

WHERE ARE YOU, LORD?

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

Date: 19-04-2026

Scripture: Luke 24: 13-35

Luke 24: 13-25

¹³ And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" ¹⁹ And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. ²² But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also 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 exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." ²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

²⁸ And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" ³³ And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread."

I believe that this is one of the most tender pastoral encounters in scripture. This road to Emmaus. Two disciples walking away from Jerusalem, walking away from everything that has just happened. But before we get into the scripture, I want to pause, just give a word, a direction maybe. As we come to this passage, I have a strong sense that it carries particular relevance for some of you who are seated here today.

So, as we walk through this Emmaus story, I want to gently draw a parallel from those disciples on the road to us disciples here at CAP. And I wonder whether at some point along the way, their experience might reflect something of your own journey. You know how the story ends. Their eyes are open to see Jesus. And it's my prayer, even my hope, my expectation, that God would do something similar in hearts here this morning.

So as we begin, I want to invite you to remain open as the Spirit of God speaks, as He quietly points to areas in your heart, in your life, through what is being said. Would you allow Him to minister to you? Would you give Him that freedom? I truly believe that this is His heart for us today. And I pray

that through this service, you would receive what He is offering – Renewal where there has been weariness, a resurgence of hope where there has been disappointment, a realignment of your heart with His, and the return of joy once again, which is the inheritance of His people.

So, let's look at this passage together. They're not just walking to Emmaus; they're carrying something with them. And when Jesus asks them what they're discussing, the text says, they stood still, looking sad. And what we begin to see is not just a journey on the outside or outwardly visible, but a heaviness that is inside. This is not just a journey; it's a quiet retreat. They're not running away dramatically; they are simply leaving. And as they walk, they talk, they process, they try to make sense of it all.

And then Jesus comes alongside of them, though they don't recognize Him, and asks: "What are you discussing?" And the Bible says they stood still looking sad. Then comes one of the most revealing statements of all in this narrative. In v. 21, it says, "We were hoping... that He would redeem Israel."

Those three words, 'We were hoping' carry the weight of disappointment.

- They speak of expectations that were once alive but now feel unresolved.
- Of prayers that seemed certain but remain unanswered.
- And in that quiet admission, you don't hear unbelief but the ache of a heart that's trying to make sense of a story that didn't pan out the way they expected it.

I wonder today if there are some here who could say the same thing. We were hoping. We were hoping that things would turn out differently, that God would answer our prayer, that the situation would resolve by now, that life would look different at this stage. And yet, you're still here, still attending church, still serving, still showing up. But something inside has shifted.

These disciples haven't rejected Jesus. They're still talking about Him. They still believe He was a prophet, mighty in word and deed. But something had changed. They're walking away from Jerusalem.

Beloved, that is what happens when discouragement sets in. It doesn't always lead to open rebellion. Sometimes it just leads to quiet distance. And I want to say this as gently as I may. Maybe there are some of you who have not walked away from church. But something in your heart has made you step back. You still serve. You still do what you've always done. But the joy is not the same. You sing the same songs, but don't move you in the same way. You pray the same prayers but something feels distant. If you were honest, you might say, "I'm here, but not fully here."

What does this phase look like? Let me name it carefully. It can look like disappointment with God. It can look like emotional fatigue. It can look like unanswered questions, or even quiet withdrawal.

The psalmist puts it like this: Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why do I feel disturbed within me? Sometimes it's not one big thing. Sometimes it's just many small things. Health struggles, family changes. Responsibilities that don't seem to let up. Long seasons without breakthrough. And over time, the heart becomes tired. You're still functioning, but you're no longer flourishing.

But then, the beauty is that Jesus draws near. Jesus Himself came near and went with them. He was there walking with them. And this is the hope for all of us, beloved. Even when we feel distant, Jesus is not absent. The Lord is close to the broken-hearted. He does not wait for us to come back. He goes out to us.

I wonder this morning, whether He is coming alongside of you. Reaching out for you, trying to take hold of your hand. And I love this part about their encounter. Jesus listens to them. He asks them, "What are you discussing? What are you talking about? He already knows. But He lets them speak. And they pour it all out – what happened, what they believed, what they hoped for, what they don't understand. And notice, Jesus doesn't interrupt them.

Sometimes the beginning of healing is simply being able to say, "Lord, I was hoping, and it didn't happen." Often, beloved, we carry disappointments quietly, never quite bringing them into the light. We keep serving, keep moving, keep believing. But that unspoken ache remains beneath the surface. And yet, the moment we name it before the Lord, honestly and without pretense, something begins to shift. Because we're no longer hiding our hearts from the very one who already knows what's going on.

Then you see what Jesus does. He reframes their story. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He explained everything. He shows them what they thought was failure was actually God's plan.

Maybe what you think is failure today, is God's plan still working, actually. "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things?" He asked. Their problem beloved, was not lack of faith; it was misunderstanding. They didn't understand fully. They thought suffering meant death. But God was working redemption through the cross.

