

**Sermon for the Celebration of the Resurrection
Easter Sunday 2009**

**Church of the Ascension, Hilton
Anglican Diocese of Natal
Nic Denny-Dimitriou, Rector**

**Service of First Light and Eucharist @ 5.30am
Resurrection Eucharist @ 8.00am**

“Keep on Walking”

My sermon theme this morning: Keep on Walking. Yes, I know that sounds like subliminal advertising because it's the line used in the TV ads for Johnny Walker Black Label Whisky – but as far as I'm concerned, a wooded Chardonnay beats whisky any time, so let me assure you that I'm not quietly on the Johnny Walker payroll 😊.

Walking – good theme from Scripture and for the journey of faith

Abraham – walked in response to God's call, to a new land with his extended family entourage; an incredible undertaking, for the promise that God would establish a people through whom God's salvation would be declared

Moses – after a very long period of life preparation, an incredibly long walk through the desert; people still suggest that if he hadn't been so masculine about it, and had only stopped to ask for directions, maybe they wouldn't have wandered in the desert for so long...

The Exile from Jerusalem
Later, the return to Jerusalem

Jesus walked
Everywhere
Limited geographical area, but he walked everywhere within that region to spread his message

And he walked to the Cross [more on that later]

Early disciples walked – Emmaus Road, met the Risen Jesus and at first did not recognise him, so unsuspecting were they

Paul – converted on a journey to Damascus (OK – journey as important here as walking). He made many journeys, some on foot, some even by boat, one of which got damaged in a storm off an island and they were all amazingly

saved after being shipwrecked – all in their determination to spread the news of Jesus Christ through parts of Asia, Greece, Rome, from where it went through Europe and North Africa and further into Asia

Throughout history – pilgrims

Egeria – a woman who did a 40 day pilgrimage to Jerusalem in C4, tracing Christ's life and his journey to the Cross and keeping a journal

Modern day – pilgrims to “The Holy Land”, but even done locally, such as people who've done a pilgrimage of faith in the Eastern Cape mountains near Rhodes, and very popularly now, trails in Europe such as The Camino through northern Spain. [Elaborate briefly]

And WE have walked – including this past week

Holy Week – the sense of “accompanying Jesus on his way to the Cross”

We learn, we remember, we do so as an act of devotion (which may be accompanied by emotion – or it may not – that in itself doesn't truly matter)

Palm Sunday – Jesus into Jerusalem, welcomed by crowds who misunderstood (some thought he was coming as a political King to throw off the Romans who occupied Palestine at that time)

Bigger picture of God; Jesus – focussed, undeterred

Aligning ourselves with God's Big Picture, by bringing our own life stories to intersect with the much Bigger Picture of God

Our weekday evening meditations with Jesus on his way to the Cross

Family Passover Meal arranged by and for the Sunday School, 60 adults and children crammed into our hall

At the heart of this week, is our celebration on Good Friday of the lengths that God went to in Jesus Christ to establish / re-establish friendship with humanity

Our Good Friday theme: Jesus, Identified with us

Jim and Heather Johnston used words in 5 short sermons and some poems, and their daughter danced and played the flute – themes included Jesus identified with us in our loneliness and rejection, in our suffering and sorrows / grief, in our sin; and Jesus identified with us because of Love.

Jim's intro example struck me powerfully: God not just shouting instructions or criticisms through a megaphone or from the commentator's box over the sound system, but joining the soccer team on a messy pitch

And now we are at the Celebration of the Resurrection: Empty Tomb

The invitation remains, as we are invited to keep on walking
 With a new step, in the light of what we know
 Not only accompanying Jesus on his (historical) journey to the Cross, BUT

Jesus accompanying us on our journey, as we keep on walking
 In tune with God's Big Picture

Even when praying with someone near death, my comment often is simply,
 "Put your hand into God's hand and go where God leads you"

That is suitable for all of us on our journey of faith, walking with Jesus

Live with integrity
 Faithfulness
 Obedience
 Humility
 Trust

At work

In the community, in politics, in how we vote and in our concerns for others
 At home and amongst friends

Jesus came to identify with us

Now, after his Resurrection, we identify ourselves with him, and he
 accompanies us as we keep on walking through God's world until our part in
 it is fulfilled

Following Jesus all began with a small group of men sitting in a boat with
 their fishing nets, and following with him on his journey. Then there were
 others; their numbers grew, their experiences deepened. First one, then a
 few, then many more...

This is the story of Jesus Christ as the gospels tell us, of a teacher (rabbi),
 who draws people around him; as one preacher put it, "a typical human
 journey with ups and downs, highs and lows, stupid misunderstandings and
 profound insights" (A. Oppewal).

But here we are today, the successors to those who kept on walking, starting
 with Abraham. We are all invited to that journey. To respond to God's call, to
 follow Jesus, to come to the cross, and to experience love stronger than
 death, hope that counters despair. To find him next to us, a travelling
 companion, to find him ahead of us, showing us the way, to find him behind
 us, catching us when we fall.

And so too do we keep on walking, in the light of the Resurrection, until that day comes when we too will see that light at first hand for ourselves, and see or feel the hand of God stretch out to us and lead us, into the final and everlasting Chapter of the Big Story of God.

Amen