



## The Road To Emmaus - 26th April 2020 Transcript

Hello everyone. Good to see you here - in a manner of speaking!  
Are you like me struggling to remember what day it is, with each day having a very similar feel to it at present? These are such strange times, but life still goes on. And Sunday is here again. We celebrated the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, two weeks ago, and we continue to celebrate the risen Jesus in these weeks known as the Easter Season. Though the fact of Jesus being alive with us is the foundation of our Christian life and all our expectations as his church here on earth. Whether we are scattered as we are now, or together as his church in a particular place, we are always together as we sing his praises and celebrate his presence.

So let's do just that, let's sing together now, a hymn of joy, that Jesus is Lord of all. Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it.

### **Song: Jesus is Lord.**

*Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice proclaims it,  
for by his power each tree and flower  
was planned and made.  
Jesus is Lord! The universe declares it;  
sun, moon and stars in heaven cry:  
Jesus is Lord!*

*Jesus is Lord!  
Jesus is Lord!  
Praise him with alleluias,  
for Jesus is Lord!*

*Jesus is Lord! Yet from his throne eternal  
in flesh he came to die in pain  
on Calvary's tree.  
Jesus is Lord! From him all life proceeding -  
yet gave his life a ransom,  
thus setting us free.*

*Jesus is Lord!  
Jesus is Lord!  
Praise him with alleluias,  
for Jesus is Lord!*

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*Jesus is Lord! O'er sin the mighty conqueror,  
from death he rose; and all his foes  
shall own his name.*

*Jesus is Lord! God sends his Holy Spirit  
to show by works of power  
that Jesus is Lord.*

*Jesus is Lord!  
Jesus is Lord!  
Praise him with alleluias,  
for Jesus is Lord!*

*David John Mansell (b. 1936)*

Let us pray.

Risen and living Saviour, God of all power, and God of all love.

We meet together to worship you.

We join together our praises with others across this country and all around this world who will meet to celebrate you today, strangely apart, and yet utterly together in you.

And you are worthy of all praise and all glory, because of who you are - the maker of all things; power and majesty, wisdom and strength. You brought this world to life, and you are involved in all life. All life speaks of your power and your love.

We praise you for who you are. And we thank you for all that you have done in Jesus. By his living, dying and rising you have transformed this world, making a relationship with yourself a living possibility and a tangible reality.

We meet you now united by the power of your Spirit. You reach out to us, you touch us, you lead us and you transform us. And you draw us ever closer into that relationship with you.

So as we gather in these less than normal circumstances, in this less than normal way to worship you, we lay all that we are at your feet. We empty ourselves of the things which separate us from you. And for these moments together we make you the centre of our attention and the focus of our lives.

We bring our prayers in the name of our risen Saviour Jesus, and we pray as he taught us, today using the modern version of the Lord's Prayer:

*Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your Name,  
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen.*



And now I'd like to ask Tracy to read for us the Gospel reading set for today.

The reading is from Luke 24 verse 13 to 31 and I'm reading from the Message

## **Bible Reading Luke 24: 13 - 31 (The Message)**

### **The Road To Ammaus**

*That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognise who he was. He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?"*

*They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?" He said, "What has happened?"*

*They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."*

*Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?" Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.*

*They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognised him. And then he disappeared.*

*Back and forth they talked. "Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?" They didn't waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: "It's really happened! The Master has been raised - Simon saw him!" Then the two went over everything that had happened on the road, and how they*

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*recognised him when he broke the bread.*

There is a village a few miles west of Jerusalem: a very small insignificant village, called Motsa. It's not on the pilgrim trail - no churches are built to mark the spot. It's the sort of village you would pass without even noticing it. Just a few houses surrounded by unexciting trees and dry brown ground. And quite a bit of litter around as well! I went there 20 years ago with about 40 other ministers and vicars in training. We got off our bus in the village, and went through a 5-bar gate onto a rough track that led off into the countryside. Our guide told us - "look for something that is different". We didn't know what we were looking for, but we walked slowly scouring the ground, and landscape around us for about half a mile.

