

## Road to Emmaus (Walk with Jesus) – Luke 24 v13-25 (4371 words)

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" <sup>19</sup> "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus." <sup>25</sup> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. <sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" <sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." <sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread

### Travelling

Who likes travelling? I don't mean just being away somewhere like a beach holiday, but actually enjoying the journey itself, or perhaps touring, cycling or walking just for the sake of it. If a friend said lets go on a 7 mile ( or 11km), hike, would that excite you, or would the very thought of it, press you back further into the sofa ! One thing that started happening in England during the covid pandemic lockdown was family walks. You were allowed out once a day for exercise, and suddenly there they were Mum, Dad and kids, all walking around my village together, some off cycling together. No-one had time for this before, but now it seemed to have become a highlight of their day. Quality time together. It was great to see. Personally I wouldn't mind a 7 mile walk, no further though, as long as there is food, drink and good company at the end of it.

Today we are going to look at two people who were taking a journey. They set out on their 7 mile walk filled with confusion, desperation and fear.

### A sad beginning

With the trial happening in the earliest hours Friday morning Jesus was up on the cross at Golgotha before many of his followers knew anything was happening. It was now more than 48 hours since the prophet Rabbi who they thought had come to save Israel had died from crucifixion. The wide circle of the Lords followers were coming to terms with their grief and disappointment. But these two, had had enough of it, left the city with its Passover celebrations, left the disciples behind and were escaping to the village of Emmaus. With their heads held low and their hearts heavy, they had entered a weighty sober conversation about what had just happened..

There was much confusion on what they should do next. There was no doubt Jesus had been a great prophet, and they had been stoked up with his message of the new kingdom of God. They had been sent out to spread this message and do great miracles in Jesus name. But how is that all going to work out now that their temple rulers have had their messiah killed. Do they go on living out his teaching with a new leader? Or was it just another false hope? Should they just shrug their shoulders, give up, and blend back in? But to confuse things even more they had report from Peter and John who had been to the tomb that day, found it open and could confirm that the body of Jesus had disappeared. A claim from Mary Magdalene that she had actually seen Jesus alive, could not yet be verified, and it was seeming like she must have been hallucinating in her grief.

But these guys were walking away. They were downcast and depressed. Perhaps they were afraid the authorities would be on a hunt for the followers of Jesus, or perhaps they had just simply had enough of it, and wanted to distance themselves from all this Jesus stuff. As they lamented on their way, it was as if some-one was pursuing them.

Then this stranger appeared alongside them. As they walked and talked, he walked and listened. Then he spoke. *He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast.* Mistaking him for a Passover festival pilgrim, Cleopas, asked, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"<sup>19</sup> **"What things?"** he asked. Cleopas was astounded. Even without on-line social media, surely everyone in Jerusalem knew what had happened. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied, and then they told him all about Jesus !

They had hoped he would be their Messiah. He would be the new Moses, a prophet mighty in word and deed. He would come in power and free Israel from the Romans, and put an end to the wrongs of the world. This was their hope. [ Their picture of the Messiah was of one who would free them from **their** suffering, not free them through his **own** suffering; that he would actually die for their sakes, but not just for them the Jews, but for the whole world. ] Their hopes had been shattered. These were learned Jews that knew their scriptures well, and had been close followers of Jesus taking on board all he had taught as they journeyed with him. Yet that day, nothing seemed to make sense to them anymore.

The stranger **was** the risen Jesus, but for whatever reason, they did not recognise him, perhaps he was cloaking his face and disguising his voice on purpose. They were not about to get any sympathy in response to their sob story, Instead he challenges these followers of his on their understanding of the scriptures and his own mission,. "You're so foolish, and so slow to believe what the prophets said! Didn't the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?"

