

Dear friends,

Another well-known story this week – that of the two walking back home to Emmaus and meeting with Jesus on the way. Two disciples walk back home from Jerusalem. They are in despair about the death of Jesus. Though Jesus appears beside them and walks with them, they don't realise it is their Lord. They listen as he teaches them the real meaning of the Scriptures – and they suddenly see that it is the risen Jesus when he breaks the bread. What a wonderful experience. Hoping, as always, that you are finding life good at the moment, I wish you every blessing. *Margaret*

Call to Worship

Come to worship the risen Christ with open eyes and ears, minds and hearts.

Come – prepared, expecting, desiring – to discover and know more of Christ, our risen Saviour. Amen.

Loving Lord, as we come to worship, help us to see and hear not only the familiar but the unexpected, the new, the different. Help us to understand and have a new awareness of you and of your story – of your love and your presence in our lives. Amen.

Here we are, Lord, the events of Easter still fresh in our minds.

We still have our questions – we wonder how we can join the dots; learn the best way to live the life we are called to live.

Open our eyes, Lord, so that we might see the stranger in our midst. Give us openness to listen to their stories and remind us that we never know when we might come across Jesus, our friend, our Lord and master. Open our eyes and our hearts, Lord. Amen.

The words to 'Lord Jesus Christ' written by Patrick Appleford [b.1925]

Singing the Faith 594

1 Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us,
you are one with us, Mary's son;
cleansing our souls from all their sin, pouring your love and goodness in;
Jesus, our love for you we sing, living Lord!

2 Lord Jesus Christ, now and every day,
teach us how to pray, Son of God.
You have commanded us to do this, in remembrance, Lord, of you;
into our lives your power breaks through, living Lord!

3 Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us,
born as one of us, Mary's Son;
led out to die on Calvary, risen from death to set us free;
living Lord Jesus, help us see you are Lord!

4 Lord Jesus Christ, we would come to you,
live our lives for you, Son of God.
All your commands we know are true; your many gifts will make us new;
into our lives your power breaks through, living Lord.

Prayer:

They asked one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us?'

Lord Jesus, you met so many people in so many ways.

Ordinary ways – walking, talking, eating with them.

But also extraordinary – because you were there. You are an extraordinary God and we worship and adore you. Amen.

Lord, we confess that we live our lives distracted by so many things. So often this is when things aren't going the way we think they should, like the pair who trod the Emmaus road. Our feet carry us forward but our thoughts go round in circles – and, at such times, when you come to us, Lord, we often fail to recognise you.

We are sorry and ask you to reveal yourself to us afresh. Amen.

All-seeing, all-knowing, and ever-present God, you understand how easily we are caught up by life's cares, spiralling into despair and distance. Yet in your grace, O Lord, you forgive us and walk the way with us, welcoming us back into your presence. You feed our souls with comfort and hope, teaching us to see life in a new light. Amen.

Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Luke 24: 13-35 – taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 2011 by Zondervan

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they walked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him.

He asked them: 'What are you two discussing together as you walk along?' They stood still, their faces downcast. 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?'

'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. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 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. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it, just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.'

He said to them: 'How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer all these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. 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.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other: 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to you?'

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying: 'It is true! The Lord is risen and has appeared to Simon!'

Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

Meditation of Cleopas – taken from A Most Amazing Man – year A. Copyright 2010 Nick Fawcett

We were returning to Emmaus, heading back the way we'd come – but in truth we were going nowhere, life suddenly empty and devoid of direction, for they had crucified Jesus, the one on whom we'd pinned our hopes. We'd thought him the Messiah, the promised one of God who'd set us free – and when he had ridden into Jerusalem acclaimed like a king we'd assumed the time had come – the moment when he'd take up his throne and start to rule.

But now he was dead – and with him had gone our faith in the future, our faith in *anything*.

What sort of God would let that happen? Why hadn't he intervened?

We tried to make sense of it as we talked together, but there too we trod the same old ground – one step forwards and the next backwards.

Until, that is, this stranger met us and walked by our side. Until we broke bread and shared wine. Until he opened our Scriptures and unfolded their meaning. Then, suddenly, we knew the truth.

It was Jesus – risen, victorious, alive!

That's why God let it happen. He *had* intervened, right there on the cross!

And though Jesus vanished even as the truth dawned, we knew somehow he'd be with us always – the King of kings and Lord of lords.

We set off again, resuming our journey, but this time we were no longer going nowhere: we were walking the way of Christ!

Prayer: Risen Lord, remind us that, with you by our sides, faith should be an ongoing journey, an unfolding story of adventure and discovery. Give us an expectation of new experiences and insights, an openness to new horizons, a desire to grow in grace, wisdom and commitment.

Reveal your presence to us through your word, your world, your Church, your Spirit – and help us to greet each day in the knowledge that you are with us, leading us forward, whatever we face, in life or in death – each moment being another step on the road to the joys you hold in store, now and for evermore. Amen.

Close: Lord, as we go on into the week, walk with us. Inspire us to join the dots of our faith to see more clearly the wonder of the Easter story. Motivate us to share that story with others and encourage us to live and work with you and in you. Amen.

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