

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit**  
**Service at Home Sheet 4<sup>th</sup> May 2025**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Easter**  
prepared by Pat Fry

**Introduction**

It's now two weeks since Easter, the central festival of the Christian year, the most joyful Sunday of the year. But every Sunday is a day to celebrate the joy of Easter Sunday. Our first hymn reminds us of this;

**Hymn 152 This is the day the Lord has made**

<https://youtu.be/26atGdbKhwy>

This is the day,  
this is the day that the Lord has made,  
that the Lord has made.  
We will rejoice,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it,  
and be glad in it.  
This is the day that the Lord has made,  
we will rejoice and be glad in it .  
This is the day  
this is the day that the Lord has made.  
This is the day when he rose again.....  
This is the day when the Spirit came.....

Our **Opening Prayer** continues this theme;

The stories of Easter morning are all about sorrow turning to elation and joy.

Today, whatever our circumstances, wherever we are, whatever our story,  
we have this promise:

**Your love is ours for ever.**

In dying You conquered death,  
your love gives purpose to our living  
and the promise of life beyond.  
Your words echo through eternity  
**"I am the Resurrection and the Life."** Fear  
and trepidation linger, darkness is not for  
ever.

Easter offers hope, love so strong that  
nothing can stop it ,  
spilling into our hearts and giving us joy.  
You long to wipe away our tears, our hurting.

As we read the Easter stories  
something deep within us rejoices.

**The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia.**  
**Thanks be to God . Amen**

(Adapted from Easter in Our hearts by Hazel  
McCorrisken URC Prayer Handbook 2024)

**Introduction to theme**

Today I am not going to focus on the set reading, as it's not so long since I prepared a service at home sheet about that. Instead, I have chosen to focus on the Resurrection story I find most engaging - the encounter with Jesus on the Emmaus Road. Of all the Resurrection stories, for many of us, this is the one that most resonates with our own experiences. We are going to look at it in two parts.

**Reading: Luke 24:13- 31**

**Exploring the story**

The two disciples making the journey to Emmaus that evening were sunk in gloom. They had been loyal and devoted followers of Jesus, not included in the inner circle of the Twelve, but close enough to that group to have heard about the women's story of their experience that morning. Like the Twelve, they had followed confidently, believing Jesus was at least a great prophet, and probably would prove to be God's promised Messiah, the one who would set their people free from Roman domination. The arrest and crucifixion had brought a cruel and decisive end to their hopes and dreams. It was impossible, they thought, for the evil power of Rome to overcome God's chosen Messiah- so they must have been completely mistaken, their faith groundless.

When the stranger joins those troubled travellers on the road, he gets them talking, talking about the dreadful events of Friday, and about their shattered dreams. Then he gets them to recall the words of Scripture they knew so well, but sheds new light on familiar words.

He opens their eyes to a different interpretation: God's Saviour not conquering suffering, but conquering through suffering.\* Totally engaged by the stranger's words, they invite him to join them for a meal, and it is only then, when he breaks and blesses the bread that they recognise the Risen Jesus. That phrase immediately links to Communion in our minds, and may well have been in Luke's mind as he wrote, for "breaking of bread" was central to early Christian worship. But Cleopas and his companion had not been present at the Last Supper; perhaps this was how Jesus regularly began his meals with the wider group of his followers, just as he had blessed and broken the bread when the five thousand were fed.

And then, almost as soon as they have recognised him, Jesus leaves them.

There is so much in this story that relates to contemporary Christian experience. We know only too well what it means to feel disheartened, overwhelmed both when personal grief strikes, and when the news headlines tell us repeatedly of the horrors of war perpetrated by the power hungry leaders of our time, or of natural disasters.

We know how sometimes even passages of Scripture we know well and have loved seem empty and meaningless for the circumstances in which we find ourselves, especially as so many people around us have dismissed them as irrelevant. It is then we need to focus on what we know of the life of Jesus himself, on the heart of the Gospel message.

Thank God, we may also know moments when faith is a shining light, when we are certain of the presence of the Holy Spirit even in our everyday life. They may come in a church service, through the word of a friend, through something we have read or seen on television, or in a place of great beauty, or when we are alone, often unexpectedly.

Those moments may be very rare and fleeting, but we need to hold on to them, and treasure them

**Hymn StF158: Lord you sometimes speak in wonders:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBQ-ql7Xbv8>

Lord you sometimes speak in wonders,  
unmistakeable and clear,  
mighty signs that show your presence,  
overcoming doubt and fear.  
O Lord you sometimes speak in wonders.

Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers,  
still and small and scarcely heard;  
only those who want to listen  
catch the all-important word.  
O Lord you sometimes speak in whispers.

Lord you sometimes speak in silence, through  
our loud and noisy day;  
we can know and trust you better,  
when we quietly wait and pray.  
O Lord you sometimes speak on silence.