### **Walking together**

Perhaps Jesus actually asked the question 'Shall we walk together?', or perhaps it was just implied by his body language, but they did continue on their way, walking side by side. However, now it was just **Jesus** that was talking. When they started off on their walk they **already** had learnt the scriptures, and they **already** had the experience of following Jesus and had committed his teachings to memory. But as Jesus draws up close to them, what they already had was about to come alive. He was about to take them back to school, to do their re-sits !! All the stuff, that they didn't grasp first time round, was retaught them in the clearest way possible. Starting from Moses and then going through all the Prophets, he explained to them everything in the Old Testament that made reference to the Messiah. It was just as well it was a long walk because there are about 365 Messianic prophecies in there. He gave them the **complete** Gospel, that **includes** the suffering. Jesus had fulfilled all of these prophecies, and the way it was now explained made sense to them, like a veil had been lifted off of their minds, like a lens had been brought into focus. They were enthralled and set on fire by all the man had to say to them, but still didn't recognise him.

### **Emmaus**

As they approached the edge of Emmaus, Jesus continued on as if he were going to travel further. But Cleopas and his friend tried to restrain him from leaving them "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over."

It had been an exhausting 3 days, and the travellers were no doubt tired, and it would have been easier to let the stranger carry on his way, but Cleopas, like an old lady with a visiting friend. did not want to let him go.

"Its getting dark now, its been a long walk, and there would be a real danger that you might get robbed by bandits travelling alone. No, you must eat with us and stay the night." They offer the invite

to the stranger. A meal was a way of cementing a relationship. Spontaneous meal invites were part of the culture as was refusing the offer until asked several times, which Jesus did.

### **Breaking Bread**

When the ritual humility was completed, they joined those already in the home sat down for the meal, which most likely was a very simple spread, eeked out a little further to feed their new guest. It was customary what ever time of night to offer bread to a guest arriving at your home. But this guest, took control of proceedings as if he was the head of the household. Without any challenge or question he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them

As if a light was turned on, they recognised in that very instant it was Jesus.

### **Jesus disappears**

Jesus had by now completed his teaching on the purpose of his resurrection, and after he broke bread he then vanished, confirming that his physical presence was no longer needed. All that had **needed** to be done **had** been done. His disappearance tells us that although he was very much with them in a physical body, it was one that had taken on a different form, one in which he could enter and leave rooms in an instant.

### **Day 1**

This is all happening on Easter Sunday, for Jesus this is day 1 of His new life. Don't forget this is just 2 days after being executed. What would your agenda have been, if you had been Jesus. He had been set up by the religious leaders, betrayed by a follower, falsely accused of crimes he had not committed, handed over to the Romans to be tortured and killed, and then taunted whilst he hang on the cross.

The Jewish people mocked him, their religious leaders mocked him, the Roman soldiers mocked him and even the criminal next to him mocked him. They were all spitefully saying the same thing to Jesus, 'Save yourself and we will believe in you". So wouldn't the first thing you do on your return, be to assemble an army of angels, and march them into Jerusalem, and put the record straight.

But no, Jesus was not interested in taking revenge, or taking control by power and might. He had never set out to save himself, and he is not returning now to save his name. Instead, he has come to save **others**.

In this key moment in his story he follows two people who we know nothing about, to a village that we know nothing about, to share the truth of his resurrection, and set their hearts on fire again for Gods kingdom.

A little earlier that day, Jesus had appeared first to a female follower of his, who had been at the cross on Friday, and had gone to anoint his body on the Sunday. Against popular belief she is not either of the ladies that washed the feet of Jesus with their tears, neither was she a prostitute. Prior to the passion account, **all** we know from this gospels of this Mary Magdalene is that she was one of many that Jesus had healed, in her case he had cast out 7 demons, and she was then one of many who provided for the Rabbis living costs. That is it. That's all we know. She was certainly not one of his higher profile disciples, which is one reason why the inner circle of Jesus, Peter, James and John found it so difficult to believe that a risen Jesus had first appeared to **her**.

Then he appears to the even more obscure Cleopas. Johns Gospel, mentions a Mary wife of **Cleopas** at the foot of the cross, who could well have been Lukes' Cleopas, but we don't know who he was. His walking companion is not even named, and whilst there is speculation it was his wife, again we just don't know. Emmaus, probably a 2-3 hour walk from Jerusalem, but whilst there are theories no-

one can be sure now exactly where it was. So the truth is we don't really know who they were, or where they were going.