One of our group, as well as being a trainee vicar, was also a history teacher. He spotted it first. It was there in the rough stones of the track, and he pointed out a different pattern, and soon we were all staring at ground, at the clear evidence of a Roman-built road. There were kerb stones in distinctive patterns, and grooves from cart wheels that must have run upon it, maybe as much as 2000 years before. Motsa, as I said, is not on the tourist trail. In 2000 this was a fairly recent archeological discovery. Is it a coincidence that the name Motsa - is not so far from the name Emmaus? It's certainly in the right direction out of Jerusalem.

This is Israel we're talking about: the Holy Land, where every Biblical event is remembered in some monumental church. And the Emmaus road experience is remembered too, in a monastery called Abu Ghosh, just a mile or two from Motsa, where in a cool, simple church, worship is offered each day by a group of monks and nuns, who live together at that spot and welcome tourists who are looking for the evidence of the Emmaus road. But I don't believe you need to travel all the way to Israel, to make sense of this particular Gospel event. I think it makes a lot of sense in our own everyday experience.

Let's think for a bit about the story we heard. Two men are walking back from Jerusalem to their homes in Emmaus, discussing what has happened in recent days, and they are joined by a stranger walking in the same direction. This stranger appears to know nothing about what has been going on in Jerusalem in recent days and they are amazed that he seems to have missed all the excitement, everything surrounding Jesus and his death. He was a prophet, they tell him, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. It's only three days since Jesus died, but already he is being talked about in the past. He was a prophet - an important person in what he did and what he said, but he's dead and gone - it's all in the past. In fact the person they are walking with is the risen Jesus himself, but somehow they don't recognise him. I wonder why?

Do we sometimes, or even often, not recognise Jesus walking alongside us?  
Do we get so wrapped up in life's pressures, that we miss him there, walking

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alongside us every step? Perhaps we are too wrapped in busyness? Or in life's more tedious routines? Or in tiredness? Or in ill health? Or in stress, or distress? Or in grief? Any of these things make us just carry on our lives mechanically, with our eyes and our thoughts so much down there in the dust of the road, that we can't see Jesus walking beside us; so that we can't sense his presence with us or grasp what his presence means for us.

In spite of their lack of recognition, Jesus just walks there beside them, content to remain a stranger. And that's true in our lives too: whether we recognise him or not, Jesus is still there walking beside us, listening to our thoughts, but content to be a stranger to us, though very much ready to respond when we recognise him there.

But even a stranger doesn't stay a stranger long for these disciples, because they talk to him. They share their concerns with him, and he painstakingly helps them to see their problems in a new light. He opens the Scriptures to them, and as they explain what has happened in recent days, he helps them to understand all that the Old Testament reveals about the Messiah. He sheds new light and clarity on all that has happened.

Perhaps that's true for us too. If we acknowledge Jesus there with us on our road, the road that we are travelling wherever it's taking us, if we share our problems, fears, uncertainties and anxieties with him, then he will help us to make sense of the things that are happening around us, things in our own lives and in the lives of others. Things that are happening in this world too.

Sometimes Jesus's role is to help us to face up the reality of the issues we face, and to challenge us to rethink our ideas, as we re-engage in our relationship with himself. And that can happen, even when there don't seem to be any clear answers or solutions. Jesus can bring new life and understanding to our issues.

The disciples needed Jesus's help to painstakingly pick through the problem, and to find some understanding of what loss of their friend and leader meant. And to help them find the bigger picture in it all.

And Jesus can help us to clarify what is real, and what is just a result of our overactive anxiety mechanisms. He is there in the struggles with us. That's what his presence with us means.

By time the disciples reach Emmaus, their home village, the day is near to its close, and the stranger at their side has become a friend. They invite him in, to eat with them and rest before continuing his journey and he accepts. And as they welcome him to their table, something very strange happens. Instead of the host, the owner of the house, beginning the meal by breaking the bread, Jesus takes that role himself, and in that moment they know who he is. They finally see him real beside them, resurrected - alive - very much alive. And all their despair turned to joy; their desolation became elation; their weariness



vanishes.

Emmaus lay west of Jerusalem, and they had set off on the walk home, reaching their destination as the sun was setting, and the daylight fading. They had walked with heavy hearts, with all their dreams and expectations shattered, as if the sun had set on all their hopes.

