

## Readings for the Third Sunday of Easter

19<sup>th</sup> April 2026

### First Reading: Acts 2:14a,36-41

On the day of Pentecost, Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd,

‘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 to their number.

### Second Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-23

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

### Gospel: St Luke 24:13-35

On that same day, two of the disciples 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?’ Jesus 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 Jesus.’ 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 Jesus; 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.

### **A Reflection for the Third Sunday of Easter**

*from Rev'd Anne Macdonald*

When I was a child one of our neighbours was the post for a couple of villages, both close to the mountains, by the sea in southwest Lewis, and without road access. He walked out across the moor three days a week, there and back, and if we thought anything about this journey it was to wonder if we could do it one day.

Now, if we were minded to walk seven miles, we could reach Lael or Strathcanaird if we started in Ullapool or walk from Kylesku Bridge down to Skiag Bridge at Loch Assynt. How long would that take? Less than two hours? More? Well, the Gospel story for this week is about a seven-mile journey on foot, to the village of Emmaus, on that first Easter Day. A story which is quite well known and has certainly inspired numerous people, including renowned artists and poets over the ages. It is a story which has always captured my imagination and maybe yours as well.

Apparently, there is a debate about what and where this village was but even although the name Emmaus may be legendary, the story is of the journey rather than the place Cleopas and his companion were going to. We do not really know who was with Cleopas, but some theologians think it might have been his wife and that she had been present at the crucifixion. Certainly, John [19.25] mentions a Mary the wife of Clopas as being present at the foot of the cross.

What we can tell from the account we have is that the two people walking to Emmaus appeared to know one another well enough to discuss what had taken place in Jerusalem and we do get a real sense of their despair from the account, for example ‘they stood still, looking sad’ when the stranger approached them. Their openness to talk about what had taken place in Jerusalem with someone they thought they had only just met does strike me as strange. We know from other passages that the Apostles were hiding in a locked room in fear of the authorities, so it is not unreasonable to assume that Cleopas and his companion must have been frightened as well, and yet here they were openly telling someone they thought was a stranger that they had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah. Did they sense something familiar in him?

Is it surprising that they did not recognise Jesus? The passage tells us that their 'eyes were kept from recognising him'. Perhaps it was necessary for them to travel a journey to faith, as they unknowingly walked with him. After all they must have been overwhelmed by everything they had seen and heard. They knew he had been arrested and crucified and had died and if one of them was one of the women at the foot of the cross she had actually seen it happen. How difficult it can be to move beyond the evidence of our senses. Moreover, just as we saw on Palm Sunday, the followers of Jesus, like all those who shouted Hosanna, had until now thought of Jesus as the Messiah, a great leader who would free them from the Romans. At this point their hopes were in tatters. So even although they had been told by some of the women that he was gone from the tomb they could not make sense of it.

Slowly as they walked with this strange man they came to feel comfortable with his presence, so much so that when they reached their destination, as it was late in the day, they turned to the stranger and encouraged him to remain with them and eat a meal. They still did not recognise him. It was only when he 'took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them' that Cleopas and the other person recognised Jesus. This meal echoes the institution of the Lord's Supper, which we commemorated just a few weeks ago on Maundy Thursday. [Luke 22.19]. Now we do not think that the wider circle of disciples of Jesus was present in the upper room, only the twelve, the Apostles were there. So how did Cleopas and his companion recognise Jesus from the breaking of the bread? Well, they might have been told about the "Last Supper", or they might have seen him do something like this before? But perhaps it was because the Holy Eucharist is a gift to all of us from God. A place where we can be connected to him, and to Christ. Is this what happened in Emmaus?

We are told that Jesus immediately disappeared and Cleopas and his companion turned round and went back to Jerusalem. Such was their joy and excitement that they went back at the end of the day, a dangerous time to be out and about, to a place which was no longer safe for followers of Jesus – particularly men. When they reached Jerusalem, they found the Apostles and others and told them about what had happened and how they had found Jesus 'in the breaking of the bread'. We also read that everyone in the room was excited because Jesus had appeared to Simon Peter. Now as Clare reminded us last week, we need to be careful about how we interpret "they saw" Jesus. At this point, the Apostles and the followers of Christ were only just beginning to understand what had taken place. As we move through the Easter season we will read about the Acts of the Apostles and walk with them as their understanding of who Jesus Christ truly was strengthens and grows.

So, when we read this story do we see ourselves in it? I do not mean that we have to physically walk seven miles – although for some that does create space for reflection and connection to God; I am thinking of the journey of faith illustrated by this account of a journey taken by two followers of Jesus. For many of us our faith journey is like that on the Road to Emmaus. It can take a long time for us to feel comfortable with walking with Jesus Christ. We come to him in our own time and sometimes the path will take us backwards and forwards. Paths seldom go in straight lines, and they have to be used to continue to exist. I have walked out to the villages I referred to at the beginning of this sermon, but the paths are no longer easy to follow because they are no longer in regular use, but it is still possible to get to these places if we wish to: could this be an analogy for the journey of faith?

Here is a poem by Malcolm Guite, Priest, and Poet. It comes from his book *Parable and Paradox* and is titled *Emmaus*  
2. I wonder what you think about it.

We thought that everything was lost and gone,  
Disaster on disaster overtook us  
The night we left our Jesus all alone  
And we were scattered, and our faith forsook us.  
But oh that foul Friday proved far worse,  
For we had hoped that he had been the one,  
Till crucifixion proved he was a curse,  
And on the cross our hopes were all undone.  
Oh foolish foolish heart why do you grieve?  
Here is good news and comfort to your soul:  
Open your mind to scripture and believe  
He bore the curse for you to make you whole  
The living God was numbered with the dead  
That He might bring you Life in broken bread.