Which is absolutely brilliant. Jesus came for the lost, for the insignificant, for the unknown, he seeks them out and guides them to a better place.

On the road to Emmaus we can see the progression of the experience of Cleopas. From his state of dark depression he sees Jesus, he walks with him and listens, he restrains him from leaving, he invites him in, he lets Jesus take control, he then rejoices in Him, and is transformed by Him.

In the same way, you could take the road to Emmaus. If you are living in the darkness, or are fearful, or without hope, or without joy, then your life too could follow that same pattern.

## 1. See Jesus

First you need to see Jesus. He is not sat in a crystal palace on the seventh heaven watching re-runs of travel documentaries. He is still out there, right now on the open road, on the country tracks, and the winding pathways of life. We can see him, if we go looking for him.

When we stop shopping on a dull and cold morning and sit down on the street next to a homeless person, hand over a coffee and cookie, then ask his dogs name, Jesus us tells us that it is Him that is receiving the kindness. He tells us in his parable of the sheep and goats (Mt 25v31-46), when we are serving the least of Gods people, feeding, clothing, or visiting them in their hour of need, then he is there in the mix ! Not just in them, but in you too. I love the lyrics of a song by Mike Scott.

*Fat woman, standing in a queue; her hat, shoes, coat and gloves were blue. And when she turned around I knew it was a wonderful disguise.*

*Outside the museum I was addressed by a blind man in his pants and vest. I was most impressed. It was a wonderful disguise.*

*Stood in front of the mirror all alone, examined my features skin and bone. Looked at this face I've always known; It was a wonderful disguise*

I wonder how often Jesus comes into our lives and we miss him. Can you see the Jesus in others that he sends to us each day. He said 'look and you will find' (Mt 7v7). We need to cry out to Jesus, show me your face. Help me to recognise you. Let me see you in others, let me see you in me.

If you are looking for more of God in your life, then you need to see Jesus, and when you see Him, walk with Him.

## 2. Walk with Jesus

Jesus met the travellers on the road and wanted to walk with them. They let him. Life can be very complex, and at times very difficult. Our spiritual enemies, those on the dark side, want to lie, steel and destroy our lives, isolating us from all that is good. Jesus knows about our lives, he knows about our **issues**. He has detailed knowledge and understanding of our complex problems. Yet he comes to us with a very simple proposal. Shall we walk together?

We didn't know who Cleopas was, or where Emmaus was? In the same way, it doesn't matter who you are, who where you think you are going. What is important, is that Jesus wants to walk with you.

Will you **let** Jesus walk with you, take him with you on your journey of life? He listened to the travellers as they poured out their whole story to him, sharing their concerns, fears and questions, and he wants to you to do the same to him, open up to him, pour it all out. Then listen to the word you hear in your heart and mind, and take his advice. Are you prepared to open up to Jesus and to listen to Him, as he speaks thoughts into your conscience?

It is important **who** you choose as your walking partners. Some years ago, I did voluntary detached work on the streets of a notorious estate. I would get alongside some of the most challenging young

teens, and try to help them, which included going to Court with them. One young man was called Christian, he was bright and articulate, but was now in a lot of trouble and up in front the Magistrate. I sat there reflecting on what he would have been like, if he had been born on my side of town, and had gone to my local school which at the time was one **the** best mixed comprehensive option for students England. If he had walked each day with them and not his estate friends, some of whom never went to school, then how different his life might have been.

Jesus is out on the open road, but any relationship with him is one of our own free-will. We have the choice to make him our life's walking companion or not. He wants to walk with you, but the choice is yours.

### 3. Restrain Jesus

If you start walking with Jesus, then keep Him close. Don't get separated.

When they reached Emmaus, Jesus made out as if he was going on further. It was not cultural or polite to assume on anyone to invite yourself in. Cleopas could have thought well that was an interesting conversation, but I'll let him go on his way now. Instead he **restrained** Jesus and **insisted** that he stayed with them.

