

He Stands Among Us

(Sermon by Cheryl Williams, preached at Footscray Baptist on April 12th, 2026 – John 20:19-31)

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Ross Langmead wrote a song which I had hoped to play for you this morning, but I couldn't attach it to the PowerPoint. It was called 'You Stand Among Us'.¹ Let me read you the lyrics.

*Lord, you stand among us,
You stir within us,
You draw us on beyond what we can do,
What we can be
Revealing your freedom and mystery*

When we search for you and find a void,
When our sense of God has been destroyed,
We need reminding, Jesus came
And stood amongst the poor, the blind, the lame,
Felt our pain, stretched his hand
The sky is tinged with dawn.

When we've given in, and had our fill,
When the air we breathe is stale and still,
We feel the gentle breeze: living grace,
We tackle obstacles we could not face,
We are loved, you stir within,
We take the road again.

When we say that's all we want to do,
When we shut the door and say we're through.
We feel the song of love draw us on,
Magnetic mystery, now here, now gone,
Sets us free and makes us whole,
We plunge into the sea.

Many of us knew Ross personally, and if you didn't, you will know him from the songs we sing, notably 'Lord Let Me See'. Ross was my friend and teacher; he died suddenly in 2013. He wrote about the circumstances under which he wrote the song 'You Stand Among Us'. He called it a theological reflection and by that I suspect he meant thinking about all he knew from his faith and how it intersected with his experience. When he wrote this song he was experiencing a time of crisis, in the writing of the words he found a sense of being deeply renewed, that even when things are tough God is somehow mysteriously present and leading us into the future.²

¹ Song © Ross Langmead (www.rosslangmead.com) May be used freely for non-commercial purposes

² Summarised from an article on Theological Reflection Ross wrote for Ministry, Society & Theology 18 (2004): 9-28 called 'Theological Reflection in Ministry and Mission' found at [Microsoft Word - TheolReflection2004.doc](#)

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In the song, Ross writes of

- God's Spirit stirring within us, drawing us forward
- Jesus standing with us and sharing our pain and holding out his hand toward us
- How things can start to feel brighter
- When we search and find nothing, when we think all is destroyed or a failure, when we are fed up, when we are ready to throw away our faith, that in some mysterious way God is present and we can feel his love, we can face the tough times and we can begin to see a brighter future and begin to be free, begin to really live.

Ross could have been writing this song for those disciples huddled together in a room, too scared to go out into the world again. Huddled talking about what had happened in the last few weeks – the betrayals, the denials, the unjust trial, the horrific death and burial of their teacher and friend Jesus. Most of them had fled and hid. The women hadn't, they couldn't abandon their friend, even in death.

In the midst of their sadness, their fear, their confusion, their guilt, their thinking all hopes were dashed, and they simply needed to go back to their previous lives, Jesus stands among them.

Notice what Jesus does as he stands amongst them. First, he offers a word of peace, twice to the gathered disciples.

Second, he shows them his wounds (and when Thomas joins them a week later, he will do it all again, offer a word of peace and show him his wounds). Why? To convey the continuity between the experience they have of the Risen Lord with the experience they had with Jesus in the previous three years.

This presence of Jesus with them, dispels the doom and gloom and they begin to experience joy again.

However, there is more. Jesus reminds them he was sent from God into the world
("For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." – John 3:16)

and now he is extending that task to them, they now are being sent, sent out into the world, into the future to continue to share God's love and the abundant life it leads to with all.

Then he breathes on them, gifting them with the Spirit of God and gives them a specific task, and it is no light task – go out and forgive.

This is the experience of the resurrection of Jesus for the first disciples, standing amongst them and commissioning them for a new task, dispelling the fear and sadness. In Ross' words, drawing them on into the future to do things beyond their wildest imaginations.

This is the implication for them of the Resurrection of Jesus – go out back into the world and share God's love and start with forgiveness.

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Two thousand years after those events we can only know Jesus as the Risen Lord. We are the people John refers to in the reading, as *'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'* (John 20:29b)

Our experience of Jesus' resurrection, our experience of Jesus standing in our midst, our experience of the Risen Lord, will, if we let it do exactly some of the things Ross alludes to in his song, and to do some of the same things as those first disciples.

Last week, I introduced you to the phrase – Jesus is Risen, Risen indeed, Risen for us and in us.

The resurrection of Jesus might be understood as Jesus standing among us. Experiencing the resurrection of Jesus will lead us somewhere. It will send us out into the world, telling it of our experience. It will send us out into the world forgiving. It will send us out into the future and strengthen us to face many obstacles. It will provide for us a sense of hope. It will remind us that Jesus knows both our pain and our joy. It will lead to freedom for all, it will lead to fullness of life for all, it will lead to peace.

Go out into the world, sent by God, to love and to forgive.

*Lord, you stand among us,
You stir within us,
You draw us on beyond what we can do,
What we can be
Revealing your freedom and mystery*

May we have the courage to live such lives, lives where we know it is true that Jesus is Risen for us and in us. Amen.