

Sunday 26th April 2020

Theme : The Road to Emmaus

Rev Alison Quilter

Reading: Luke 24:13-35

Hymn: O Lord, whose love designed this way
(Tune: O Waly, Waly)

Reading: Luke 24:13-25 (NRSV)

The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognising him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹ He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and

he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflection:

What if you were Cleopas – how would you retell the encounter with Jesus to other people?.....Would it go something like this?.....

We met him, there on the Emmaus road, can you believe that? Despite the testimony of the women and the disciples, the empty tomb, the vision of angels, still I couldn't take it in!

I suppose we'd made up our minds that it was finished, come to terms with the fact that our hopes had been dashed, and we just couldn't bring ourselves to think any different for fear of yet more disappointment, yet more broken dreams.

Condemn us if you like, but remember this: we'd seen him hanging there on the cross, contorted in agony, we'd watched in desolation as he drew his final breath, and we'd been there, tears streaming from our eyes, as they cut him down and laid him in the tomb.

You don't forget that in a hurry, I can tell you that!

So when this stranger appeared out of the blue, we thought nothing of it – why should we? ---- the possibility of him being Jesus was the last thing on our minds.

Even when he interpreted the scriptures for us, explaining why the Messiah had to suffer and die, still we didn't suspect anything – even though our hearts burned within us with inexplicable joy.

But, when we sat together at the table, and he took bread and broke it, then even we couldn't miss it, the extraordinary truth – it was Jesus, Christ crucified and risen, there by our sides!

We'd thought the adventure was over, but it had only just begun. We'd thought there was nothing left to us but memories, but suddenly the future beckoned, rich with promise.

The night had ended, a new day dawning, life was beginning again – and we marvelled at the sheer wonder of his grace, for, of course, we didn't meet him that day, despite what we'd thought; he met us!

We too are walking our Emmaus road wondering when we will see one another again, wondering when this nightmare of lockdown will be over. Like the disciples we don't walk this road alone, our Lord Jesus Christ walks with us. Take hope and know that a new beginning will dawn soon.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, you speak your word to us as you spoke it to the disciples long ago: 'Come, follow me.'

You call us as you have called so many over the years: 'Come to me all who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'

You offer us, as you offer your people, refreshment for our souls: 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink'. Lord, we thank you for that invitation, and gladly we respond.

But, more than that, we thank you for the fact that before anyone comes to you, you come first to them.

You came to Peter, James and John by the lakeside; to the hungry, the sick and the outcasts in the streets of Galilee; to the weary disciples walking the Emmaus road; to the disciples trembling behind locked doors; and to countless others since.

Always it is you who makes the first approach, calling your people to faith, and still you come through your Spirit to meet with us.

Open our eyes to your presence and lead us forward in your service until the day when, with all your people, we enter your kingdom and meet with you face to face. **Amen.**

Hymn: Written by Christopher Idle

O Lord whose love designed this day,
you walked with us along the road;
so as the daylight fades away
stay with us when we rest our load.

Our stumbling steps were known to you
before we recognised your face;
you loved us long before we knew
your covenant of saving grace.

You spoke your word of truth to us,
bringing us gladness when we grieved;
we found forgiveness at your cross,
and yet how slowly we believed!

But now we see your wounded hands;
you share with us the broken bread:
these are your pledges, your commands,
our living Lord, who once was dead!

So through the darkness, be our light,
O Lord whose love designed this day;
we praise and bless your name tonight
for love that never fades away.