

## The Greatest News in All the World!

Luke 24:13-35

Easter Sunday 2026 5th April

**PREACHER: Pastor Roy Summers**

I'd like us to turn this morning, to a life-transforming story that took place on the very first Easter Sunday, 2000 years ago. Here's what happened. It's around 4pm, only a few hours of daylight remains. Two of the wider circle of Jesus' followers (not two of the twelve), one by the name of Cleopas, the other unnamed (both otherwise unknown) were walking home to Emmaus from Jerusalem.

It's a 7 mile walk, a couple of hours?

These two disciples are in the dumps, confused and downhearted because Jesus had been crucified. Their Bible predicted the coming of a mighty king. A Victor who would deliver his people from tyranny and rule the world from "sea to sea." And all the astonishing miracles he performed seemed to prove that Jesus was that Messiah!

But hopes had been dashed last Friday, when Jesus was crucified! So they're walking home, sad, disillusioned, disappointed, crushed. Perhaps we can feel their pain.

They talked together about one small ray of hope! Some female followers had gone to Jesus' tomb early that morning and reported they'd seen angels who told them, "Jesus was alive!" but since they hadn't seen Jesus himself, it was little more than a rumour.

All of a sudden, probably quite early on in the journey, a stranger joins them, but somehow they are kept from noticing who this travelling companion is. The stranger was Jesus Christ himself, risen from the dead! The mutilated body that went into the tomb, so renewed that he could move and walk and talk!

Isn't it just like the Lord Jesus to find "the broken-hearted and save those who are crushed in spirit?" (Palm 34:18)

*"What are you discussing together as you walk along?" he asked them*

*They stood still, their faces downcast.*

*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?"*

I mean, Jerusalem had been alive with news and rumours about mock trials, a crown of thorns, beatings, fickle crowds who had once cried "Hosanna" but now screamed "Crucify him" and the

terrible crucifixion itself. “It was all over social media” How had this stranger missed the news?

19 *“What things?” Jesus asked.*

*“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 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...” (in other words, three days down the line, that’s it, he’s gone..)*

We were convinced that Jesus was the promised king, but now he’s dead. Messiahs don’t suffer and die!! But remember the small ray of hope?...

*22 some of the women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”*

A ray of hope, but no-one had actually seen him alive!

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

A strong rebuke! The problem with you two is that you’ve cherry-picked the Scriptures! You loved the verses that talked about the Messiah’s triumph and glory, but completely ignored the verses that mentioned his sufferings! You rightly read that Messiah would be a glorious King, but glazed over the means, the method, by which that greatness would be reached, the route to greatness, the road to greatness—which was suffering.

So Jesus took them on a tour of the Bible and showed them here and there and everywhere in the OT how the Messiah had to suffer. Their hearts were warmed as he explained! Perhaps he quoted Isaiah 53:

*“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering... (there’s the suffering) therefore I will give him a portion among the great (there’s the glory that followed suffering)” (Isaiah 53)*

*28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 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.*

In those days no-one travelled in the dark for fear of wild animals and robbers. They went into the house, and probably by the light of an oil lamp, began to eat a meal. Surprising: Jesus took the initiative, the lead, the role of the host, rather than the role of a guest:

*30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 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?"*

All of a sudden they recognised Jesus! Was it the visible scars on his hands as he broke the bread? And then as soon as they recognised him he was gone.....an easy miracle, for Jesus was the God who created the universe, including it's very laws.

## Lessons

Three observations for us on Easter Sunday morning... the first for those who are already Christians...

### (1) The path to glory leads through suffering

Jesus had to die. Before he could be raised to life, he had to suffer and die. And that pattern is not only true for him, but for all of his followers too. Jesus said "If anyone wants to follow me he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Paul wrote "It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him but also to suffer for him." (Phil1:29)

Brothers and sisters, you and I so easily make exactly the same mistake as these Emmaus travellers! We cherry pick the Scriptures, we take the good Gospel bits about having peace with God, a new life and the hope of heaven beyond the grave, but glaze over the bits about suffering. In all my years as a preacher, every single time I have spoken about believers suffering for the gospel, I have seen members of the congregation switching off, staring out the window or up at some stain on the ceiling, fidgeting, fumbling for their phones, whatever!

