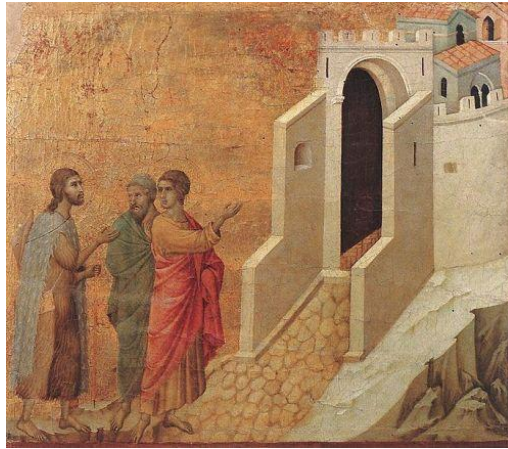


Shellrock Benefice

Service for Third Sunday of Easter



Road to Emmaus by Duccio di Buoninsegna – Web Gallery of Art, Public Domain, [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Collect

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

Readings

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116: 1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1: 17-23

The Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in

Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' ¹⁹ He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' ²⁵ Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Reflections on the gospel reading

One of the things that I like about St. Luke's Gospel, and also the Book of Acts, is that the author is such a wonderful storyteller. He gives clear, vivid and ordinary every-day detail which stirs the imagination. Reading this passage about "the Road to Emmaus" I can imagine the scene unfolding, whatever the century, or time, or wherever the place. Something important has happened, which has had a huge impact. Two people talking: every detail needs to be rehearsed to get some sense of understanding. It's a very natural human process, going over and over things, speaking about them, re-living them, trying to make sense of them. We do it all the time don't we?

This story is found only in Luke's Gospel. The location of Emmaus has never been identified with certainty, but it's thought that it was near the city of first-century Jerusalem, around seven miles away. But we are not told why these two people were travelling to Emmaus. Perhaps they were in a state of despair, and, like many of us, just had the need to "get away." For them and for their fellow followers of Jesus, any place would be better than Jerusalem, where all their hopes had been brought to nothing following the crucifixion. They are grieving the loss of a loved one. They are shattered.

We are given the name of one of the two travellers. His name is Cleopas. He is probably the same person we find as Clopas in John 19, 25, but he appears nowhere else in the New Testament. The couple on the road, it has been suggested, may have been a husband and wife, Cleopas and Mary. They were clearly not part of the original disciple group of twelve since the story ends with them going to report to "the eleven" what had happened (24:33). However, it seems that they were certainly followers of Jesus. They had regarded Him as more than a prophet; they had witnessed God's power through the miracles and Jesus' teaching. They had developed the hope that they would be liberated from domination, free to serve God in peace. And this is the way they were explaining their

thoughts and feelings as they walked, accompanied by the initially unrecognised Jesus.

It was only when they broke their journey to take rest and eat a meal together that recognition dawned. Their eyes were opened. But, at the moment of realisation, Jesus vanished from their sight and they were left with this wondrous experience to share with their friends in Jerusalem.

Tom Wright, in his commentary on St Luke, highlights the parallels of two different meals described in our Bible. The very first meal, recorded in Genesis, is when Eve took some of the fruit of the forbidden tree, ate it and gave it to her husband, Adam. He ate it and "the eyes of the two of them were opened to their nakedness" (Genesis 3; 6-7). The tale has been told many times and is used as an explanation for the start of the woes befalling humanity. Death was traced to this first rebellion. But now Luke is echoing that story as he describes the meal taken with Jesus by Cleopas and Mary. Jesus "took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them; then were their eyes opened and they recognised Him" (verse 31). Cleopas and Mary discover that the curse of Adam has been broken. God has brought in a new creation and with it a new life has burst upon the world. I find Tom Wright's idea of the parallels an interesting and thought provoking one.

Within this recorded story is a pattern or template that describes the journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus and back to Jerusalem. It's a journey Cleopas and his companion take, and it's a journey each of us may have taken, or may take in the future. It is a journey from despair, loss, disappointment, bewilderment, to a new discovery. If we allow it to do so, it can change us; a metanoia. For Cleopas and Mary, as soon as they saw and recognized Jesus, "he vanished from their sight." Hard as it might be to understand this disappearance, in a sense Jesus did not need to be there any longer. So amazing was this experience of the risen Lord that for these two travellers, He became incorporated within their hearts and minds and their lives were changed for ever. But for us today, is it sometimes the case I wonder, particularly when life is tough and

confusing, it feels as if Jesus disappears from us. We cry out in our prayers, O Lord, where are you, where have you gone ?

I am here reminded of that poem, familiar to many people; a single set of footsteps in the sand. Where was Jesus, the traveller asks?



One night I dreamed a dream.
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,
there was only one set of footprints.

This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,
You'd walk with me all the way.
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my
life, there was only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You would leave
me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you,
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.

**When you saw only one set of footprints,
It was then that I carried you."**

Prayers

Good Lord, we are confident that you are with us at this time of crisis in our country, although sometimes we may not realise it. Isolation from our friends and family is so hard and we can sometimes feel low. Help us to remember that you are there, understanding, and reaching out to us with love. Amen

Some in our country and community are blessed with space in which to enjoy the fresh air and the joys of the garden. There are others who do not have this advantage and we are aware of the difficulties they experience. We pray for those who live in very cramped conditions and who are having to bear the frustrations and the impact of their living situations on their emotional well-being. We ask you, Good Lord, to sustain the fearful and those whose mood is low. Amen

O Lord, we are also concerned about those who have lost their employment as a result of the viral threat, and also those who are frightened about their economic futures. We ask that policy makers be ever mindful of the personal costs to individuals and families and be compassionate in their decision making. Amen

Good Lord, we ask for healing for those known to us who are in any way afflicted, physically or emotionally at this time. We ask that they be given relief from their suffering, and the knowledge that they are loved and cared for. Amen

Gracious God, give skill, and resilience to all who are caring for the sick and wisdom to those searching for a cure. Strengthen them with your Spirit that through their work, many will be restored to health. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Finally, O Lord, we give you thanks for the dedication of all those known to us who are working so hard in our community to ensure that facilities are available and that resources are brought to those who need. We are truly thankful that there is so much love and commitment within this our community of Shellrock. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; 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

Blessing

The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and for evermore. Amen

