



**Written Service April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2023**  
**A service of worship for use at home**  
**Prepared by Rev David Speed**

Charity number 1134226

You take us seriously  
YOU LISTEN TO OUR QUESTIONS  
You walk alongside us  
YOU SHARE OUR JOURNEYS  
You surprise us and bless us  
YOU FILL US WITH WONDER  
Open our eyes to see you among us  
BURN IN OUR HEARTS AND FILL US WITH JOY

**Hymn** - Singing the Faith 309 See what a morning gloriously bright

See, what a morning,  
Gloriously bright  
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem  
Folded the grave-clothes, tomb filled with light  
As the angels announce, "  
Christ is risen"  
See God's salvation plan  
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in  
sacrifice  
Fulfilled in Christ, the man  
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead

See Mary weeping, "  
Where is He laid?"  
As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb  
Hears a voice speaking, calling her name  
It's the Master, the Lord raised to life again  
The voice that spans the years  
Speaking life, stirring hope, bringing peace to  
us  
Will sound till He appears  
For He lives, Christ is risen from the dead

One with the Father, Ancient of Days  
Through the Spirit who clothes faith with  
certainty  
Honour and blessing, glory and praise  
To the King crowned with pow'r and authority  
And we are raised with Him  
Death is dead, love has won, Christ has  
conquered  
And we shall reign with Him  
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead

**Prayers,**

Let us pray, Lord, we praise you for your love, its toughness, its perseverance, we praise you for never giving up on us. You are just and have no favouritism. Help us to know that seeking to follow you will lead to our happiness. Forgive us for those many times when we have been deluded that something else, something other than you, will, Lord, your love change us so that we know that in you will in the end lead to our fulfilment. AMEN.

**The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against  
us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## Hymn - Singing the Faith 337 There is a higher throne

There is a higher throne  
Than all this world has known  
Where faithful ones from every tongue  
Will one day come  
Before the Son we'll stand  
Made faultless through the Lamb  
Believing hearts find promised grace  
Salvation comes

And there we'll find our home  
Our life before the throne  
We'll honour Him in perfect song  
Where we belong  
He'll wipe each tear-stained eye  
As thirst and hunger die  
The Lamb becomes our Shepherd King  
We'll reign with Him

Hear heaven's voices sing  
Their thunderous anthem rings  
Through emerald courts and sapphire skies  
Their praises rise  
All glory, wisdom, power  
Strength, thanks, and honour are  
To God our King, who reigns on high  
Forevermore

Hear heaven's voices sing  
Their thunderous anthem rings  
Through emerald courts and sapphire skies  
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To God our King, who reigns on high  
Forevermore  
Forevermore

## Reading, Luke 24:13-35 On the Road to Emmaus

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[a]</sup> from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup> He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

<sup>19</sup> "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. <sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

<sup>25</sup> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

<sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to

Simon.”<sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession,**

Let us pray,

We thank you for these days of Easter. We thank you more that we can pray with a sense that there can be new life. You see things that we cannot see. So, we pray in faith for Sudan in that conflict for power; for Israel/Palestine, and all the tensions within the country and between Palestinians and other Israelis. We pray for the latest families to grieve in Dadeville, Alabama, after the shooting, and for the debate there on gun laws. We pray for the Borough Council elections, and those who are candidates, and those who prepare for the King’s Coronation. We pray for individuals wondering how to make ends meet, the single parent whose money never stretches far enough, for the postal worker, our postman, struggling at work, often feeling resigned and alone, for nurses and doctors.

We pray for the person we know, who is anxious, struggling with health issues, young people revising for exams, parents, whose youngster did not get into the school of their choice, and for those whose youngsters did.

And we pray for ourselves, perhaps found in one of those situations, or perhaps not. We come the other side of Easter with a sense of new life. May it be so for our community, for our world, and for us all. AMEN.

### **Dramatic Reading – Mrs. Cleopas**

#### **MRS. CLEOPAS**

I can only describe his look as bemused perplexity. It was his normal expression, certainly with me, except this was different.

He couldn’t say a word. I knew what was going on but let him tell his story. Men do have to think that they have been the first to suss things out.

He said that he and his friend were on the road back to our village of Emmaus when suddenly a stranger appeared. You know how some people have this ability just to appear from you don’t know where. This stranger had. He asked them why they looked so sad. Well, Jesus had just died and we were hoping for so much from him, what we weren’t quite sure, but we felt he could revive our nation of Israel. What did our fellow countrymen and religious leaders do? They killed him or arranged for him to be killed. So, one of the men asked Him, the stranger, that is.

“Where have you been these last few days? There has been quite a commotion in Jerusalem. Everyone there knew what was going on”.

So, they told him what had happened to Jesus of Nazareth, a great preacher and prophet, who did great and wonderful things, and how the chief priests and rulers handed him over to the authorities to be killed. And they had killed Him.