None of us wants to suffer, all of us avoid suffering, that's understandable. But brothers and sisters, let us not forget that suffering is part of our calling here below. And nothing else leads to spiritual growth more than suffering.

The crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday was the very means by which the Son of God accomplished his greatest work, the forgiveness of our sins! Suffering was not incidental to his mission it was essential!

Is this a message someone needs to hear today? Stop staring at the ceiling, "Did not the Christ **have to suffer these things** and then enter his glory?" Lift up your head! Don't be downhearted!

## (2) The journey of faith is step by step

Second place, a lesson for those who do not yet believe. These two men had a partial understanding of Jesus, but their faith took a step forward after this event.

And that's often how faith grows. Some people are changed in an instant, but for other it starts with "that's interesting" "I want to explore that some more." And then advances step by step, line, line, precept, precept.

That's what happened with a German scientist by the name of Gunter Bechley, who died last year

"I had been a 150-percent atheist for almost forty years... My parents were both irreligious. We never talked about religion or God, we never prayed or visited any church service. My parents pushed to opt me out of religion class in school, resulting in my being ridiculed as the village atheist"

"I earned a Ph.D., I was fortunate enough to get a dream job as scientific curator in the palaeontology department of the State Museum of Natural History in Stuttgart, (one of the five top natural history museums in Germany.)

I did not believe in anything supernatural. Skeptics like Richard Dawkins and James Randi were my heroes. It all started in my late thirties when I became interested in modern physics. I soon realized that materialism is untenable, and I searched for a new worldview that could make sense of the world we experience

I was the project leader for a special exhibition on evolution at our museum for Darwin Year 2009. In preparing for this exhibit, I read some books by Darwin critics, because we wanted to refute and mock them.

What most impressed me were 1) the argument from the fine-tuning of the universe, 2) the argument from reason, 3) the argument from contingency "why is there anything rather than nothing?"), 4) the argument from the uncanny effectiveness of mathematics in the natural sciences, and 5) the argument for God as the very source of the laws of nature.

I could not shut my eyes or close my ears to the arguments of Christian apologists. They claimed that there are good reasons and strong evidence for Christianity. I found this surprising because it had never occurred to me that Christians had anything but irrational, blind faith in ancient fairy tales from illiterate goat herders.

Ultimately, I reached a point where the evidence and arguments were so overwhelming, while most of my problems with Christianity could be resolved, that I had no choice but to surrender to the call of Christ.

He calls his story "The long surrender."

Will this Easter be the start of a step by step journey for someone here today. We sincerely pray so!

### (3) The Resurrection of Jesus brings hope

I missed out the last part of the story!

*“They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” 35 Then the two **told what had happened on the way**, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.”*

Everything changed when these disciples realised that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead! Sadness gave way to joy, despair turned to hope! Although it was dark and the journey was dangerous they rushed back to Jerusalem, to tell their friends the news “Jesus is alive!”

The resurrection of Jesus brought them—and us! real hope!

***The hope of sins forgiven!*** On Good Friday Jesus was crucified to pay for all our sins; his resurrection from the dead proved that the debt had been paid in full!

***The hope of life beyond the grave!*** All of us must die one day, but Jesus said, he promised ***“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies.”*** It is a precious thing to be comforted in the face of death by certain hope of eternal life beyond the grave! I have lost both parents and a brother, and people sometimes wonder why I have not grieved as much as they thought I should grieve. All three were believers, I know where they are, I will see them again! Believers grieve in hope!

#### What about you?

What about you, on this Easter Sunday morning? Do you believe? Will you believe? May the Lord give to each of us the gift of faith if we do not yet have it and may he strengthen our faith if we do. Amen.