The Emmaus Road
Luke 24:13-36

Well, we're on the penultimate week of our 2 and a half-year study of Luke's gospel this morning! Only 2 weeks left in Luke! In fact it's all I've heard preached on at Westlake. Incidentally, mine and Nicola's first Sunday here was also the first Sunday as a church in Luke's gospel. What a journey! So if I can ask you to turn to Luke 24 and we'll be looking at the first thing Jesus did when he rose from the dead this morning. You consider all the things he could have done: surprising people, shouting it from the rooftops, running straight to the religious leaders or the Romans who crucified him, I wonder what you or I would have done? Well, let's turn to verses 13-35 this morning and we'll see what Jesus does on this glorious day; the day of his resurrection.

Read Luke 24:13-35, let's pray…

Now, if you remember, right back chapter 1, Luke gives the preface to his gospel. He explains that his reason for writing is to produce an organized, eyewitness account for a guy called Theophilus, so that Theophilus, and others, might know the certainty of what they are being told about Jesus. For this reason, Luke focuses on the facts and produces a reliable eyewitness account of what Jesus said and did. That's why Luke likes to name people and places. After all, he's a doctor and so he pays a lot of attention to detail. I think that's why Martin likes him so much! I think they'll get on well in heaven. And so this morning we get another one of these eyewitness accounts. We get the details. Luke wants his audience to know that this really happened.

So Luke tells us that our story takes place on a Sunday afternoon, the first day of the week, it's 3 days since Jesus was crucified. We know it's late afternoon because verse 29 says it's getting toward evening and the day is nearly over. Only one of our characters is named and that's Cleopas. He's obviously well known to Luke's readers which is why he's mentioned. There's someone else with him, but we don't know their name. Probably a friend or family member, we don't know. Some believe Cleopas is the father of Simeon who later became the head of the church in Jerusalem. They live in a little village called Emmaus just 7 miles outside Jerusalem and they're heading back there because Passover ended the day before, and as far as they're concerned, it was the worst imaginable Passover celebration ever. All their hopes and dreams and all their expectations of what Jesus Christ was going to do have been smashed to pieces that Friday when he was crucified by their own leaders. So for them there's no point staying in Jerusalem any longer – it's all over. They're heading home sad, downcast, confused and wondering where it all went wrong. Maybe even feeling a bit stupid for putting so much faith in this Jesus and now he hasn't come through. He's dead, never to be seen again…or so they think!

You have to see the humour in this passage. Especially because in the very next verse, guess who shows up of all people? The very one they're depressively

discussing: Jesus! But he's in-cognito! They don't recognize it's him. Maybe he's wearing sunglasses or something. We've no idea why but they simply don't know it's him. So Jesus shouts 'hey guys, stop your whinging, guess who? It's me!' No, actually quite the opposite! Luke says he just pulled up next to them and carried on the conversation pretending he has no idea what they're so down about! Jesus is right there with them as they go on about his funeral and they don't even know it. And so Jesus plays along, surely he must have been smirking a little bit at this point, and he says to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" "what are you two talking about?" And these two stop dead in their tracks: 'are you kidding? You must be only one around these parts that doesn't know what's going on! Where have you been? They crucified Jesus Christ! We'd pinned all our hopes on this man and he's dead and gone forever.

My first point this morning is:

Jesus is there even we might not recognize him.

