

## Prayer Points

Pray for our Day Centre, CAMEO group and Tuesday Tea Talk. For the Volunteers who staff and run these and for those who attend. That they might be places where people find friendship, companionship and for those who are not yet Christians an opportunity to come to faith.

We thank God for those who have given up their time, talents and finances to work alongside BMS partners in a short-term role. We are grateful for the expertise and capacity they bring to BMS and their partners.

## Sermon Notes



# BIBLE STUDY

April 14<sup>th</sup> 2024

## **Life After Death – Part 3: What Happens When We Die? Part 1.**

**1 Thes. 4:13-17 & Luke 23:  
42-43**

There is a question that divides, and has divided, various faiths for millennia: 'Is there life after death?'.

At the time of Christ even different sects within Judaism couldn't agree. The Sadducees, roughly two thousand in number and generally wealthy, didn't believe in resurrection. The Pharisees, also known as scribes and debaters of the Law of Moses, did believe in resurrection. The ordinary folk just tried to get on with their lives.

In Christian circles there are two questions that arise but are seldom asked aloud. The first is; 'Am I really forgiven?' and second; 'Is there a life after death?'

Through this series, it is hoped that you can feel free to ask challenging questions and arrive at a positive and fully-understood answer to the second, which will give you reassurance in the first.

If you would like to join a Connect Group, please contact the church office 01424 730001

**Another** early church letter and more questions. Wouldn't it be good if we had the letters sent to which Paul's epistles are the answers? Is our modern day Church frightened to ask questions? Or asking the wrong ones?

**'Brothers and sisters'**. I do not consider myself a 'woke\*\* bloke' or even 'politically correct' but I do like it when reading passages in the Bible where both men and women are acknowledged. The miracle of the 'feeding of the 5,000' is a passage that irritates because it says; '5,000 men' – what about the women and children? There was at least one child because his lunch was the foundation of the feast.

**However**, our first two verses contain another small word that carries enormous gravitas and grace. 'Hope'. Hope, when it comes to our Christian faith, is not 'wishful thinking'. It is not like imagining spending the lottery jackpot – when you haven't bought a ticket. It isn't trusting in the words of a salesperson or politician at election time. It is a hope born of the word of God made flesh.

Jesus has promised and God has said; 'so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it' [Is. 55:11].

\*\* *"woke" – alert to racial/gender/identity prejudice & discrimination*

### **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 & Luke 23:42-43**

I do wonder what the question was that made Paul respond with an answer suggesting a 'pecking order' for resurrection? If this had been part of 'John's Revelation' it may have made us feel more at ease. That is, at least, a visionary text.

1. What do you think may have been the question Paul was asked by the Thessalonian church regarding who and when and the resurrection? Why do you think it was important? What questions do you have around what happens when we die?

2. What do you understand by the expression 'rapture' in relation to the 'End of Days'? Compare Verses 15 and 17. Is that the same message or is there a distinction? Why?
3. There are many examples in Paul's letters where he implies the imminent return of Jesus. In today's reading that implication is still present although 'some have fallen asleep'. In our faith is mortality really an issue? Why? Why not?
4. Verse 13 mentions 'ignorance', which, contrary to the expression, is not bliss. Look at 1 Cor. 12:1, 2 Cor. 12:8 and compare with verse 13. What is the problem with ignorance and how do *you* combat it? [See Mk. 15:16-18 et. al.]
5. Sleeping, or falling asleep, is an oft used euphemism for death. In Pagan terms, death often meant the end of everything, [sic] the 'eternal sleep'. Should we be afraid of death? Or is our fear in the manner of death? [Cemeteries translates as Dormitories]
6. A Roman epitaph reads; 'I was not, I became, I am not, I care not'. An Irish one, dated 1782 reads; '*O cruel Death you well may boast. Of all Tyrants thou art the most. As you all mortals can control. The Lord have mercy on my soul.*' Depressing, aren't they? What do they both share and lack? Can you do better?
7. On the cross Jesus suffered between two criminals. One scorned Jesus, the other didn't and was told, 'Today you will be with me in Paradise'. How does that compare with 'those who have fallen asleep in Christ'?
8. Does faith only sustain us in our desperation?