

Traditional Home service

Sunday 23rd April

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty Father, who in your great mercy gladdened the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord: give us such knowledge of his presence with us, that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life and serve you continually in righteousness and truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Let us return to the Lord our God and say to him:

Father, we have sinned against heaven and against you. We are not worthy to be called your children.

We turn to you again. Have mercy on us, bring us back to yourself as those who once were dead but now have life through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Alleluia, Alleluia! Give Thanks to the Risen Lord*)

READINGS - Acts 2.14a,36-41
1 Peter 1.17-23
Luke 24.13-35

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!*)

CONCLUSION

The Lord bless you and watch over you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

Hymns to use

Refrain:

*Alleluia, Alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to His name.*

1. Jesus is Lord of all the earth.
He is the King of creation.

Refrain

2. Spread the good news o'er all the earth.
Jesus has died and has risen.

Refrain

3. We have been crucified with Christ.
Now we shall live forever.

Refrain

4. God has proclaimed the just reward:
Life for all men, alleluia!

Refrain

5. Come, let us praise the living God,
Joyfully sing to our Saviour.

Refrain

1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain:

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

2 Perfect communion, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight.
Angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Refrain

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest.
I in my Saviour am happy and bless'd,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

Refrain

Sermon - Holly Horspole

Luke 24:13-35 Inviting Jesus In

Our Gospel reading for today is about an unexpected conversation that happens on a journey. I wonder if you've ever had an unexpected conversation with someone on a journey...example...

Unexpected conversations that we might have on our journeys can be really impactful and leave a lasting impression on us – and that's certainly what happens in our reading from Luke's Gospel on the road to Emmaus. As we explore this together, we're going to start by looking at what is going on in this story, and then we'll think a bit about what it might mean for our lives today.

So, as we've heard, two of Jesus's followers are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. We're told that one of them is a man named Cleopas. We're not told anything about the identity of Cleopas's companion, but it's possible they're a married couple. This journey takes place in the days following Jesus's death and resurrection, but these travelling companions do not yet know for certain that Jesus is alive. We can imagine this couple are probably feeling a mixture of grief, disappointment, confusion, and pain following Jesus's death. Not only because he was someone they had come to know and love, but because they really had hoped that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and that he would be the one to redeem Israel.

As they are walking to Emmaus, talking about all of this, Jesus appears alongside them and joins them on their journey, but they don't recognise that it's Jesus with them.

Jesus asks them what they are talking about and, as Cleopas begins to explain, Jesus recognises that these people did not understand that his death was always part of God's salvation plan. If you remember, throughout the Gospels, Jesus predicts his own death and resurrection, but his followers repeatedly fail to understand what he is really saying. And of course, Jesus' death and resurrection isn't just foreshadowed by Jesus himself in the Gospels, but right the way through the Old Testament as well – there's so many prophecies about what would happen to Jesus.

And so, Jesus starts explaining all this to them as they are walking along – beginning with Moses and the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

This journey on the road to Emmaus went on for 7 miles, so it's likely they were walking and talking together for at least a couple of hours. Can you imagine how amazing it would be to have Jesus himself explain the Bible to us?! What an incredible conversation that must have been for this couple.

I wonder if you've ever had a conversation with someone that was just so good, you didn't want it to end? Well, that's what happens here, because once they arrive at Emmaus, Jesus indicates that he is going to keep on walking, but Cleopas is not ready to end the conversation, so he invites Jesus back to their house.

At Cleopas's house, the three of them share a meal together. And it is during this meal that they finally recognise that the man they have been spending time with is actually the risen Jesus. I love that it's in the midst of this ordinary everyday activity that Jesus is revealed – something as simple and mundane as a meal. It's true that we can see Jesus revealed in the big, special things in life. But we can also definitely find Jesus revealed in the normal, everyday things of our lives too. It could be while driving, cleaning, or cooking, walking etc...I believe if we're open to finding God in the midst of our everyday lives, we will find him. God is close to us always, not just on Sundays or in church buildings!

