

# The Emmaus Road...

## *... Jesus walks alongside*

---

*A reflection given on Third Sunday of Easter 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020, in the Online Service by the Curate, the Revd Tim Kelly*

*Luke 24:13-35*

Confusing; traumatic; head-spinningly disorientating; wearying; frustrating; depressing; uncertain about the future. Words and emotions that may well describe how you have felt at times this week as you try to make sense of the news, as you try to figure out where things are heading not only nationally and globally, but also personally and for your friends and family. These thoughts and feelings almost certainly capture some of the experience of these two disciples that we hear of in today's gospel account from Luke of their walk on the road to Emmaus. After all of the dramatic events in Jerusalem over the last couple of days, their heads must have been a whirlwind of emotions, a tangled mess of ideas. We join them as they walk from Jerusalem to this village, 7 or so miles away, called Emmaus. They're disengaging from the hubbub of the city and walking somewhere, anywhere, nowhere, just to get some space to work out what all of this means.

Time on our own: some may value that; some may hate that. For some, time on our own may – we think – be just what we need to 'get things straight', to 'get things clear'. But for others time on our own may feel like a dangerous thing: thoughts possibly spiralling out of control; small thoughts becoming large; becoming lost in the forest of our own thinking. It's unclear how productive the disciples' conversation was proving to be, but we can tell from the overall account, that they were still struggling to make sense of it all. They still didn't understand the big picture of what was going on.

Into this scene walks Jesus, though they don't recognise him (we'll talk more of that in a moment). What is wonderful about this picture is that Jesus joins a conversation. He sidles up to them as they walk and says, "What are you talking about?" He doesn't want to stop their conversation, he wants to be part of it. The two men walking side by side talking and chatting, become three men walking side by side talking and chatting. As some of you know, I have three sons. I think it was

around the arrival of son number 2 that I bought a book called 'Raising Boys' by Steve Biddulph. (You'll be pleased to know that there's also a 'Raising Girls' book, but I haven't needed that one!) There are many pearls of wisdom in that book, but one of the most significant for me was the advice that if you want to have a proper conversation with one of your boys, one of the best ways was to talk while on a walk together, or as you are doing something together like a bike ride. In contrast, direct face to face confrontations are rarely productive. And so it is here - Jesus is walking alongside, joining in the conversation. And he starts, not by seizing control of the agenda, but by finding out what they are talking about. I can imagine the disciples almost blurting out their account, thoughts and ideas – as far as their discussion had taken them – and then almost presenting them in a metaphorical heap to this third man saying, “So what do you make of all that then?” And then I picture Jesus picking up the threads of their account and their tangled ideas, one by one, and starting to help them make sense by setting them in a larger context – the context given by the scriptures. Jesus ‘zooms out’ and provides the wider perspective, the larger story that helps them piece things together in the current chaos of their disassembled thoughts. I’m confident that their response wasn’t just intellectual assent and resolution “Ah ... now that makes sense”, it would have also been a moment of catharsis – a rest and relief from the mental and emotional exhaustion of their headful of ideas.

Significantly, the conversation is followed by a meal, by a normal everyday act, shared together. And it is only in that shared meal, that moment of simply being together (after all the words had been spoken) that they recognise Jesus.

So how does this help us today? Back to some of those thoughts: confusing; traumatic; head-spinningly disorientating; wearying; frustrating; depressing; uncertain about the future.

We might feel like we have to sort out all of our thoughts and emotions on our own. However, the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus reminds us that God wants to walk alongside us as we journey. He wants to hear us bring to him the ‘brain-dump’ of our thoughts and emotions. And he’s also here to slowly and sensitively unpick, and then reconstruct, our thoughts; to reveal to us and remind us of the larger story of which we are part: the story that we celebrate in this Easter season, of how love came down for us, and how victory over death was won through

Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. In a world where all else may sometimes appear to be shifting sand, this is our compass bearing, our one true north, our fixed point.

If, amongst the chaos and confusion, you sometimes struggle to see Jesus, to recognise Jesus amongst it all, take comfort also from the road to Emmaus account. Jesus was stood in front of the disciples and yet they didn't at first recognise him. It was only as they continue to spend time in his presence and recognised the fingerprint of his actions in the breaking of the bread that it dawned on them that they had been journeying with Jesus all this time.

## Reading Texts

Luke 24:13-35

<sup>13</sup> Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup> but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> 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?" <sup>19</sup> 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, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup> Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. <sup>28</sup> As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> 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?" <sup>33</sup> That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup> They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to

Simon!"<sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.