

## How can you live for God now?

We all make mistakes or misunderstand the things that are going on around about us.

I heard the story the other day about a woman who'd come home to find her husband frantically shaking and vibrating around the kitchen, with what looked like a wire running from his waist towards the electric kettle. Thinking he was suffering an electric shock, she smashed a heavy piece of wood into him to jolt him away from the current, breaking his arm in two places as she did. It was only then that she discovered that he was dancing to his favourite music on his iPod. What a nightmare!

There's also the story of the Duke of Wellington when he was fighting against Napoleon in the battle of Waterloo in 1815. Apparently, the battle had finished, and the English lookouts were trying to find news of what had taken place. Through the mist they saw the signals 'Wellington defeated' but then the mist and the cloud came back in again. They were disappointed with that news. As the next day dawned, they looked again and this time they saw the full message. The full message came through 'Wellington defeated' just as before but then with the extra two words: 'the French'. Defeat had turned into victory; sadness was turned into joy. They had the wrong end of the stick.

It's a funny phrase that isn't it: getting the wrong end of the stick. Of course, it means that we've misunderstood something or made a mistake.

As you read the stories of Jesus and his disciples in the New Testament, you can often see that the disciples continually got the wrong end of the stick. They didn't really understand what Jesus was doing and what he was saying.

You remember, for example, a time when some people brought children to Jesus and the disciples said, "no take them away". But Jesus said "no, let them come to me. Because anyone who wants to enter the kingdom of God needs to be like a child". And then there was the occasion when the disciples came and asked Jesus "how many times should we forgive someone, seven?" Jesus says "no, you should never stop showing forgiveness to other people".

And then there was the occasion when the disciples were having an argument about who was going to have the greatest seats of power, authority and importance in heaven and Jesus said to them: "Look it's not about power and authority. It's about serving other people. That's what it means to follow me, it's not about power and influence and status. It's about service."

You see the disciples kept on getting the wrong end of the stick. They expected Jesus to be their rescuer, the one who would rescue them from the Romans who were ruling them. They were expecting Jesus to do something dramatic; to defeat the Romans, drive them out, and then to establish his new kingdom in its place.

Well of course what happened to Jesus, particularly in the final few days of his life, was dramatic. We've just been reminded how he was strung up on a cross and was crucified. How confused and disappointed the disciples must have felt. They must have felt that it all had gone horribly wrong. The last three years, when they'd been going around with him, hoping that things would be so different. And we know that after Jesus died on that Good Friday, they were afraid, they feared for their lives. They fled and locked themselves behind closed doors. They got it all wrong, they'd made a mistake. It was a waste of their time having followed Jesus. How it must have felt to them that evil had won the day on that Good Friday. All must have seemed gloomy. They must have despaired they must have had so many questions to ask. But of course, on that Easter Sunday morning as the mist

clears the clear and full and correct message becomes clear. News came from the tomb that it was empty, and that Jesus had been raised to new life. Not resuscitated but given brand new life again. Jesus was risen from the dead. He was alive. And so even though on Good Friday the disciples had it wrong, they got the wrong end of the stick, as always Jesus was able to turn things upside down. Evil had not won the day; it had not got the final hand or the final word. Jesus had been raised to new life again.

The true message was not that evil had won, but that we are now called to live for him. And that's essentially what Jesus said to his disciples as he comes and meets them. From our reading in Luk, today: once they realize that it was Jesus and it wasn't a ghost, we're told that Jesus opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures. Just as had he done with those couple of travellers that he'd been with on the Emmaus road, immediately before Jesus appears here to his disciples. Then Jesus goes on to say to them you are witnesses of these things. He instructs them to wait for the Holy Spirit, who's going to come in mighty power in Jerusalem soon. But he calls them to live for him now.

You see the cross and the resurrection has changed everything. Jesus is alive, he has made all things new, and he calls me, he calls you, to follow him, to live for him in every aspect of our lives. So, we're called to whole life discipleship as witnesses of Jesus, that means that you and I are to live for Jesus in every aspect of our lives all the time.

This whole life-giving is all important, it's about all of us being involved and it encompasses every aspect of our lives.

So, what does this look like? Well, it looks like you and me as ordinary people living with an understanding of our role in what God wants to do in and around us. It looks a bit like Albert.

Albert is a bus driver who's passionate about serving people. Albert has a natural way of extending courtesies that make life easier. He waits for the person who's still running for the bus stop and exercises patience with those who've lost their change. He's also bothered about the other drivers in the depot. Not long ago he returned to work after a short strike during which only five drivers had crossed the picket line. He knew what he had to do, "my job tomorrow" he said "is to be a peacemaker. That's why I'm here".

You see Albert has a vision to make a difference in his place of work. Quietly spoken with a sense of humour, a diplomat, and a good listener, he uses his gifts by actively engaging with the relational tensions of his workplace. Along the way he hopes to drive lots of people safely from a to b, to enable as many people as possible to experience grace through his attention to their needs and to speak about Jesus as the one who inspires his vision for a life worth living.

I wonder as you now live for Jesus, how can you be like Albert? You see the reality is that our fundamental identity is that, first and foremost, we are disciples of the risen Lord Jesus. And so, as a whole life follower of Jesus, how can you live for God now in the various places you find yourself in this week?