When I first went to University I had no initial intention in getting involved in Christian activities, but due to an obligation I decided I would have to go at least once to the Christian Union. At the meeting I was befriended by Simon and I really enjoyed the evening, so I started going every week. To me Simon was a great example of a mature Christian, and looked up to him as he helped me establish my adult faith in Christ. After I left University, I heard that he was no longer walking with Jesus. He had got separated.

We are made for closeness. We are made for presence. We are made for connection. The bible is about God yearning and longing to be connected to us. The world the flesh and the devil, want to lie, steel and destroy. He wants to isolate us from that which is good. The enemy will try every trick in the book to distract us and prevent us from retaining the intimacy from God and experiencing his transforming power.

Jesus is not going to walk away from us, even if it may look like it at times, but if we are not determined to restrain Jesus, keep him close, as part of our daily walk, then it is us that can get easily distracted and lose focus. We then lose the path we are on.

We won't stay on track if we have not been properly convicted of our sins. The good news is good news because of the bad news, which is our sin and separation from God. That is why the Messiah had to go to the cross, why he had to suffer. For Cleopas, for me, for you. If we just embrace Jesus, because of our poverty and suffering, with the hope all will change for us on this earth and it doesn't in the way we want, then we can easily drift off the path. But when we know we are sinners, when we are deeply convicted of this, we know that we have to keep Jesus close. He is our only chance of avoiding punishment for all we have done wrong. He is our only chance of eternal life. Our hope is in him. We **are** sinners, fall so far short of what God's holiness and purity requires of us. The more we have been deeply convicted of that, then the more we will cling to our only home, and that is the truth of the forgiveness of Jesus through his death on the cross. We cling to that truth, by clinging to Jesus, and we do by keeping in tune day by day with the Holy Spirit.

If though our evangelism, people want to follow Jesus, but our not really convicted of their sins, and their utter need for this forgiveness, then although they may start off on the road, they will soon stray off it, perhaps when the first new bout of suffering comes.

We are not promised a suffering free walk. The bible tells us that there will be trials and temptations in our lives but Jesus will be there in the midst of that guiding us and strengthening us, **if we don't get separated.**

Whatever comes against you, whenever you lose your footing, whatever you do, don't let Jesus go. Your journey of life is a daily walk, so check each day that you are still walking alongside Him. Don't get separated.

#### 4. Give Jesus control

The main reason we get separated is because we try and keep control of our own life, do it our way and not His way. When Cleopas got back to Emmaus, he invited Jesus in, and handed over control to Him. It was Jesus who then took on the role of the house holder, by breaking the bread and blessed it. If we want to take our own road to Emmaus, and journey our life with God, both now and for eternity, then we need to hand over control to Jesus, and trust him with our **lives**. This **is** Christian **faith**. We walk with him, but **He** guides us, in what at times can be a rough and rocky road. But fear not, for he is with you. Lean on him, lean on his understanding. He knows you intimately, and knows what is best for you. He wants you to trust him with your relationships, your career choices, your finances, and each detail of those complex lives that you try and live. Jesus says walk with me, give me control, and I will guide you.

#### 5. Rejoice in Jesus

When Jesus suddenly disappeared from them at the meal table, the two travellers exclaimed "Wow, our hearts were on fire, when he opened up the scriptures to us back on the road." I imagine them looking at each other, their faces now glowing with excitement and joy.

They had set out on the road to Emmaus fearful, despondent and depressed. They would not have been good company. You would not have wanted to walk with them, but **Jesus** did and their mood changed. They were now so transformed by walking with Jesus, that their weary minds and bodies were so restored, that they immediately set off **back** up the 7 mile road to Jerusalem, in the fading light. Why? because they could not keep the good news to themselves even for one night. They had to share their joy with the disciples.

