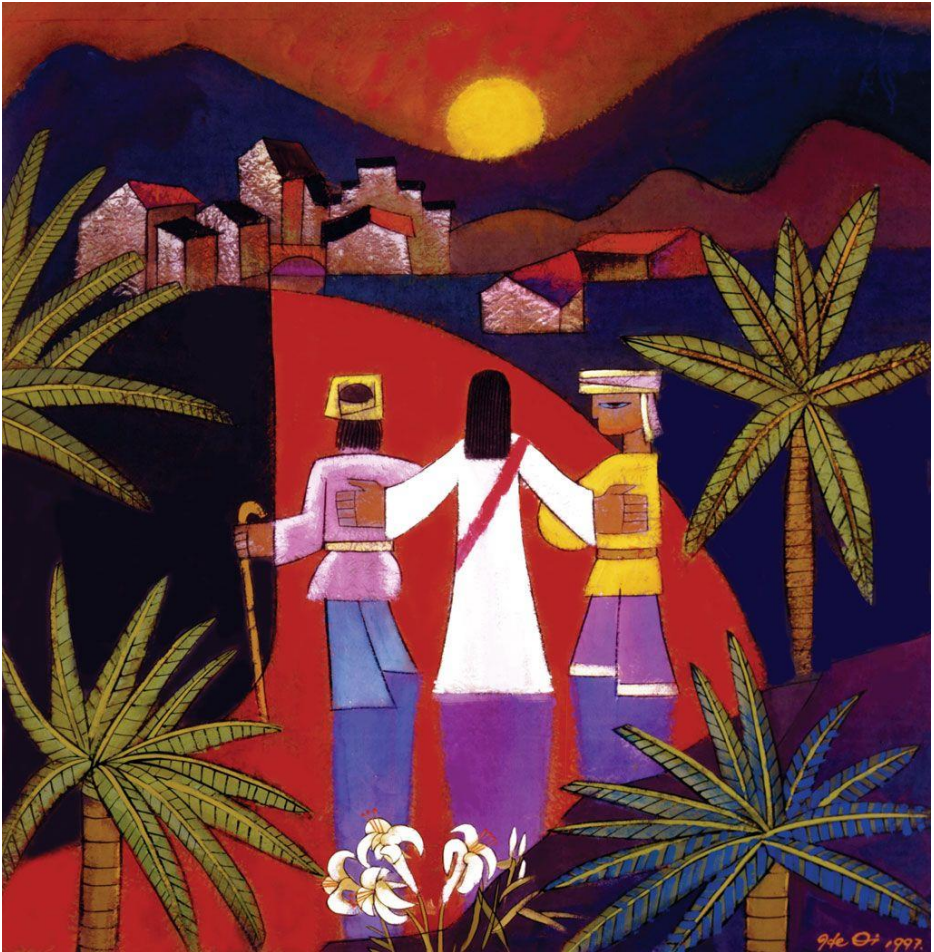


Journeying with Jesus on the Emmaus Road



An 'Easter Sunday evening' reflection
for worship at home,
whenever it is needed

Introduction

In these strange and challenging times, when we are unable to gather together, celebrating Easter ‘together, apart’ is going to be hard – impossible, even, to celebrate fully. We’ll miss being together, and we’ll miss sharing communion together.

In the days ahead, we might find that some days feel like ‘Good Friday’ – days where suffering and death fill our minds and hearts. Some days might feel like ‘Holy Saturday’ – an empty space where we’re able to do hardly anything, where the numbness of grief and shock are overwhelming. But there will certainly be some ‘Easter Sunday’ days, where we catch at least glimpses of life, hope, joy and resurrection.

For ‘**Good Fridays**’, you might find the Stations of the Cross (images and short prayers) helpful. For ‘**Holy Saturdays**’, we’ve offered poems and reflections to help you dwell for a while in that space.

For ‘**Easter Sunday mornings**’ there is a reflective liturgy for sunrise (‘Greeting the Easter Dawn’), as well as our shared Sunday liturgy for the whole of the Easter season.

