

**Kairos      1st May 2022**

**Emmaus Road   Luke 24: 13-35**

Let's go in our imagination on that same journey made by Cleopas and his companion. Along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. You and your friend leave Jerusalem behind, the noises, the smells, the hustle and bustle. You are glad to get away, and glad to have the company of a trusted companion to share the long walk. There are roughly 7 miles ahead of you and you might just make it to Emmaus by evening if you keep a steady pace.

Why are you making this journey? Are you escaping the mayhem? Or are you scared because there may well be repercussions for people who, like you, had associated themselves with Jesus of Nazareth? Are you simply just wanting to get away, have a bit of breathing space, put a bit of distance between you and all that has happened? Do you want to forget?

Your heart is heavy with disappointment. Hope has been crushed. Jesus was dead, it had all come to nothing. You had really believed he had come from God - but what Son of God ends up on a cross?

No, you can't forget it. The story crops up again and again in your conversation as you walk. There really doesn't seem to be anything else to talk about. You've been going for a good while, and stop to share a drink of

water, splashing a little of the precious liquid on your face. The sun is beating down; normally you'd have no trouble covering this distance, but today you are weary and every step feels like hard work. There's a little copse ahead where you can rest a while in the shade of the trees, so you and your friend take a while to regain your strength. But you can't stay too long if you are going to get to Emmaus by dusk, and so on you press.

You pass the time by taking turns to recall stories, the things that had happened. Funny how they nearly all revolve around Jesus - the day the crowds were fed from one small boy's picnic, the people who had been healed of blindness and leprosy and the man who Jesus freed of his demons. For a while these stories encourage you, but then you remember how it all ended, the arrest, the trial, the crowds yelling, 'Crucify him', then the awful day of crucifixion, the cries he made from the cross 'It is finished' he had said - how right he was. Not only that, but you really don't know what to make of the reports that his body has gone missing and some women saw a vision of angels saying he was alive.

You hadn't really noticed, but a stranger has joined you, so now there are three of you walking along together. Where did he spring from? Did he catch you up, funny, you hadn't seen anyone else around when you last looked back the way you've come. He asks you what you are talking about. Where has this man been? He doesn't seem to know anything about what's been going on in Jerusalem - who is he?

So, you fill him in and go over everything yet again – somehow, it's quite therapeutic talking it over again with a complete stranger. When you finish the story it's his turn to speak, and he has some very challenging things to say to you. He certainly knows his scriptures and, bit by bit, he pieces everything together, showing how everything that has happened was just how the prophets said it would, going right back to Moses.

You hardly notice the tiredness in your legs now, or the fact that the sun has got really low in the sky. This man has given you a new energy, the air temperature has dropped dramatically but you feel warm inside. Before you know it, you have reached Emmaus - your stomach rumbles and you realise you've had nothing to eat all day. Presumably your new companion hasn't eaten either, and something makes you not want to part - not just yet, and so you invite him in to share a meal with you and he gladly accepts.

It's so good to sit down, to take the weight off those weary feet, and there is a real bond between the three of you who have shared so much on this journey. As the bread is put on the table, your guest takes some in his hands, he says a prayer of thanks and then tears it up to share it out. You feel the hairs standing out on your arms and your heart beats faster - you've seen those gestures before - on that hill with the 5000, in the upper room at the Passover - it could only be him, no one else. You turn to your friend as you both recognise him at the same time

but before you can say his name - Jesus has gone. The women were right - he is alive again; you have seen him with your own eyes.

Let's leave the story there to reflect. What has happened here? As I've been pondering on this passage, I've come to see it as much more than one of several resurrection appearances, much more than another piece of evidence that Jesus did indeed rise from the dead. I see it as a story of resurrection itself – a parable of resurrection even.

If resurrection is about life out of death, hope out of despair and joy out of sorrow, then what these two companions have experienced is exactly that. They aren't the same now as they were when they left Jerusalem, everything is different.

In his book 'Living Easter through the Year', John Pritchard talks about resurrection being the secret at the heart of the universe. He says, 'God had built resurrection into his world long before he enacted it in the life of Jesus.' What does he mean? He's saying that resurrection wasn't something new that first Easter Day, it had always been around, but people just couldn't see it. It took Jesus' resurrection to open our eyes.

Resurrection is there built into our bodies - and the amazing capacity they have to heal – broken bones knitting together again. Resurrection is there when new buds come on what looked like dead twigs, when

branches burst into pink and white blossom. Resurrection is what happens when communities devastated by disasters, repair and rebuild.

Resurrection happens when a relationship that went wrong is put right again through the healing of forgiveness. We see resurrection when a child, mistreated by the ones who should have cared for her, begins a new life in a new family and learns what it is to be loved.

Resurrection happens when survivors of modern-day slavery rebuild their lives and become advocates of freedom for others.

There's resurrection when the long dark times of bereavement gradually ease and life can feel good once again.

When life is going along happily for us with no major upsets or difficulties, perhaps it's easier to spot evidence of resurrection. But, in those times in our life when we feel more like Good Friday than Easter Day, when we long for resurrection to come, perhaps what we most need then is to have Jesus draw alongside us, on that hard and stony road, to let him share our pain and disappointments. Allowing him to walk beside us, trusting that there will be resurrection.

Every time we meet to celebrate Holy Communion as we will shortly once again today, we celebrate and enact

resurrection. In the prayer we're using today are these wonderful words that capture what I've been trying to say:

He opened wide his arms for us on the cross;  
he put an end to death by dying for us;  
and *revealed the resurrection* by rising to new life.

As John Pritchard says - it's an open secret, Jesus has revealed what was already there - the possibility of a new world, God's kingdom.

Because Jesus Christ is risen and nothing will ever be the same again! AMEN