Lord you often speak in Scripture,  
words that summon from the page,  
shown and taught us by your Spirit  
with fresh light for every age.  
O Lord you sometimes speak through  
Scripture.

Lord you always speak in Jesus,  
always new yet still the same;  
teach us now more of our Saviour,  
make our lives display his name.  
O Lord you always speak through Jesus.

I love this hymn, but I feel it misses out one significant way we often experience a word from God. A year ago I used this hymn and asked for suggestions on how to complete an extra verse: here's my attempt .

in Lord you sometimes speak through people.  
Showing you in how they care,  
In their words and deeds of kindness,  
Holy Spirit, You are there.

## **Reading part 2 Luke 24 31-36**

### **Exploring the story**

I find this part of the story quite surprising. I want to shout “ Don’t go, come back, we need you! Tell us more, show us what to do next.....”

Why, Oh why didn’t Jesus stay longer?”

But those two disciples react much more positively. Recognising that the stranger is Jesus himself makes sense of what they had felt as they listened on their journey, and they are overwhelmed with joy. But they do not cling to the moment, they do not keep their joy to themselves. They were already tired from a seven mile walk; it’s already dusk, in a place where travel at night was unsafe, but their immediate reaction is “We must go straight back and tell the others.” And it’s when they have done that, that Jesus appears again, greeting them all with the words “Peace be with you.”

So for us there is challenge here too. Any insight we are given, any moment of certainty is not to be clung to in private, like a miser counting his gold, but shared joyfully where it’s appropriate. It should be a springboard for outgoing Christian living within our particular circumstances, whether that is through active service, sympathetic listening, or prayer for others.

In a world where many people want “spiritual experience” just for their own enrichment, we are told firmly that such experience is given to enable outgoing Christian living within our everyday lives.

### **Prayer of confession.**

Let us open our lives to God and ask his forgiveness and grace:

On those time when we have kept your resurrection as a past event rather than a present encounter:

Lord have mercy

On those times when we have been blind to your presence:

Lord have mercy

On those times when we have failed to live as those who know the Risen Christ;

Lord have mercy

On those times when we needed to speak about our faith in you but were afraid, or embarrassed or could not find the right words:

Lord, have mercy

On those times when we have talked and blundered in without understanding, or offered platitudes when we needed to listen sensitively

Lord have mercy

To all who turn to him, Christ says “Your sins are forgiven. He also says, “Come follow Me.”  
THANKS BE TO GOD. AMEN .

(adapted from WGRG Fire and Bread)

### **Words of reassurance**

Still Jesus comes

to those who will receive Him.

He comes as one who knows  
our innermost needs,  
our deepest fears,  
our most secret sins.

He comes as the great Healer,  
the loving Saviour,

to make us whole people

and lead us from our petty little worlds  
into new adventure.

He comes as one who has fought evil,  
and prevailed,

who has suffered without being destroyed,  
who has died and risen again.

He comes, telling us to have

for whatever lies ahead

He will be in it with us

always.

He comes, telling us to have

courage for whatever lies ahead

He will be in it with us always.

(Edmund Banyard: Reaching for the Infinite)

## Prayers for others

Gracious God,  
Sometimes the new headlines make it hard to hold on to faith, hard to believe in the ultimate victory of good over evil, hard to hold on to the hopes of the Resurrection.

So in quiet, let us each bring before God one situation in the news that troubles us, one place of suffering that distresses us, and at the same time hold on to the picture of the Risen Christ, arms outstretched in blessing.

.....

Now come closer to home, and bring one concern about a situation in our own city or locality, and visualise Jesus walking our streets....., and again, picture them, and picture Jesus, or picture light surrounding them, whatever image you find helpful

Now bring to God the people you know personally who need your prayers today and again, picture them, and picture Jesus, or picture light surrounding them, whatever image you find helpful

And remember,  
All any of us can do is light a small flame, a tiny candle.....  
And ask that God will take it, and smile, and bless it...  
And use it to shine warmth and joy, where we are, through us.  
(wild goose big book of resources)

Join in the words of an Easter blessing, for those you have prayed for, and for yourself:

**The power of the Creator, who brings new life, surround us.  
The risen Christ be our constant companion  
The healing embrace of the Holy Spirit encircle us.  
so that we see resurrection ever about us.  
Amen .**

(WGRG Fire and Bread).

## Hymn StF297 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing Christ is Alive, Let Christians Sing (Singing the Faith 297 / StF297)

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing,  
The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
Love drowned in death shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine  
He comes to claim the here and now,  
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,  
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,  
Christ suffers still yet loves the more,  
and lives where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus freed for all.

Christ is alive, and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love and praise.

(Brian Wren b.1936)

## Blessing

The blessing of God,  
who created you in love,  
who walks this life beside you,  
and who inspires your every breath,  
be with you  
and give you joy,  
now and always,  
Amen

(URC daily devotions)

\*Borg and Crossnan The Last Week

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