

**Collect, Readings and Sermon**  
**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2026**  
**Third Sunday of Easter**

**Collect**

Almighty Father,  
who in your great mercy gladdened  
the disciples with the sight of the risen Lord:  
give us such knowledge of his presence with us,  
that we may be strengthened and sustained  
by his risen life  
and serve you continually in righteousness and truth;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Acts 2:14a, 36-41**

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them:

‘Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.’

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

**Luke 24:13-35**

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed

him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### **Post Communion**

Living God,  
your Son made himself known to his disciples  
in the breaking of bread:  
open the eyes of our faith,  
that we may see him in all his redeeming work;  
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

## Sermon

It probably will not surprise you to hear that when you move to a new role as a clergy person, you do so with a strong sense of calling to that place and its community. Each of us has a different relationship with change, but as most of you know, becoming Vicar here at St. Mary's has involved moving house as well as starting a new role. Not to mention the significant transition for my husband.

Sometimes it can feel like this kind of transition is not for the faint-hearted. But we have done this because at each stage of the journey, we have felt a strong sense that this is where God is calling us to be at this time. From reading the Ministry Area profile, to seeing the churches and meeting with members of the congregations, to being interviewed, it felt as though this is where God wants us to be.

While that sense of vocation, of calling, is something that we are used to exploring as clergy, in the conversations that I have with so many different people, it is clear that we are all called in different ways by God. It often isn't dramatic, and sometimes it is easier to see it in retrospect than at the time. But I expect you can each identify times when you have had a sense of God's purposes. Maybe you have taken on a role unexpectedly, but have discovered that you're actually rather good at it. Or you have found that it is time to stop doing something – and in doing so have discovered that a different and more fruitful path opens up. It could have been as simple as saying yes to going somewhere, and as a result meeting with new people who broadened your horizons.

This morning's gospel reading is very familiar. It tells us about two people walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. As is so often the case, we know very little about these individuals, though we do know that one of them is called Cleopas. For me, there is something so relatable about this story. These two individuals are doing something very ordinary: walking together, and chatting along the way. And let's be clear, a seven mile journey is going to provide the opportunity for quite a lot of conversation.

We know what it is that these two are talking about because they tell us. They have clearly been following Jesus, and therefore deeply impacted by the events that have taken place. When Jesus draws alongside them, they summarise for him all that they have been saying. They talk of Jesus as being a “prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people” and explain that he was put to death by the authorities. And then this beautiful phrase: “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”

Just pause for a moment to take in this scene. Only a couple of weeks ago, we were following Jesus in his final hours, answering to the Chief Priests and to Pilate, the crowds apparently crying out for him to be crucified, and even his closest disciples struggling to stand alongside him.

But here in this moment, when all the clamour has died down, we find ourselves walking alongside two people who had known Jesus. Who had listened to what he had to say. Who had followed him. And in all that he taught and said and the ways that he behaved, these two men can say: “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”

There is something so gentle about this story that speaks of how it is that Jesus relates to us. Do you notice that the first thing that happens is simply that Jesus draws alongside them as they’re walking. Nothing dramatic, just meeting them exactly where they are. And that is exactly how Jesus meets us, too. Wherever it is that you are, whatever it is that you are feeling, it is always worth taking a moment to pause and recognise that Jesus is right there.

As these two travellers tell their story, Jesus’s love for them is clear. He cares deeply about all they have to say. He wants to know and understand them and their story.

And then Jesus shows them something more. He does so by revealing the scriptures to them; helping them to understand that the events that have taken place over the past days - events that have been painful and disconcerting, events that have called into question all that they had believed – that those events are actually part of the bigger story of God. And he reinforces that message by breaking bread with them.

This story of two men on the road to Emmaus tells us so much about how it is that God works in our lives. How it is that we can discern where God is calling us. Whether individually or as a community. God meets us where we are; loves us; and shows us something more.

It is such a reminder to pause and take the time to notice God's presence. Because no matter how it is that we are feeling; how tough things are; we can be assured that God is right there, loving us, and longing us to see something more.

As a community it also feels like such an important reminder as we enter a new chapter of our journey together. The St. Mary's committee met earlier this week, and we all acknowledged that within the church – not just St. Mary's, but churches across the country – the last decades have been tough. Congregations are certainly getting smaller and we see fewer younger people.

The key message of this morning's gospel reading is that as we experience that sense of sadness, God is right here among us, loving us. Just as those two travellers on the road to Emmaus were not alone in their confusion, neither are we. That love is so important, too. God does not meet us with a wagging finger, telling us that we should have done better. God meets us just where we are and loves us.

And as we recognise that presence; as we pray together about what we might be being called to do; God will show us something of the path that lies ahead of us. It might not be in a blinding flash, or even in an especially clear way. But if we pray together and take the time to be with God and listen, we will find a faithful path forward.

While, as I said at the beginning, I am confident that God is calling me to be here in this place at this time, I don't know the path that lies ahead of us. But I believe and trust that we will find it together. I don't know exactly what it will look like. Of course it would be wonderful if it led to full and vibrant churches, and maybe that's what God has in mind. Or perhaps it is something slightly different.

And just to reassure you, we are not starting from scratch, as you know far better than me. This community has been guided by God from the outset. There are wonderful ways in which each of you, as individuals and together, serve one another and this local community; look after each other and reach out beyond. As we pray and listen together, I expect that many of those things will continue to feel important. And whatever lies ahead, we can be assured of God's love surrounding us all along the way.

Amen