

Worship @ Home

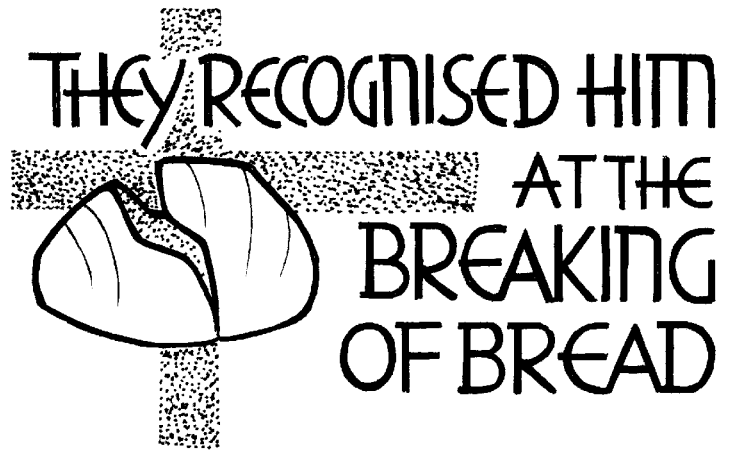
10.45am Sunday April 26th 2020

Minister: Revd Val Reid

Music: Steve and Caroline Cook

Reader: Heather MacMillan

Technology: Tony Edmonds



Call to worship

Come walk with Him.

Come talk with Him.

Come feast with Him.

Come worship Jesus, our risen Lord.

Jesus be the centre

Jesus, be the centre,

Be my source, be my light,

Jesus.

Be the fire in my heart

Be the wind in these sails

Be the reason that I live

Jesus.

Jesus, be the centre,

Be my hope, be my song,

Jesus.

Be the fire in my heart...

Jesus, be my vision,

Be my path, be my guide,

Jesus.

Be the fire in my heart...

Michael Frye

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MERQ0P6O0CE>

Opening prayers

God, we gather as your people.

We come to make a journey with you

And with each other.

Today we cannot talk together.

We cannot even walk together.

But you are surely with us.
And perhaps we might recognise you
In the homely, ordinary things of our lives.
Amen.

Travelling God, we thank you that you come out and meet us where we are.
That you walk the road with us,
even when we fail to recognise you.
We are sorry that we fail to notice you in our midst,
that we are too preoccupied with ourselves.

Silence

God of hospitality, you always love us, always care for us, always want to eat
and drink with us – such is your love.
We are sorry that we let you down,
that we feast and don't invite others to share with us,
that we welcome friends but not always the stranger,
or anyone who makes us feel uncomfortable.

Silence

Forgive us.

Thank you that you are not a stranger, but our friend.
That you invite us to re-tell the story of our lives.
That you offer us bread for the journey.
Help us in turn to be generous people,
our church, our homes – and our hearts –
always places of welcome.
Amen.

Luke 24: 13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. 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?' 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, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 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. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 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. 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.'

Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 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?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' 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

Revd Val Reid

Walking along a road with a friend and sharing a conversation.
Sitting down to a meal with a stranger.
Well – that's something we haven't done for the last few weeks!
It seems like another world.

But isn't that the point of this story?
That whatever the world we are inhabiting, there is another world waiting to break in.
If only we are present.
If only we are honest.
If only we are open to it.

So I invite you to come with me on the Road to Emmaus.
To walk alongside those two disciples in your imagination.
During our journey there will be some short silences.
Opportunities to think, to reflect, to place yourself on that path.
To share that encounter.

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

That dusty road towards Emmaus.
We have all been there.
One way or another.
Scholars – who like this kind of thing – have tried to identify the geography.
Where was Emmaus?
Was it Nicopolis, an early pilgrim site?
Too far.
El-Qubeibeh, a site favoured by the crusaders, but with no archaeological evidence that it existed in the first century?
Abu Ghosh?
Qaloniye?
There is no consensus.

But the theologian Frederick Buechner asks us to see Emmaus differently.

This is what he writes:

Emmaus is the place we go in order to escape.

Emmaus may be buying a new suit or a new car or smoking more cigarettes than you really want, or reading a second-rate novel – or even writing one.

Emmaus may be going to church on Sunday.

Emmaus is whatever we do or wherever we go to make ourselves forget that the world holds nothing sacred.