It was three days since this happened. Now some women perplexed them even further. They’d been to his tomb but couldn’t find his body. They’d seen angels tell them that He was alive. Some of their companions went to the tomb and yes, there was no body.

Then the stranger told them, well, not to put too fine a point of it, he told them they were thick, and so slow to believe. Had they not read the Scriptures? Was it not told to them that the Christ would have to suffer and die before he entered his new life? So, he explained what the Scriptures said about God’s Special Person from Moses to all the Prophets. It helped fill up the time spent walking, even if it was a long spiel.

Now, I’ll say a word for those men. They’d just seen their friend and leader die. They were bound to be mystified when they heard no-one could find his body and that he was alive.

They all got back to Emmaus. The stranger made as if to go, but they asked Him to stay overnight with them, no they begged him to.

And so, He's just come into our house. One glance told me who He was. He was so powerful in life, I was sure He could overcome death. There's always some food on the kitchen shelves. I make sure we always have bread and fish if I can. So, when I saw the Stranger, I hurried out to prepare what I had. There was bread but I forget what else we had. It didn't seem to matter though it normally does. I made it, whatever it was. I took the bread in to them. And then the Stranger as the Visiting Guest broke the bread. Well, if I had needed persuading, this would have persuaded me. He broke the bread. He did it in the way only Jesus could. As He did so, He not only broke the bread but He broke our despair.

Even the men got the point. They said, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road, and opened up the Scriptures?" You know, if it had been possible, I think Jesus would have done better with twelve female disciples. At the least, it would have saved him a lot of time getting things across.

By the time they said this, He'd gone, but He had left something behind, which begins and ends with Him – Hope.

Singing the Faith 156 From the breaking of the dawn (Please can you type, the words again, Cath)

### Sermon EMMAUS

They only do it to confuse me. I looked to see if the Road to Emmaus was included this year around Easter. I looked on the first Sunday, Easter Sunday. It was not there. I looked on the second Sunday. It was not there. I looked on the third Sunday expecting non- Resurrection readings. It was there. They only do it to confuse me. It's my wife's favourite Easter reading, and there is so much in the story. Those first few verses, I'd like us to think about where the men looking gloomy meet the unrecognized Jesus on the way. It shows Jesus is present with us in our discussions, in our despair, in our discipleship.

In our discussions

Two followers on the road to Emmaus were discussing what had happened in the previous few days as if Jesus were not there. It would have taken a lot for them to expect him. They were just perplexed. He was dead, but women, whose views did not matter really, said he was alive. What could they make of that? Unrecognized Jesus was there with them. What would our conversations, our discussions be like if we considered Jesus was there beside us?

The two followers of Jesus found the stranger with them in their conversation as they were discussing what had happened in the last few days. They talked as if Jesus were not there. Hardly surprising. I'm wondering if in our taking together, and our talk generally, are there times when we talk as if Jesus were not there? We could remember the old poster, "Christ is the Unseen Guest at every meal, the Hidden Listener at every conversation". I'm sure there are things that we would not say if we thought that Jesus was present in our conversations but, to me, this gives the impression that Jesus is checking each phrase we utter to make sure it is OK. You can't relax with that going on. Suppose we look at it another way!

An Abbot found that his abbey was in a bad way. The monks were quarrelling, and they had had no new recruits or novices for some time. The Abbot didn't know what to do so finally he went to the Buddha. The Buddha was sitting there as the Buddha did. He told him the problem, the Buddha listened, and finally said, "The Messiah has come among you, and you have not recognized him".

So, the Abbot thanked him, went to the door, and stopped, "But who is the Messiah". And the Buddha smiled.

The Abbot went back to the monastery. Who could the Messiah be? Not one of the two novices. They both had too much to learn. Was it the Guestmaster? The only trouble with him was that he didn't like guests. It certainly couldn't be the Prior. The monks asked him, "Well, how did you get on?"

“Well, the Buddha said that the Messiah has come among us, and we have not recognized Him”. “Right, but who is the Messiah?” No-one knew. They decided that the only thing they could do was to treat everyone as if they were the Messiah. And the quarrelling stopped. New monks to be came into the Abbey, and there was a new spirit in the Abbey.

What would happen if we talked as if each of us were Jesus? Would there be an openness to each other’s insights, as they may shine a light into Christ’s truth? Would there be a deeper respect for each other? This might be because we were aware that Christ was among us, and something of Christ was in each other. I’ve seen a fair deal of that here, but is there still something to be done? There was an openness to the Stranger’s truth on that road to Emmaus. There was a deep respect for Him. Did not our hearts burn with us on the way?

What is the alternative? Passion is a word which is on trend. It is good to be passionate. I am a passionate person. Yet, instead of ruling our passions, we can be governed by our passions.

When you are on holiday, you are often totally dependent on our guides as to where to go and where not to go. Somebody was doing a tour, in a different part of the world. He was advised by a guide as to where and where not to go. At one time, his guide said, “Do not go there. It is a holy day. The fighting starts at 10 a.m.”