But at the end of their journey, the stranger in the midst has become recognisable to them, as their friend and leader, their resurrected Saviour, their Lord and their God. And although night has fallen, their weariness has vanished, their hope has been restored, and they find a new energy that leads them back along the road to Jerusalem. Back from where they had come. But now heading towards a new day, and the sun's rising. As they walk with excitement, they watch a new dawn unfold - a dawn of new hope - the beginning of new life. Jesus's resurrection - Jesus alive, transforms everything for them. They can no longer see him, but that doesn't matter because they know that he is alive. They have experienced his comforting words and presence and now they need to share their joy with others.

Today I want to ask the question, where are you in this event?

Are you walking through this strange form of life, with a heavy heart? Are you focusing on the fact that the sun has set in recent weeks on all the usual patterns and opportunities of life? Are you wrestling with fear and anxiety? Are you confused in your isolation? Are you grieving? Does each news bulletin and all the media speculation on what might happen next take you spiralling downwards in negativity?

Does that sound like you in any degree?

Are you aware of the stranger who walks beside you? Are you willing to share all that you are feeling and thinking with him? And do you have the confidence that he can help you make sense of it all? Do you believe that he can transform your thinking by raising your eyes from the dust of the road, to the bigger picture? Are you willing to trust the transforming power of his presence in every moment. Are you walking towards the sunset, sharing your sorrows as you go?

Or are you perhaps, filled with the joy of resurrection, and seeing the risen Son at the heart of this world's struggles, and your own struggles? Are your eyes turned towards the rising sun, as you know in your heart with certainty that Jesus is right in the midst of all of this with us. Do you have confidence in the God of this whole earth, who has the power to transform this whole messy situation with his peace, with his love and hope?

Wherever you are, God is with you, by the power and presence of his Holy Spirit.

May you find the sun rising on your hope. May you feel your heart warmed as

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you share the day to day issues you face with the one who has all the time in the world for you. And may you see him clearly as each day unfolds, there at your side, alive, and ready to bring new life to you and to this world.

A song that seems appropriate today is: For the joys and for the sorrows - for this I have Jesus, so let's sing that now.

## **Song: For The Joys And For The Sorrows**

*For the joys and for the sorrows, the best and worst of times,  
For this moment, for tomorrow, for all that lies behind;  
Fears that crowd around me, for the failure of my plans,  
For the dreams of all I hope to be, the truth of what I am:*

*For this I have Jesus, for this I have Jesus,  
For this I have Jesus, I have Jesus.*

*For the tears that flow in secret, in the broken times,  
For the moments of elation, or the troubled mind;  
For all the disappointments, or the sting of old regrets,  
All my prayers and longings that seem unanswered yet:*

*For this I have Jesus, for this I have Jesus,  
For this I have Jesus, I have Jesus.*

*For the weakness of my body, the burdens of each day,  
For the nights of doubt and worry, when sleep has fled away;  
Needing reassurance, and the will to start again,  
A steely-eyed endurance, the strength to fight and win:*

*For this I have Jesus, for this I have Jesus,  
For this I have Jesus, I have Jesus.*

*Graham Kendrick (b.1950)*

Let us pray.

Loving Lord, risen Saviour  
You are here with us in the hard times, the struggling times,  
The searching times, the anxious times.  
And you are with this world in all its frailty right now.  
Touch those that need to feel a loving touch.  
Hold the hands of those who feel weak.  
Bring your healing to those who are hurting and in pain.  
Put your loving arms around the lonely.  
And give strength and hope to all who are working so hard to keep things going,  
Wherever they are and whatever they are doing.



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Bless this whole world with your peace, and the possibility of new life.  
This day and every day. Amen

Let's end with another song - a song of praise: My Jesus, My Saviour

## **Song: My Jesus, My Saviour**

*My Jesus, my Saviour,  
Lord there is none like you  
All of my day, I want to praise  
the wonders of your mighty love.  
My comfort, my shelter,  
tower of refuge and strength,  
let every breath, all that I am,  
never cease to worship you.*

*Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing,  
power and majesty, praise to the King.  
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar  
at the sound of your name.  
I sing for joy at the work of your hands.  
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.  
Nothing compares to the  
promise I have in you.*

*Darlene Zschech (b.1965)*

*Jesus is Lord - David John Mansell (b.1939)  
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*For the Joys and For the Sorrows - Graham Kendrick (b.1950)  
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*My Jesus, My Saviour - Darlene Zschech  
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