

Sunday 19th April 2026; Easter 3 - Benefice Holy
Communion Oswaldkirk

“Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.”

We have today the famous story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It speaks of many things and today I would like to look at it from the point of view of our behaviour in the world as followers of Jesus, not what we or others may expect, but what Jesus calls us to be.

In the account we are told that Jesus joins the disciples on the road, but they were kept from recognizing him. Firstly, this comforting stranger asks them a simple, open-ended question, *“What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?”* Jesus knew what they were discussing, but He wanted to listen to their answer to teach them. In the same way, too wants to know what is happening with all of us, in our own words and hear our stories, in a constant conversation.

This teaches us, firstly, that the risen Jesus is walking with us, even when we don't recognize him. Indeed, he often walks alongside us in the form of a comforting stranger or through others who often unexpectedly offer a listening ear. This also teaches us about how to share our faith with others, by first listening to their story and not imposing our own. We should always learn from Jesus and here he teaches us that it all starts simply by joining someone on their journey, walking alongside them and listening to them. Sometimes this might mean opening ourselves to someone else's pain because that's part of being with another person and caring for them in the way Jesus teaches. Sometimes we want to skip this step, but Jesus shows us in this story how important this step is, to simply be with and listen to someone, share and help carry their pain and their grief, to be present with them. Before we share our faith, we listen, as Jesus did.

Then Jesus opened scripture to them, and we are told their hearts burned. Why? Because he helped them to see their story as part of God's story. He helped them to understand that the cross was necessary and that everything He did in his life and in his suffering was done out of love for us. That too is part of our vocation as Christians to do the same, to help others to see their story as part of and eternally connected to God's. Whether it is literally using scripture or not, we can help others to see something of the bigger picture, their life through the lens of God's grace and mercy. We can help them to better understand their place and purpose in this world, by helping them to see that Jesus walks through this world with them, who died for them, and is with them now and will walk with them through death itself. To help them realise first that they belong, even before they believe.

After opening the scriptures to them we are then told as Jesus made to continue on his journey on the road, the disciples urged Him to stay with them and invited Him into their home. Notice Jesus doesn't impose on them, keep banging on their door and barge in, He waits for an invitation. So, He teaches us to do that, as He does that for us. Jesus will join us on the journey but at some point, He also waits to be invited in, but He never forces his way in. This, too, is a powerful image for the Christian life and a reminder to us of how when relating to others, we are not drawing up a list of expectations, even for the vicar (or his wife), not bombarding our beliefs and practises on anyone, but instead always being ready when the invitation presents itself, not when we think it does, but when the Holy Spirit does and prompts us. Jesus will always enter if invited and this teaches us too to always seek to invite others, not shut people out of our exclusive groups and cliques, but always to be hospitable and form community, not to expect but to invite and graciously receive.

Once the disciples invite Jesus in, they break bread together, and this simple meal becomes holy, as it is for us today and each time we partake in Holy Communion. Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them and then, their eyes are opened, and they recognize him, in the breaking of the bread, then immediately He vanishes from their sight. This teaches us about the importance of what we do after we worship Jesus; after we pray, and hear God's word, and share the Lord's Supper; it shouldn't end there and be hung up like a coat to put on again next Sunday, we should go out immediately to love, serve and proclaim God's grace to all.

So as we walk our own Emmaus Road, may we encounter Jesus in the comforting stranger, may our hearts burn within us as we learn from Him, and realise we are part of God's enfolding story. May we invite Him to stay with us and come into our lives anew, and may our hearts always be opened, so that we can recognize Jesus alongside us and always be eager to share with others and invite them to experience the joy of His resurrection and presence among us.

Thanks be to God. Amen