Think back to a day recently when you were in a proper bad mood. Now imagine on that day you became aware that Jesus had **actually** come up alongside you, like he did with the travellers. What if he you could not just sense him but see into the spiritual and see him for real right there with you. How long could you stay in that bad mood? Being with Jesus is transformational

There is a line from the Housefires worship song called The Way, which says

*It's a new horizon and I'm set on you, and You meet me here today with mercies that are new. All my fears and doubts they can all come too, because they can't stay long when I'm here with You.*

We are made for closeness. We are made for presence. We are made for connection. We are made to be in tune with God. He **wants** to transform our sorrow into dancing.

#### The onward journey - transformation

Your onward journey through life starts **today**, and is heading towards **another** day in which you breathe a fond farewell. In between time, you will travel through a series of days and nights, hopefully very many. If you see Jesus, then let him walk with you, restrain him from leaving, invite him in to every aspect of your living, and give him control of your destiny? Take your own personal Road to Emmaus, your own road of discovery and transformation.

But if you do that, then what will it look like?

Well, you won't know unless you go. But other travellers can give you good insights on what your personal road to Emmaus will be like.

For each of us, our paths will be different, though at times they will cross. The way ahead may be clear on some days, and almost disappear on others, it may even double back on itself for a while, but keep on it. It was designed for you. Often you will only know the very next step and not the one after, so you need to take one step at a time, restraining Jesus to stay close, and listening hard for his voice.

There will be days when your path takes you to a [mountain](#) top experience. The air will be sweet and rare, and you may feel the fire of God burning in your heart as you savour His presence. Your fellow travellers at that point will be seeing the light and joy from that Jesus encounter in your face, as you see it in theirs. From that peak you will gain a new perspective of your Christian journey and feel a deep assurance of your direction and purpose.

Your path will also take you into times of prayer and fellowship that, like deep [lakes](#), will refresh you from the heat and muck of the day that you have just endured. The Holy Spirit will surprise you on route, who like an erosive [river](#) over time, will not just flow through you but will mould the landscape of your personality to be more like that of Jesus. The source of these Spirit rivers, bubble up from the very heart of God and will surprise you with moments of incredible joy, and feelings of intense aliveness.

You will meet other Christian travellers on route, so be ready to invite them in, break bread and share wine with them. Share your travel stories and learn more about the road from them.

Your road will also take you into [valleys](#), sometimes so deep, that the sun can not no longer penetrate your path, and your bones are chilled by this turn of scenery. Yet the Son, of God, is still there, and will never leave you, and if the terrain gets too rough, he will carry you through it. You may even have to cross the [wilderness](#), a desert like place where temptations are rife, and comforts are few. Your valleys and deserts, are part of your road, and will be formative in your walk with Jesus, If you don't lose heart, you will face down your inner demons, and emerge wiser and stronger on the path as it winds up to your next mountain top, even higher than the last.

All the way, you are never far from the [ocean](#) that is God love. When you reach its shores, it will lap up around as you wade cautiously into, but its depths will cry out to you to go further and to plunge in out of your depth, to be immersed, to be overwhelmed. There is no end, breadth or depth to this love. When you leave that place and follow your road onwards, the ocean of Gods love will produce the refreshing warm rain that reminds you that he is close by, accepting you, forgiving you, loving you and rejoicing in you, despite the many times that you wandered off track from your personal road to Emmaus.

Our road to Emmaus is not about reaching heaven, although that is one reward for the faithful traveller. It is about the journey itself, as we simply **walk with Jesus, wherever he leads us.**

Jesus says today – Can I walk with **you**? Say Yes. I will walk with you. I will give you control over my life. I will follow you wherever the path leads. I will not let you go whatever the terrain. Be my life-long travelling companion, and transform me day by day more and more into your likeness.

Listen ! Can I walk with **you**? Yes Lord. Walk with me. Let's go. Amen

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Note 1: The Jewish people mocked him "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One." (Lk 23v35). Their religious leaders mocked him ""He saved others but he can't save himself! If he's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him." (Mt 27v42). The Roman soldiers mocked him "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself. (Lk 23v37). " Even

the criminal next to him mocked him "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us (Lk 23v39). Wow. They were all spitefully saying the same thing to Jesus, 'Save yourself and we will believe in you'".