That even the wisest and loveliest and bravest decay and die.

In the last few weeks, we have been brought face to face with that truth.

We have been reminded all too clearly that we are mortal.

That life is fragile.

That we are always walking with loss.

So where is your Emmaus?

Where do you go in order to avoid the pain?

What is your escape route?

Silence...

The two disciples are walking towards their Emmaus.

Away from Jerusalem.

Seven miles, Luke tells us.

That's a longish way to walk.

Not a marathon.

But a good three-hour trudge.

It's a long time to be talking about –

well, what were they talking about?

All these things that had happened.

Telling and re-telling the story.

Naming all the trauma, and the disappointments, and the unrealised expectations.

Wishing things had been different.

Wondering what the future might hold.

But we had hoped...

Perhaps one of the saddest phrases in all the gospels.

But we had hoped.

What a wealth of frustration and regret and loss in just four words.

That's a familiar feeling for most of us, I guess.

So many of us have had to cancel holidays.

Weddings.

Parties.

Today I am celebrating my birthday on my own – I shall see my family and friends only on a screen.
But more serious things too.
We have had to let go of assumptions about our lives.
Plans for the future.
Let go of feeling safe.
Let go of believing that we have some agency in our lives.
Let go of people we love, who have died of Coronavirus.

What had you hoped?
What are you mourning the loss of?

Silence...

*When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.
Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.*

The story ends with a simple meal round a table.
A familiar action – breaking bread – that suddenly has huge resonance.
A moment of deep recognition.
Nothing spectacular.
No long sermons.
No great rhetoric.
Just friends sharing food at the end of a long day.

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

This encounter with the risen Christ is rooted in the ordinary.
At the moment, things are not ordinary.
Or – at least – many things are not ordinary.
But some are.
There is still a little bit of normal in our lives.
If we keep our eyes open.

What modest, commonplace things are life-giving for you?
Where do you experience resurrection?

Silence...

I like it that at the moment the eyes of the travellers were opened, Jesus vanished from their sight.
They had been talking all the way along the Emmaus Road.
Telling their stories.
Listening to Jesus make sense of them as he unpacked the scriptures.
But that moment of recognition?
A moment of silence.
No further words needed.

And also a moment of absence.

Yes, Jesus walks with us as we travel our own Emmaus Road.
But we don't always recognise him.
Sometimes we talk too much to listen.
Sometimes we don't ask the right questions.
Sometimes we don't have the courage to articulate our deepest fears, our most painful losses.
And that seems to be the starting point for an encounter with the Risen Lord.

So perhaps our task, as we go on trudging through lockdown, is to make the space to notice the presence of Christ, walking alongside us.

Here is the poet Mary Oliver, a poem called 'Prayer':

It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

Amen

Speak O Lord

Speak, O Lord, as we come to You
To receive the food of Your Holy Word.
Take Your truth, plant it deep in us;
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness,
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
Holy reverence, true humility;
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity.
Cause our faith to rise; cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail—
Let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us—
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises,
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory.

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubRIJj8xkds>

Prayers for ourselves and others

Risen Lord,
You walked alongside people who were grieving, confused, depressed.
Walk alongside us now.

Music

Risen Lord,
You listened well as stories were told, and loss was shared.
Help us listen well to those who need to be heard.

Music

Risen Lord,
You were a guest, and you were the host.
Enable us to be people of hospitality,
People of welcome.
Help us to recognise you in the strangers we encounter.

Music

Risen Lord,
You break the bread, and invite us to share the feast.
Open our eyes to the food you offer,
In the most unexpected places.
Amen.

I invite you now to say the Lord's prayer out loud.

Use whichever version you are familiar with.

Use whichever language feels like your mother tongue.

Although we are apart, we join together in praying the prayer that Jesus gave us.

Blessing

Lord Jesus,
as you walked on the road to Emmaus,
walk with us on the roads we travel.
Help us to know your presence with us,
and to be your presence to others.
And, at the end of the day,
may we all enjoy your feast.

Amen.

The servant King

From heaven you came helpless babe
Entered our world, your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live
This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not My will but Yours, ' He said
This is our God, The Servant King...

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered
This is our God, The Servant King...

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving
This is our God, The Servant King...

Graham Kendrick

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0FSZ_iSYO8

Some prayers are adapted from 'Roots' Issue 106

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