This booklet is for ‘**Easter Sunday evenings**’, but it doesn’t have to be done on Easter Sunday, or in the evening! It’s a reflection on the Road to Emmaus story (Luke chapter 24, verses 13 to 35).

*Although this isn’t ‘sharing communion’, in the way we normally understand it, it is an opportunity to prayerfully spend some time in the company of Jesus, to talk with and listen to him, and to invite him to be with us where we are – in our own home and in our own heart. To help us know that in our bodies as well as in our minds, **you might want to have a piece of bread to hand**, to break and eat towards the end of this reflection.*

With Jesus on the road: ‘what things?’

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?”

Imagine you’re walking down that road, heading home, walking and talking with a friend or loved one. Talking together about everything that’s going on in the world.

Imagine Jesus comes alongside you, and asks you what you’re talking about. It’s an open question: ‘what things?’

Tell Jesus what’s been going on. Don’t worry that he’ll know already. Imagine him as a friendly stranger, who’s a good listener. Tell him what’s important to you right now.

With Jesus on the road: hopes dashed, and a rumour of resurrection

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.”

‘We had hoped...’, say the disciples. They share with Jesus their hopes and their disappointments – and their shock and grief. And they share their wonderings, however doubtful – a rumour of resurrection – the faintest of hopes, a tiny glimmer of possibility of life beyond death.

Share with Jesus what’s on your heart. Tell him how you’re feeling: the happy and the sad, the hopeful and the fearful, the things you’re thankful for and the things that are heart-breaking.

With Jesus on the road: re-telling the story

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.

It's probably not the response they were expecting! Jesus sounds a bit harsh here. But if we can get over that, we hear him responding to their story-telling with some story-telling of his own: helping them see how their fragments of experience are in fact part of a much bigger Story, that stretches back to the beginning of creation, and forward to the 'making new' of all things. And helping them understand that he, Jesus, is in the middle of it all – with us, in it all, every step of the way.

Where might Jesus be in the midst of all that is going on right now? What words might he be saying, to you, and to those others for whom you're praying? What might it mean, that our stories of suffering and death, of disappointment and fear, are held within his story of love and healing, of death and resurrection?

Spend some time listening for a word of hope and promise – or, in the silence, simply know yourself in the company of Jesus.

Inviting Jesus in

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.

'Stay with us...', the disciples say to Jesus. Invite Jesus to come into your home, to stay – to be with you, here and now.

Imagine opening your door for him, and welcoming him in. Imagine him coming in with you, following you through your home and sitting down next to you where you are.

A hymn / prayer (especially for evenings):

Lord Jesus Christ, abide with us,
Now that the sun has run its course;
Let hope not be obscured by night,
But may faith's darkness be as light.

Lord Jesus Christ, grant us your peace.
And when the trials of earth shall cease.
Grant us the morning light of grace,
The radiant splendour of your face.

Immortal, Holy, Threefold Light.
Yours be the kingdom, pow'r, and might;
All glory be eternally
To you, life-giving Trinity!

Recognition...

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?"

Take some bread in your hands, just as Jesus did.

Break it, just as Jesus did.

Take a piece and eat it.

'Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him...'

Know that Jesus is with you, closer than breathing.

Spend some time just dwelling in this moment, with thankfulness.

Longing to return

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.

This is where the story ends. For us, at the moment, there is an incompleteness. It's not possible for us to leave home, and return to a place where all our friends are gathered together – where we can exchange our stories of where we've met Jesus. We long for that day. We maybe even ache for it.

But what is possible today, or tomorrow? Who can we speak to – on the phone, on a doorstep, or at a window? Who can we share with, the glimpses we've caught of the risen Jesus, of hope and life?

Jesus, beloved friend, we thank you:
for listening to us along the way,
for coming in to be with us here,
and for making yourself known
in the breaking of bread.

Stay with us, we pray,
and when the day comes,
go ahead of us into the world:
that we might see your presence and hear your voice
in loved ones, in strangers, in neighbours all,
as we join together to cry:

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!