



## The Road to Emmaus

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Acts 2:14, 36-41 | Luke 24:13–35

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I think a lot of us come to scripture hoping it will help things make sense, not in a big abstract way, but in the middle of actual life. When something hasn't gone the way we expected, or when we're trying to make sense of something we didn't choose, we come looking for something we can hold onto. A way of understanding what's happening, or at least something that might steady us in it.

And often what we're really looking for is reassurance, words that will make things feel ordered again, or explain the unexplainable. But instead, we're met with the kinds of phrases that try, but fail to do that work: "everything happens for a reason," or "God won't give you more than you can handle," or "this will all make sense one day." They're usually said with good intentions, but if you've ever been on the receiving end of a platitude, you'll know they hardly ever land well, because life is not tidy like these clichés.

And that's exactly what we find on the road to Emmaus.

These two disciples are not having a neat theological discussion; they are trying to make sense of something that has gone very wrong. They had followed Jesus, they had hoped, and now he has been killed. Whatever they thought was going to happen hasn't, and so they leave. They walk away from Jerusalem, away from the place where their hope had been, and they say it plainly: "We had hoped..."

It's such a simple phrase, but it carries so much: disappointment, confusion, grief, and that quiet, disorienting sense that what once made sense no longer does.

These disciples know the story of God, the promises, the shape of their faith. But none of that has stopped this from happening, and none of it is, in this moment, making it make sense. This isn't a story about people who just needed better information. It's a story about people trying to live with something that no longer fits.

And that, I think, is a place many of us recognise. It might not look dramatic from the outside, but it's there; in the quiet disappointment of something not working out, in the strain of a relationship that has changed, in the uncertainty of what comes next, or simply in that lingering sense of "this isn't how I thought things would be." Those moments where you find yourself trying to make meaning, and nothing quite settles.

And that is exactly where Jesus meets them; not at the end of the road, not once they've figured it out, but right there in the middle of it. And the way he meets them is important. He doesn't arrive with a neat explanation or a clear theological statement that resolves their confusion. Instead, he comes alongside them. He asks what they're talking about, and he lets them speak. He allows them to tell their story, even though it's incomplete and shaped by disappointment. There's no rush to correct them, no attempt to tidy things up straight away. There is simply presence, and attention, and the willingness to walk with them as they are.

Once Jesus has heard them, he begins to speak about the scriptures, but even here we are given remarkably little detail: "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures."

That's all we get.

No list of points, no formula, no explanation we can neatly apply to every situation. And that absence matters. As Reverend Lizzie McManus-Dail writes, “I suspect part of why we don’t get a specific list of things Jesus wants these disciples to know and believe is that he’s interpreting the scriptures for them personally. We are outsiders to the counsel Jesus offered to his friends in a moment of trauma.”

In other words, the scriptures are not being used as a script; they are part of a living, relational encounter.

Even so, after all that, after walking with him, after listening, after having the scriptures opened to them, they still don’t recognise him. If understanding were the key, this would be the moment their eyes were opened. But it isn’t. Recognition comes later, in a very different setting.

As they reach their destination and the day draws to a close, they say to him, “Stay with us.” It’s a small moment, but an important one: an act of openness, of making space.

And it is at the table, in that ordinary act of sharing a meal, that everything shifts. Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them, and it is in that moment that their eyes are opened. Not because they have finally understood everything, but because they recognise him. It is not explanation that reveals the risen Christ, but relationship.

And that rings true to life, doesn’t it? There are moments when nothing is resolved, nothing is neatly explained, and yet something changes. Not because we’ve found the answer, but because we are no longer alone in it.

A conversation that doesn’t fix anything, but steadies you. Or sitting with someone in silence that somehow says more than words could. Or a shared meal where, for a moment, the weight lifts just enough to breathe again.

Those moments don't look dramatic. They don't come with clear conclusions. But they matter. And this story suggests that they may be closer to the presence of Christ than we often realise.

Because most of us, at one time or another, find ourselves on that road. Trying to make sense of something, carrying disappointment, unsure what to do with what we thought would be true. And this story doesn't tell us that if we just understand enough, everything will fall into place. It tells us that Christ draws near. That Christ walks with us, listens to us, and meets us in the middle of things.

And often, it is only in hindsight that we begin to recognise it. Like those disciples, looking back and saying, "something was happening there... we weren't alone."

And so we come to this table.

Not because everything makes sense.  
Not because we have all the answers.  
Not because our lives are neatly resolved.

But because this is where Christ has promised to meet us.

Here, in bread that is taken, blessed, broken, and given, we are drawn into that same moment of recognition. Not through explanation, but through encounter. Here, we are reminded that Christ is not distant from the reality of our lives, but present within it. That even when we do not recognise him, he has been walking with us all along.

And perhaps, as we gather here with whatever we are carrying, whatever still doesn't make sense, we are given not an answer, but something else:

Christ himself.