximation of what I preached at the Bournemouth Church at the closing service on February 16th when we had 64 people present. Following the service we had a photo display of people and events over the years in our church's life set out in the lounge, then the congregation tucked into a light buffet lunch in the church hall. There was a lovely buzz of conversation and reminiscence as the

food and company was enjoyed. There was a printed sheet with a brief history of the church from its beginning in 1948 for people to take away together with a listing of all those who had led worship since 1985. A memorable day of mixed emotions and great hymn singing. The hymns ending with "Guide me O thou great Jehovah"

“We had hoped He was the one
who was going to redeem Israel” Luke 24v21

Sometimes things just don't work out the way we hoped and we can feel sad, downcast, and dispirited. Today could be that kind of day as we hold our closing service and look back to all the good times of yesteryear, and the good people we shared them with, and the hopes we had for the future. OR - we can take a step back and look at the bigger picture that Cleopas and his companion were enabled to do as they walked away from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus. They had hoped Jesus would “redeem Israel”, but now their dreams were dashed as they tried to cope with his death. Is it any wonder they were unable initially, through probably tear filled eyes, to recognise the Saviour of the World, whose love and living presence nothing could alter even death itself.

Spiritually, in every end there is a new beginning. It is the message of the Cross and the central message of Christianity that whilst the things of earth are transient and temporary, the spiritual realities that give them life are permanent and enduring. Peter acclaims Jesus' Divinity and says “You are the Christ the Son of the living God” Jesus in response says “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church”. This foundation is not in the ground of earth but in the heart and soul. It is in the faith in Jesus that Peter represents. If the foundation is in the heart then THIS is where the Lord's church is to be built.

Cleopas and his companion had too small a vision of what the Lord would do. Their hope was too small not too large as they had feared. Today we too need a larger vision of the CHURCH and what it means to be a part of it. Buildings like this one give a sense of permanence, but today a far better way to think of this building is as a temporary encampment and not as a permanent home.

The time has come to recognise that the spiritual reality of faith in our hearts, minds and lives is, we hope and pray, a living part of that church that the Lord promised Peter he himself would build..... For us today the time has come for the Lord's church in us to break camp and step forward, as did the people Moses led. Like them, we are to follow our pillar of fire that is the Lord's loving spirit, and the pillar of cloud that is our, as yet, clouded understanding of His Holy Word. Today is a day for the church in us to step forward and accept, as Jesus himself taught, that “the seed must die” if real new growth is to take place.

The church is evolving, in a world that has been changing at an unprecedented rate for over 250 years since the Lord has made his second coming. It is time for the church as a community faithful to the message and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ - as people seeking to be open to the movement of His Holy Spirit - to move forward and leave behind old

certainties. Then, despite new doubts and difficulties to rediscover what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ. in new ways, in new places, with new people.

Let there be no mistaken understanding like that on the Emmaus road to cause us needless grief . We leave behind this building as the Israelites of old left behind the old encampment... but the CHURCH that Jesus promised Peter He would build is a spiritual reality. It is built of people and established in the human heart.- as it was in Peter's heart. We take it with us individually and collectively.

Through correspondence, it is pictured in the tabernacle tent made by the people Moses led, and this goes with us - the living CHURCH of love and faith, the inner sanctuary of insight and personal inspiration, and within, the ark where dwells the living presence of the Divine..... As the Israelites wove the beautiful tapestries of the tabernacle tent let us weave our faith into our thinking and actions to become for us an enduring spiritual reality of eternal and unmeasurable value.

This essence of the church at the core of our conscience **goes with us**, as surely as does the love of the one who made us. As we continue to follow Jesus on our wilderness journey, He will remake us more into His image and likeness. As we seek to serve his will, he will lead us to find our path to heavenly peace.

Let us today pray that the Lord will turn around any sense of pessimism in us, into inner peace and optimism, as surely as Cleopas and his companion were turned around to return to Jerusalem with new hope. Let us turn with renewed optimism to the hope we have offered to us in the vision of a New Jerusalem – not built out of brick and stone – but coming down out of Heaven from God. Its gates are open to all, as we look to the one who Cleopas and his companion met on the Emmaus Road - our Lord, who says “Behold I make all things new” Amen.