

# St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. May 8th 2005

## God's Gifts - the Gift of His Presence

### The gift of the Holy Spirit – go and tell!

#### Mark 16.9-20



#### Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

As well as Election Day Thursday last week was Ascension Day the day that marks Jesus' ascension to heaven. Described in detail in Matt and Luke's Gospels, Mark's Gospel briefly records the event in verse 19 "After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God." After weeks of uncertainty, worry, mixed emotions and promises about the future Jesus finally left the disciples. Verse 19 is part of an 'addendum' to Mark's gospel (verses 9-20) which contain a summary of some of the resurrection appearances of Jesus found in more detail in the other three gospels. Quite different in literary style to the rest of Mark's verses 9-20 nevertheless echo a key Marcan theme – the struggle between belief and unbelief, between faith and no faith. In the crucial 40 days between the death of Jesus and his Ascension the disciples struggled between belief and unbelief.

v 9 – 11: Mary Magdalene went and told the disciples...they did not believe it

v12 -23: Jesus appeared to the two of them...they reported it to the rest but they did not believe them.

As a result Jesus appears to the disciples (v 14) rebukes them for their lack of faith and refusal to believe (v14). It seems amazing that the risen Jesus should have to rebuke his disciples in this way but Jesus goes on to commission them to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (v15).

Like the first disciples we may struggle with faith and at times it seems that we may have given up on God but God does not give up on us. Out of our lack of faith and he calls us still to be his witnesses in a world characterised by unbelief and hardness of heart. In their unbelief Jesus affirmed his disciples as his witnesses and sent them out in the power of the Spirit to change the world (v 15-18). Verse 20 tells us what happened next and in a nutshell describes the mission of the church a mission that calls our church today to be:

**1 A 'Go and Tell' Church** – the disciples went out and preached the good news everywhere. Good news flowed from their lives both as individuals and as a community.

**2 A Church where Jesus is present** – 'and the Lord worked with them'. The Archbishop of Canterbury when asked about the church's mission said "find out where Jesus is and what he is doing and join in."

**3 A Church of 'signs and wonders'** - 'the Lord confirmed his word by the sign that accompanied it.' In Acts we see how the disciples full of the Holy Spirit not only preached and witnessed with power but did works of power – healing, prophecies, words of knowledge, casting out evil. Speaking good news went hand in hand with demonstrating good news. Proclamation and demonstration.



#### Witness: Questions to discuss

1. Have we given up believing that God can do it? Praying for our partner, son, daughter, friend, family member? that God can change our lives and the lives of others? have we given up believing in 'miracles'?
2. What does it mean for you, your small group, our church to be a 'go and tell' church?
3. Where is Jesus at work in your small group, our church?
4. What evidence have you seen of 'signs and wonders' in your life, your small group, the church?