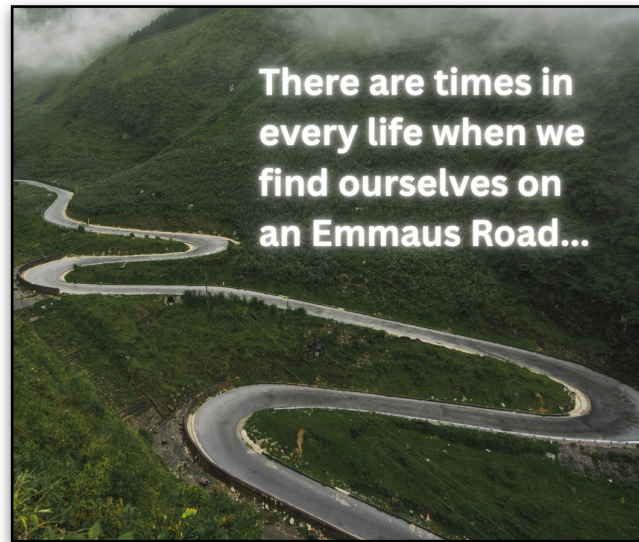


Sermon on Sunday 19 April 2026

by Rev. Alan Stewart

Gospel Reading: Luke 24. 13-35

Emmaus Roads



Life is full of twists; things we don't see coming. Some we take in our stride, and others completely derail us.

And what bigger twist is there than a resurrection? No-one saw that one coming. And for many, then as now, it's a twist too far. Dead people don't rise.

Perhaps that was true for this couple on this road to Emmaus.

They were leaving behind the scene of a terrible miscarriage of justice where their friend and leader, the one they believed could change everything, didn't. Instead, he let himself be nailed in a kangaroo court and

then to a Roman cross. And with him died all the hope they'd mustered over those past three years.

So, these two followers, with no one to follow, are walking back to Emmaus, back to their old lives, broken and confused.

There are times in every life when we find ourselves on an Emmaus Road; walking away from failure, from broken relationships, from something which didn't turn out as we'd hoped, and harbouring all kinds of feelings like grief, disappointment, disillusion, anger. Emmaus Roads can be hard and humbling, and often lonely.

On that first Easter Eve, these two companions are joined by a mystery third. And for some unexplained reason they completely fail to recognise him, so lost, perhaps, in their grief and confusion.

As they walk, this stranger picks up on that confusion and begins to unpack the scriptures, opening their minds to how the Messiah was destined to suffer and die and to... rise again. And as he does, their broken hearts, we're told, begin to burn within them. Glimmers of hope return. Perhaps those impossible rumours the women spoke of might just be true.

And when, finally, they arrive at their destination, and the stranger makes to go further, they invite him in to eat with them, offering hospitality to that same Messiah unawares. Notice that Jesus doesn't assume he's welcome; he waits to be invited, then as now.

It's not until they've sat down at the table to eat - when just as he'd done three nights previously, Jesus assumes the role not of guest but of host, as he takes bread, thanks God, and breaks it - that the spell is broken and the penny drops. 'It's him!'

It's interesting, isn't it, that Jesus waits all this time for the big reveal.

He shows enormous restraint and patience. He spends time preparing the ground; convincing them intellectually of what's happened, and then, when they're ready, he takes them beyond that, into an awakening to his presence.

This happens in the most ordinary thing; the breaking of bread. And still, Christ comes in the mundane and the routine and in the ordinary.

Christ is still to be found on every Emmaus Road, on every path, in every moment of life. But often we're too distracted or disillusioned or too 'elsewhere'. Maybe we have low or no expectation of seeing him.

So often we sleepwalk through life unaware of the Christ who walks alongside.

We don't recognise him because so often he comes as the kindness of strangers or the challenge of our conscience; in the one who notices us, the one who needs us, as the next person we meet.

So, pray for eyes to open, for pennies to drop, for an awakening to that presence with us and in front of us. Expect to see him.

What was true for those two friends is true for us. Christ is still to be found beside us on whatever road we're on.

And especially he's to be found in this breaking of bread that we are invited to share in a little later. At that moment, when I have that privilege of breaking the bread for us today, I'll pause, and maybe within those few seconds of pause, we can each ask for those eyes to see. And if you don't usually receive the bread and wine, I want you to know that you are welcome to if you'd like to extend that hospitality to Jesus, perhaps suspend your doubt, offer that invitation, 'Jesus, if you're here, open my eyes'.

There is no place where God is not, no road where he does not walk shoulder to shoulder with us. Because dead people can and do rise.

Alleluia, Christ is risen, he is risen indeed, alleluia!