

We come to seek the risen Lord: **let us begin our journey**

A prayer of confession

Lord God, we know we are not always ready to find you as we travel life's road.

Sometimes, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we are lost in sadness and heartache.

Sometimes, though, we are too busy enjoying ourselves, or trapped in the minutiae of our own family life.

Sometimes, remiss of your care for us, we are overwhelmed by worries about our health, our families, our jobs, or our possessions.

Shake us out of our preoccupations; make us see you and know you;

for only then will we find the peace and joy that you promise to your followers.

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through **Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Lord God almighty, you make us see things afresh.

We see winter turn into spring and then into summer.

For the ability to see change and find joy, we praise you.

We see babies turn into children and children into grown men and women.

For the ability to see change and find joy, we praise you.

We see people overcoming failure, disaster, illness and bereavement.

For the ability to see change and find joy, we praise you.

We meet others and hear stories of courage, of faith, of perseverance in difficulty.

For the ability to see change and find joy, we praise you.

Keep us faithful to the Good News. Death and darkness will not win, but love and life will always remain with those who seek to follow you. **Amen.**

Read or Sing:

1 Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
 wheat that in the dark earth many days has lain;
 Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
 Love is come again, like wheat that springs up green.

2 In the grave they laid him, Love who had been slain,
 thinking that he never would awake again,
 laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:

3 Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,
 he that for the three days in the grave had lain,
 quick from the dead my risen Lord is seen:

4 When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
 then your touch can call us back to life again,
 fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:

John Macleod Campbell Crum (1872–1958) (*alt.*) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 306

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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.

Loving God, we praise and adore you for your great compassion, for giving us new birth into a living hope.

The glorious truth of the resurrection astounds us; we pray that we never lose the wonder of what you have done for us, of the wonderful, lasting inheritance you provide for us. Amen.

Word for today.

The journey to Emmaus is both a literal and a spiritual journey. On one hand it tells the story of two disciples who, after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, walk seven miles from Jerusalem to their village of Emmaus. On the other hand, it shapes for us the journey that we all take from not recognizing Jesus, to accepting what the Scripture says about Him, to knowing Him for who He is, and finally to our giving witness of what we experience.

Jesus seeks us. Although the disciples knew who Jesus was, they did not recognize Him. They knew a lot about Him. They had been witnesses to all those things that had happened in Jerusalem. They had heard, no doubt, countless times the things Jesus had said about Himself. Yet, they were not able to recognize Jesus when they met Him.

Events had not happened as expected. They had a fixed idea of who Jesus was, what He had come to do, and how He should do it. But when things did not turn out like they thought they should, they dismissed the whole thing as a mere failure, as misplaced hope and trust.

We need to be careful not to make the same mistake, to discount what God has done simply because we cannot explain it or understand it. While God often uses natural things to accomplish His will, He also does

things we can neither explain nor understand. These two disciples knew something had happened, but it was beyond their level of faith to see things as they truly were.

Just because they knew about Jesus does not mean they knew Him. Just because they could see Him does not mean they could see who He was. Many people today know who Jesus is. They have heard about Him, read about Him, use His name, and many even claim to know Him. They would not recognize Him if they saw Him. Their eyes have not been opened. Knowing about Him and knowing Him are two different things. Secondly notice that ...Jesus opens our eyes

Verse 27 says, "Then beginning with Moses and from all the prophets Jesus interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scripture."

While we do not know the specific passages Jesus used, we know He opened to them the Scriptures with a view toward showing them how all the Old Testament pointed to Him as its fulfillment. Maybe He pointed them to Deuteronomy 18:15, which says, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to Him."

From there Jesus could have taken them to Isaiah 53:3: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like one people turned away from; He was despised, and we did not value Him."

Perhaps Jesus showed them what Isaiah 53:7 says: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter, and like a sheep silent before His shearers, He did not open His mouth."

We know that Jesus walked them through and gave witness to who He was, why He had come, and why it was necessary. Jesus wanted them to see that if they would only believe what the Scriptures say about Him, they would understand why He came and why He had to suffer. They would have known who He was. But actions speak louder than words, in verse 30 Jesus reveals Himself. It was only as they had fellowship with Jesus that He disclosed Himself to them.

It is not without significance that it is around the supper table that the disciples' eyes are opened and they see Jesus for who He really is. But when they recognized Him, He disappeared. Fellowship with Him was not going to depend on their ability to see Him, but rather upon their taking Him at His word.

And notice finally their response. Once they recognized Him, they could not help but share Him. When your eyes have been opened, you will want others to have their eyes opened.

Can you imagine the excitement they must have felt? They said to one another, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" Their encounter with Jesus had been emotional. It had stirred them on the inside. It had moved their very hearts. And once moved they could not help but share.

That very hour, dark as it was, late as it was, dangerous as the road was, they left for Jerusalem. They gave witness that Jesus was risen, that He had walked with them and talked with them, explained the Scriptures to them, and broke bread at their table.

All who have experienced the risen Christ should be moved with similar emotions. All who have come to know Him should react the same way. We should not be able to contain it.

Do you know Jesus today? Have your eyes ever been opened to who He is and what He has done for you? Do you know that He walks with you and talks with you? Can you testify to His presence in your life? Do you have fellowship with Him? Has your encounter with Him been so real, so moving, so life changing that it has caused you to tell others about Him? What will you do with Jesus today?

Read or Sing

1. When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way;
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
*Trust and obey,
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

2. Not a burden we bear,
Not a sorrow we share,
But our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss,
Not a frown or a cross,

3. But is blest if we trust and obey.
But we never can prove
The delights of His love,
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

4. Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do;
Where He sends, we will go,
Never fear, only trust and obey.

John Henry Sammis (1846-1919)

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

God knows when we are having a bad day and even invites us to "be glad and rejoice in it." In Luke's Gospel we read that the Shepherd had been killed and his sheep scattered. Some of the Lord's most intimate friends were locked in a room. Others had nowhere to hide, and so decided to walk home and return to their former way of life. I asked myself this morning why did some stay and others leave? What made all the difference? I think the answer is in how each disciple handled the situation. Some prayed and others did not. In the case of our two young disciples, they thought too much and prayed too little. The disciples on the road to Emmaus were downcast, drained and frightened, and what did they do? They made a decision: they left, and it was a big mistake. We should never make an important decision when we are emotionally drained or in a poor state of mind. They thought too much, way too much and on the wrong things! There is no mention of them ever praying for light, for faith. They were blinded not by the light but by darkness. The Lord opened their eyes by burning their hearts. He brought "understanding" to them which eventually led to the bringing of transformation to them. We have to be very careful not to turn our feelings into thoughts: such as 'I am useless' or "God has forgotten me!" Worse, "The Lord no longer loves me!" as Rubbish! Nonsense!

Why is this account so important, so powerful? Because at times we can feel downcast. It is at these moments that we turn to "The Eternal facts of our Faith." God has created me; God loves me; God died for me; God wants me.

The lost disciples turned back towards Jerusalem to share the Good News with the others. They told them what had happened. They were interrupted by the tears and laughter of the others. In different ways, they had come to the truth and could all say, "The Lord has truly been raised and we are witnesses to Him who lives forever."

God of glory, go before us.

**Remind us of the profound reality
of a life infused with your love.**

**Let us be witnesses to you,
whatever roads we travel,**

sharing the good news and celebrating the enduring hope we have.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. **Amen**