So, Jesus is revealed to Cleopas and his companions within an ordinary, simple meal. It is as Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and began to give it to them, Cleopas and his companion can see that Jesus is indeed alive and has been with them this entire time! And they recognise, 'were not our hearts burning within us as he talked with us and opened the Scriptures to us?'. This couple have powerfully encountered the risen Jesus as they have spent time with him and engaged with Scripture. And after such an amazing encounter with Jesus, they run off to find the eleven disciples and tell them what they've experienced.

So, what might all this mean for us today? I want to spend the next couple of minutes

thinking about how Cleopas and his companion respond to Jesus...I think this has something to say to us about how we can respond to Jesus too.

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus meets the travellers where they are at. In the midst of their pain, confusion, and disappointment, Jesus draws alongside them. Jesus spends time listening to them and just being with them. And the same is also true for us today— Jesus meets us where we are at. Even if we are slow to recognise him at work in our lives, Jesus meets us wherever we are.

But just because Jesus can and does meet us where we are at, it doesn't mean that we don't need to offer Jesus a response. Even though they don't recognise Jesus at first, Cleopas and his companion still respond to Jesus coming alongside them. They respond to Jesus with openness, sharing what they've recently been through. They make themselves available to Jesus, which helps create the possibility of such an amazing encounter with him.

The openness of the two travellers is also shown through the way that they invite Jesus to come and stay with them. After explaining the Scriptures to Cleopas and his companion, Jesus doesn't force himself upon them – he makes out that he is going to carry on walking. Jesus waits to be invited in. And notice, how it's only once they invite Jesus into their home that Jesus's identity is revealed to them.

Jesus meets us where we are at, and he reveals himself to us in our lives today. But just like Cleopas and his companion did, we have to choose to respond to Jesus with openness. We've got to make space in our lives for him to reveal himself to us. If we want moments in our lives where our hearts burn within us because we've encountered Jesus – and I know I definitely want more of that in my life! – then we have to choose to invite Jesus in.

What might it look like in our lives to be open and inviting to Jesus?

* We can live lives that are open and inviting to Jesus through make space in our lives to regularly read the Bible – God gave us the Bible, not just because it's a good read, but because it's the main way that he speaks to

us today. The Bible reveals God's heart for us and for the world, it reveals who Jesus is, it also reveals who we are in Christ.

It was as Jesus explained the Scriptures to the two people on the road to Emmaus that their hearts burned within them. As we choose to spend time reading and studying God's word, we can have our eyes and our hearts opened to encounter Jesus too.

Perhaps some of us need to hear the encouragement to be intentional about making regular space in our daily lives to be open to Jesus by reading our Bibles?

* We can also live lives that are open and inviting to Jesus through prayer. There's lots we could say about prayer, but one thing I want to briefly touch on is that prayer is a way of trying to align our hearts with God. Cleopas and his companion chose to invite Jesus into their home and into their circumstances. For me, this is a way of trying to align my heart with God's, and it's something that I try to do regularly in prayer.

A long time ago now, I remember someone I looked up to sharing that they struggled to give their everyday life circumstances over to God, and so they would pray these words: 'Jesus, I invite you into my circumstances'. For them, it was a way of trusting God in all areas of their life and being more open to Jesus being at work in their circumstances. And I just found that prayer so helpful – I pray that every morning as I spend time with God. Especially with things I might be worried about or struggling to trust God with, but also the good things in my life as well – I just simply pray 'Jesus, I invite you into my circumstances'. Just saying those words out loud helps me to put my trust in him and be more open to Jesus being revealed in my life.

Perhaps some of us need to hear encouragement about being open to Jesus through prayer and inviting him into our circumstances?

So, as we finish, what might it look like for our lives to be open and inviting to Jesus? How can we be open to experiencing our hearts burning within us as we see Jesus being revealed? What one thing could you do this week, to be more open and inviting to Jesus in your life?

As we ponder these questions, let's pray...