You see these two, as well as most of Jesus' disciples and followers were expecting Jesus to bring salvation to them by setting them free from the Romans. They were expecting some big powerful militant-type redemption that Jesus would lead. But rather, like a lamb led to the slaughter, he went quietly to his own execution and gave his life as a ransom. But they don't see that! All they see is broken dreams and crushed hopes of salvation for them and their nation. That's why they are so downcast. They've put so much hope in this 'Messiah' and he hasn't come through. Or so they think! And perhaps you find yourself in a similar situation at the moment? Maybe you feel like Cleopas and his friend. You're downcast. Confused too. Perhaps you expected something of God and it didn't happen. You've been praying for something or someone and yet God doesn't seem to be coming through. You're confused about God's timing, about his will. Maybe you feel like your even losing faith in it all. Cleopas and his friend certainly are; they're confused by an account from they received from some women that morning about Jesus being alive. They mention it to Jesus as a curiosity, but clearly don't believe it; they've kind of lost faith or they wouldn't be so downcast. But you know Jesus often comes through in ways that we don't expect. In fact he usually does! He can be right there with us and we don't even recognize him. If you're a believer this morning and you've put your life in his hands, Jesus has promised that he is walking right beside you. Just as it was for Cleopas and his friend, be encouraged that Jesus is with you in your struggles, even though you may not be aware that he is present. The risen Jesus is not limited, as we are, by geography or time. He walks into our hard times, our times of doubt and confusion. Be comforted to know that he's walking with you.

So how does Jesus respond to them here? Well as we've already seen, he doesn't lay his hand on their shoulders and say "hey guys, why the long faces? It's me." Quite the opposite in fact. My second point this morning is:

Jesus is not very tolerant of our unbelief

Cleopas and his friend get a good old rebuke from Jesus! "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart" Strong words from gentle Jesus meek and mild! Jesus calls them stupid! Why? Because He's convinced that they should have known what the scriptures taught about the Messiah and believed them and believed that he would rise again but they didn't. He didn't expect them to know everything but he did expect them to know that the Christ would have to suffer and die before he would enter his glory. So Jesus isn't very tolerant of their unbelief. They had the scriptures but they neglected them. They'd had the teaching from being kids in the synagogue and in the temple. Isaiah said that the Messiah would suffer, be beaten and die by crucifixion. Isaiah 53, as well as many other messianic verses which they had no doubt read numerous times make it abundantly clear what would happen to their Messiah. And so Jesus rebukes them because they didn't believe it. Rather they wanted to believe that he would be some great powerful leader who would overthrow Rome but that was not what their scriptures taught. That was what they read into them. You see God wants us to take this book and believe in, and trust every word of it letting it speak for itself not making it say what we want it to say. These guys, and many others had failed to that.

But Jesus doesn't walk off and go find others who did believe the prophets. No, rather in his amazing grace, he goes on to blow them away with the greatest sermon ever preached! Jesus preaches the bible to them for 7 miles! Imagine walking from here to Lutry, which would take about 2.5 hours or one hour at the Slacks pace! But imagine walking from here to Lutry with Jesus expounding the entire redemption story to you! WOW! I'm a little bit jealous of Cleopas and his mate! Later they remember: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?' I'm not surprised! That feeling of your heart burning within you, as if everything else fades away when God is speaking directly to you. It's incredible. This was one of those precious times. Where every ounce of your attention is fixed on Him and you are clinging to his every word and don't want it to end. No doubt they were talking about this experience everyday for the rest of their lives.

And so they walk for a good 2 hours while Jesus takes them from Genesis, probably beginning with the fall, explaining how he is the wounded seed of the woman who crushes the serpent's head, going on through to Exodus and explaining how he is the true Passover Lamb who protects the sinner from divine judgment and into Leviticus, showing that he fulfils the various offerings and is the perfect spotless offering. No doubt he explains the day of atonement, the work of the priests and Levites and how it is all fulfilled in him, then into the Psalms he would read 'my god, my god why have you forsaken me,' the words he used on the cross. Then he probably walked them through the prophets who predicted his life, his suffering, his betrayal, his crucifixion and so on and so forth. Jesus shows up in some form in every single book of the Bible. In case you were wondering this book is all about JESUS! And Jesus explains it all to them: who better to do that? What a study! These guys are mesmerized. Their hearts are burning within them. No doubt they not so

long faced anymore and then… I love this next bit and this takes us into our third point…