And sometimes in our lives, we are interpreting our story too soon. We draw conclusions in the middle of the chapter, assuming that what we see now is the final outcome, the end of the story. But God is still writing. God is not done, still working behind the scenes. And what feels like an ending may yet be part of a greater story that's unfolding. "My thoughts are not your thoughts," He says. "Neither are My ways your ways."

Later they would say to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us?" before their eyes are opened, their hearts are stirred. And something begins to awaken again within them. And possibly this is where many of us might be today – not fully restored, not fully clear.

But something is stirring again. A small spark, a quiet pull. Maybe it happened during Lent, maybe Good Friday, maybe Easter, or last Sunday. Somewhere along the way, God has begun to stir and ruffle the waters of your heart again. you're not quite where you want to be yet, but there's something new. Subtle, but real. And that's how renewal begins.

So, if that's you today, don't dismiss it. Don't rush past it. Stay with it. Perhaps this is the beginning of what God is doing in you. Hang in there, keep listening. I believe God wants to do more. He hasn't finished with you yet.

Then we read v. 29. They invite Him in. "Stay with us," they say. And at the table, as He breaks bread, their eyes are opened. They recognize Him, not just through teaching but through presence. His presence. Joy restored. Again, not through activity, but through an encounter.

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. Everything changes – direction, energy, purpose. They were walking away, now they are running back to Jerusalem. And this is what happens when Jesus becomes real again. maybe some of you here, you're faithful. You're committed. You're doing all the right things, but inside there's this weariness, this disappointment, this distance.

But Jesus is not standing far off. He's walking toward you, with you. Not to rebuke you, not to correct you harshly. But to walk with you, to listen to you. To open the scriptures to you. To awaken your

heart again. perhaps today He's saying to you: Stay with Me. Not do more, not try harder, not fix everything. Simply walk with Me again. you may feel like you're walking away, but Jesus is already walking with you, drawing you to Him. And if you let Him walk with you again, beloved, your heart will burn again. your eyes will see Him again, and your joy will return.

Sometimes we wonder: Where is Jesus in my situation, in what I'm going through? Where is He? His word tells us: "I'll never leave you, nor forsake you." And yet, in moments of struggle, we find ourselves asking, "Lord, where are You? What are You doing? Are You speaking anything to me, Lord, because I'm not hearing? Can I still lean on Your rod and Your staff for comfort? Can I still do that?"

And it's interesting. The disciples on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize Jesus while He walked with them, not even when He explained the scriptures to them. But they recognized Him in the breaking of bread. I find that so meaningful, because sometimes it is in the quiet, sacred act of coming to Him that clarity comes. That presence becomes real again. hearts begin to awaken.

So, as we bring this time to a close, I want to give each of us an opportunity to ask that question. Lord, where are You? In the middle of my struggle, in the middle of my discouragement, in the middle of my disappointment, in the middle of disillusionment, where are You?

I was talking to somebody after the first service. We were saying how subtly disillusionment creeps in. it's not a turn of a page. It's just suddenly you find that the purpose is going away slowly and slowly.

Today, right here in the front is bread and juice. The sacraments are here. And in a few moments, I'm going to invite you. If you feel led to come forward, take a piece of the bread, dip it in the juice and partake of it. Then if you like, you can go back to your seat or use this altar for quiet time of prayer.

But this bread reminds us that His body was broken for us. what does that mean? When He died, the veil of the temple was torn into a powerful sign that you now have access directly to God. The cup reminds us His blood was shed for you. And because of that, there is nothing, no circumstance, no burden, no failure, no addiction, no fear, nothing that you bring to Him that He cannot cleanse, restore and redeem.

So come in faith, come honestly, come expectantly. And I pray that the Lord would meet you, perhaps in a quiet way, perhaps in a surprising way. But may you know this again, that He is near, that He's always been near by your side. It's just that sometimes circumstances cloud or blur our awareness of His presence. But He's here now. He will lead you. He will guide you. He will restore to you the joy of your salvation. He will give you new strength. *And as you wait upon the Lord, your strength will be renewed. You will rise up on wings like eagles. You will run and not grow weary. You will walk and not faint.*

And above all else, I pray that the joy of being a son or a daughter of the Most High God, living for His name and for His purposes, will fill you again with peace and contentment and fresh energy. And may every situation that has tried to blur that joy, find its proper place in Him.

I pray that you would walk from this place with a renewed sense of awareness of His presence, that that question – where are You, Lord? – will be answered in the partaking of the sacrament. That there would be a steadiness in your spirit, a quiet confidence that He is at work. He hasn't stopped working in your life.

So my prayer is for His grace to go before you, His peace to guard you, and His joy, that incredible joy that belongs to every son and daughter of the Most High God be reinstated, once again bubble up within you today and in the days to come.

So, if this message has resonated with you, if that's been a question, if you've retreated, been going through the motions. If you feel that joy left a long time ago. "I'm doing everything, but somehow, He and I have somehow moved.

They recognized Him in the breaking of bread. So beloved, if that's you, if God has been speaking to you and saying: I haven't left you. I'm still there," I want to invite you to come. just come, take a piece of the bread, dip it in the juice, partake of it. nobody is going to be there. just do it on your own. And then, use the altar if you'd like to.
