

Evotional

Date: 11th March 2007 (am).

Speaker: Neil Durling.

Message title: “Journey to the centre of God: Incarnation.”



Bible passage: Mark 16:1-8:

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' " Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

The message in brief:

Incarnation means “embodiment in human flesh”. Jesus came and lived amongst humanity. Compare him with the Roman Emperor of the time (Tiberius) who left Rome and hid on the island of Capri (3x5 miles) in Villa Jovis (7,000sq metres) and attended by thousands of slaves.

In the above passage Jesus has lived, died and been buried and Mark talks of a sunset and sunrise (endings and beginnings) as the women came and fled. What interests me is what comes between the women; the young man's (angelic being) message:

1: “Tell the disciples and Peter”:

It's good to know that the disciple's falling away is not the end of God's plans. Peter is named because he boasted about not fleeing (14:31) and then denied Jesus (14:66-72). He needed reassurance. The disciples, Peter, the three women at the tomb all fail. It seems we are all failures when it comes to following Jesus and yet he sticks with us.

2: “Go to Galilee to meet Jesus”:

Jesus promised them that he would meet them in Galilee (14:28). But they didn't go to Galilee initially: They hide in Jerusalem behind locked doors (Luke 24:33-36, John 20:19-20). Jesus accommodates his plan to them and meets them there. Rather than telling them off he says, “Peace be with you”. When they do go to Galilee they receive the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16).

Galilee was 60-70 miles away from Jerusalem and called “Galilee of the nations” because it was surrounded on three sides by Gentiles. The limestone hills of the southern end were a fertile and dense area of settlement as well as an international district.

Why Galilee? There are several possibilities but I think the main reason Jesus chose Galilee was because it was the working district. In effect he is saying to them: “Take your Christianity into the world where you live and work and be fishers of men and women there.”

Jerusalem is the church and Jesus meets us there but it's not the way he planned it. He wanted something far more inclusive. He wants us to go to Galilee; the world. John Taylor writes: “The church as a whole still prefers to meet Jesus Christ behind the closed doors of its own weekend Jerusalem, and does not want to find him alive in the Galilee of the job, of politics and of international affairs.”

Jesus calls you and me to go to Galilee and promises to be there ahead of us.

Question:

How can you “incarnate” Jesus in “Galilee” this week? Seven words: “I'll pray for you about that tonight.”

A prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,

Alive and at large in the world, help me to follow and find you there today, in the places where I work, meet people, spend money, and make plans.

Take me as a disciple of your Kingdom, to see through your eyes, and hear the questions you are asking, to welcome all others with your trust and truth, and to change the things that contradict God's love, by the power of the cross and the freedom of your Spirit. Amen.