Jesus waits for the invite

They arrive at the house and Jesus doesn't want to impose. They still don't know it's him but he's a true gentleman and He doesn't want to assume an invitation, but he really would like one! So he pretends he's carrying on! This made me laugh! It's like when you go out to eat with someone and you're not sure who's going to pay for the meal and you start to take out your wallet to see what the people your with will do (hoping they'll pay) and they go "oh no we've got this" and you say "Oh no" and they say "yes of course" and you say "ok that's very kind!" Well Jesus is so polite he doesn't even take it upon himself to invite himself in for bed and breakfast. As if these two could have had wanted rid of him and his astounding teaching. It seems that Jesus wondered if maybe they'd had enough! And that's what's so incredible about Jesus. He will never force himself upon people! You will not meet a Christian who claims that they didn't want Jesus but they had no choice, he intruded and they reluctantly let him in. If anyone has the right to intrude surely it's the God who made you but he doesn't. He will only go where he's welcome. He loves to be requested by us! In Revelation 3 Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Notice He doesn't shoot the lock and break the door down to grab us! He wants us to desire him, to prove our love for him, to choose him, even to beg for him! You remember the parable of the unjust judge and the friend knocking on the door at midnight. This is how we need to be with God. Too often I've taken the opposite approach. I sit and wait for God to come to me, to serve me, to come and help me when I'm struggling. I expect him to show up even if I don't invite him and I treat him as though he knows what I expect without me having to ask! But we do need to ask, to seek, to knock, we need to seek diligently the Lord's presence, we need to fight for it, we need to press in to him. Like David said in Psalm 81:10 we need to open our mouth wide so that he can fill it. How wide open is your mouth this morning? God will not force feed you while you tighten your lips and turn your head away! But when we invite him to, he will reward us with himself, and that's exactly what he does when he's invited in. My fourth and final point this morning:

He rewards our seeking with himself.

As they welcomed him in and he came to dine with them, verse 30 says, 'their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.' How incredible must that have been! How glad they must have been that they did invite him in! And then ironically, He goes from invited guest to host - he takes the bread and breaks it. In the intimacy of fellowship, as this stranger breaks the bread which represents his body and offers the blessing, they suddenly become aware of who he really is! Hebrews 11:6 says that 'God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him and these guys, as they've sought him by faith and invited him in have been rewarded! But then as soon as they recognize him, he disappears. He's gone! He doesn't even stay for the meal. He's not hungry. He's got other people to reveal himself to!

But man, what a day for these guys! First they're sad and disillusioned, confused and upset, then a guy comes along and brings the scriptures to life like no one has ever done for them before, then eventually they invite him in to eat with them and when they break bread together they recognize it's him! It's Jesus; risen from the grave, and then before they can say another word, he's gone! How could they go to bed after that? I sure wouldn't be able to and neither could they: Nope, shoes back on turn around, 7 miles back they way they came - back to Jerusalem. And I bet they walked back faster than they walked away! In fact I bet they ran back to tell everyone the good news as fast as they could!

And so as we come into close, I want to address those of you who may be here this morning and have not yet invited Jesus in. Perhaps he's knocking on the door of your heart, perhaps it's not coincidence that you are here this morning. Jesus is a stranger to you but he wants to reveal himself to you and come in and dine with you. I encourage you, I even plead with you to ask him in. Listen to Jesus own words from Revelation: 'If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.' That is not an invitation you want to reject. A refusal of that invitation from Jesus will lead to an eternity in hell. But you have the choice to accept his invitation now. Once you die it will be too late. Maybe you've even been coming to this church for a while. Jesus is right in front of you, walking with you and sitting down with you at every meal - but your eyes can be restrained from seeing Him. Pray that God would open your eyes to see him as He is.

And for those of us who do know Jesus and have accepted that invitation already, let's not warrant a rebuke from Jesus for neglecting scripture. It could be doubt, it could be scepticism, it could be intellectual pride or it could simply be laziness, but let's feed on this book, on every word and let's press into Jesus. Let's invite him into every area of our lives. Let's be like Jacob was when he wrestled with God and said 'I'm not letting you go until you bless me.' Open your mouth wide so God can fill it. Take responsibility for your own relationship with Jesus, trust that he's right there in the storm with you and worship him. Enjoy communion with him. He desires a relationship with you. That's why he created you. He loves you and wants you to want him back. Invite him in and seek his face. He promises his presence.