But if we see Jesus as present with us in our discussions? Can it not be different?

Jesus is present with us in our discussions.

Jesus is present with us in our despair.

How would we be if we saw Jesus present in our despair?

They had had their hopes dashed. They had heard that it was possible that they could hope again. Some women had said that Jesus was alive, but women’s testimony couldn’t be relied upon, certainly a court of law. They preferred to carry on grieving. “Why are you so sad?” asked the Stranger. They looked as if they had lost £10 and found 2p. They preferred to grieve than to hope. “Do you alone not know what has happened in Jerusalem?”

When Robert Runcie was Archbishop of Canterbury, he was asked by an American tourist if he had seen Prince Charles’s and Princess Diana’s wedding. He replied, “I had a very good view”. If anyone had a good view, he would have. If anyone knew what had happened in Jerusalem, Jesus did.

Sometimes, we make out that no-one can know but ourselves what we are going through, and to a certain extent, that is so, when the person we’re talking to has had a similar experience.

The way in which Nottingham North Circuit and Nottingham East Circuit have come together has been commendable, even though more work still has to be done. I was once in a situation where three Circuits were trying to unite. I was Super. of a one- person Circuit, there. The process was not equally harmonious as this one. My Circuit was increasingly unhappy about the approach to a union. I and the Senior Circuit Steward tried to argue their and our case, but it seemed unheard. I got a fair amount of flak. So much so, that I finally at a Church Council told them all I had done on their behalf. After the meeting, a Church Steward of that Church came up to me and said, “So you are on our side, after all”. All I had tried to do was to show them that I did not want to have power over them but to share vision with them, work with them, and make of ourselves a team. I felt like saying, “Did you not know, could you not see, could you not trust me that I would be this way?” They were too blinded by their unhappiness, to know that the one they thought was anti them shared their pain.

The meaning of what Luke says, is, “It’s almost as if God prevented them from seeing”. The force is, “How can they possibly not have seen that the Stranger was Jesus? They didn’t see because they did not want to see. Is it so that sometimes we have preferred to wallow in our despair rather than notice the help of the one who is with us?”

Then Jesus sat down with them and broke the bread. You know how your long sleeves can ride up when you sit down or do anything with your hands. Either that will happen when you break bread or people will see the whole of your wrist. That wouldn’t mean a thing except when they saw Jesus’ wrist, they would have seen the nail marks in it, and know that the other had the same marks. Of course, it was also how he broke the bread in a way that possibly only Jesus did that convinced them. Either way, they found that the stranger they thought did not understand was the one who understood above all else. If we knew how much Jesus walks beside us on the way, would He not leave us as He left them with hope in that despair?

Jesus is present us in our despair.  
Jesus is present in our discipleship.

I came across these lines from a song called 'One of Us'. Joan Osborne, an American singer sings it. One line might slightly jar but I must quote the verse, "What if God were one of us, just a slob like one of us, just a stranger on the bus, trying to make his way home, if God had a face what would it look like? And would you want to see if seeing meant that you have to believe in things like heaven, and in Jesus and the saints, and all the prophets?"

Most of us are seeking to follow Jesus. Have we noticed that in the word 'follow' there is no 'I'? We want to let Jesus be in control but we're human. Are there not areas in our lives where we want to be in control?

'Not what I want but what you want', Jesus said to his parent, God. How much do we want to see Jesus? Are there times when we wish to be at the centre of things rather than let Jesus be? Are there times when we forget to ask, "What is best for the work of Jesus?" If so, we forget that Jesus is present as we make our decisions. If we recognized that He walks beside us as we shop, do the housework, look after grandchildren, how would it affect what we think or what we do? How did it affect those two disciples? All we know is that Luke calls one of them Cleopas, without needing to tell us anything more about him, which suggests that the first Christians knew him well. He stayed loyal to Jesus. What we can do is to notice how when those disciples on the road to Emmaus, noticed Jesus for who He was, they were full of joy. We can, as they did, believe that following Him will be to our wellbeing. Then we can be more prepared to give Him not a good part of us but all of us. He will show us what it means to follow Him and enable us to keep to our promise to do so.

He is present in our discipleship.

In our discussion, in our despair, in our discipleship, Jesus is present. That makes all the difference. AMEN.

### Hymn - Singing the Faith 313 Thine be the glory

1 Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast  
won;  
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,  
kept the folded grave-clothes where thy body  
lay.

*Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,  
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast  
won.*

2 Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;  
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and  
gloom;  
let the church with gladness hymns of triumph  
sing,  
for her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its  
sting:

*Thine be the glory ...*

3 No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of  
Life;  
life is naught without thee: aid us in our strife;  
make us more than conquerors through thy  
deathless love;  
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home  
above:

*Thine be the glory ...*

### The Grace:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ  
The Love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all evermore,  
Amen