

The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. ¹⁶ But God kept them from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. ¹⁸ Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days."

¹⁹ "What things?" Jesus asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. ²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

²² "Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. ²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! ²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said."

²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" ²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, ²⁹ but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. ³⁰ As they sat down to eat,^[b] he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

³² They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" ³³ And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, ³⁴ who said, "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter."^[c]

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

³⁵ Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.

The Emmaus Road

Walking in and into Faith

Luke 24:13-32

1. Lead In

- a. They tell us that we need to walk around 10 000 paces a day to keep ourselves physically healthy. This works out at about 6kms per day. The journey to Emmaus is about 7miles / 11 kms/ 20 000 paces.

2. The Emmaus Road

- a. It is initially a story about spiritual disappointment – about feeling seriously let-down, of walking away from following Jesus. Jesus had died ignominiously and horribly. All their hopes and dreams for the future had come crashing down and they were now walking away.
- b. As they walked away, they met a stranger who encouraged them to speak about their disappointment and so they poured out their whole sorry story. Quote v19-24. Those words of theirs are so telling: *“we had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel”*. *“We had hoped.....”* *“He was....”*. We no longer hope this, we no longer believe this....” It has all come to nothing – we have been spiritually let down even duped. It is time to walk away from it all get on with life. Their life had intersected with the life of Jesus for a while but now his life and their life were going on divergent paths.
- c. I wonder how many here would have the honesty to describe their spiritual journey in a similar way? As one of disappointment? Of trying to follow Jesus and feeling that he never became real and personal for you. Of feeling let down and disappointed by those who followed him, of feeling disillusioned by the church, put off by its politics, hurt by its leaders and then set out on your own journey to Emmaus away from Jesus. Away from the church altogether or remain in it but settle for a little bit of religion, come to church but not expect to really encounter divine love. If you don't set your hopes too high you can't be disappointed.
- d. Perhaps we feel disappointed that Jesus has allowed Covid 19 to happen.
- e. As a child, as a teenager, as a young man I had settled for a little bit of religion, I believed in God, never encountered him. I served in the sanctuary, for several years sang in the church choir as a boy, went to church but had never encountered Jesus. I didn't realize one could – never heard a sermon to that effect and slowly began to drift away from church. Believed in God, knew that Jesus fitted in somehow but really God was a rather distant fuzzy figure with no real substance.

- f. Back to the Emmaus Road story. Then this stranger began to speak to them - we know the stranger is Jesus, but they didn't yet. He was able to put the events in Jerusalem into a theological and intellectual framework that connected with them deeply and made sense. Perhaps your disappointment is one of having your intellectual questions treated superficially and not getting satisfying answers.
- g. The journey came to an end. "Jesus acted as if he was going on." Never forces himself on us. Leaves the invitation to us. As they invited him in, they deeply and profoundly encountered him. Such an impact that they returned to Jerusalem that night - an 11 km walk. The choice to invite him in is ours. The experience of doing that is likely to be lifechanging.

3. Some Observations / Comments.

- a. Our life is a journey.
- b. Everyone deserves the opportunity to walk to Emmaus for their spiritual wellbeing – to walk 20 000 spiritual steps that gives them an opportunity to choose to invite Jesus in and encounter him. To invite his presence into our lives so that he can help us live life through his gift of grace rather than our own striving.
- c. You are so important to God that he has been seeking to have an Emmaus road walk with you since the day you were born. Disappointment has perhaps made you want to walk away.

4. Opportunities

- a. Next week I hope to make available to you some pilgrimage walks that Peter Stuart has been working on as part of the Retreat Parish model. This could help you turn your daily walks into an Emmaus experience.
- b. This term we will be running another PIGS (People Investigating God Seriously). Opportunity for people to come as they are; disappointed, sceptical, let-down, feeling unworthy, curious and seeking for something more. Opportunity to come. Opportunity to invite others to come. Dates will be communicated within the next week. The course will be run on Zoom.
- c. Those two followers of Jesus walked 20 000 steps that changed their lives. They then walked another 20 000 steps back to Jerusalem to go and tell others. They start out being invited on a journey – they end up inviting others.
- d. Each day we walk about 10 000 steps. Do we make those steps count? Do we make the effort to invite others on the journey?