Open Door – 26th April 2026

Session 2 of the 'Journeys' series at Sawston, St Mary-the-Virgin

The Road to Emmaus

Last week, we began in a quiet place. Not with answers, not with clarity, but with *holding:* Mary, holding things she did not yet understand, and we named something honest: Sometimes the journey is not moving…it is holding.

Today, the journey shifts to movement, yes….walking in fact…. But not full understanding.

Let me show you something. *(An OS folded walking map is held up)*. If I asked you to find your way somewhere using this, most of us would feel reasonably confident. You can see the roads. You can see the direction. You can make sense of where you are going, but what if I do this… *(Cover half the map – or the Key to the map is folded or covered)*

Now you can still read it. You can still walk it. But you are not seeing the whole picture. You are not lost, but you are not seeing fully. That is where we find these two disciples, walking along the road to Emmaus and notice this carefully: they are not confused in the sense of having nothing to say, they have a very clear account of what has happened don't they? They say:

> "Jesus of Nazareth - a prophet, powerful in word and deed. He was handed over. He was crucified. The tomb is empty."

They even know about the women's testimony. They are not wrong. Everything they say is true. And yet — they conclude:

> "We had hoped…".

Notice the past tense. Here then, hope is closed down. So, the problem is not that they have no story to tell – they are not pondering or holding something - the problem is: they are reading the story… partially.

And then — quietly, without announcement — "Jesus himself came near and went with them." He joins them.

Please notice Jesus' timing here. He joins them not at the end of their story or journey, not once they understand, but right there — in the middle of their misreading; and they do not recognise him. This is not simply a trick of perception; it is something deeper. They cannot see him… because they do not yet have a way of understanding what has happened.

So, what does Jesus do? This is crucial. He does not give them a new set of events, he does not say, "Here is a different story." Instead:

"Beginning with Moses and all the prophets…"

He *re-reads* the story they already have. He shows them that what they thought was the end… was in fact part of something larger. That suffering was not a failure of the plan — but somehow, mysteriously, part of it. In other words: He does not replace their map; he teaches them how to read it.

I wonder, does this feel familiar to you? We can describe our lives accurately, we can name what has happened, we can even tell the truth about it, and yet still say: "We had hoped…" Not because we are wrong, but because we are not yet seeing the whole story.

The disciples walk with him. They listen. Something begins to shift — but still, they do not recognise him. Not yet. They reach the place they are going; and they say something simple: "Stay with us." They do not fully understand, but they know enough, or risk something, to ask him to remain. And then, at the table — everything changes.

"He took bread…" "…blessed it…" "…broke it…" "…and gave it to them."

And in that moment — not on the road, not in the explanation — but here — "their eyes were opened." And they recognised him. Which raises a question for us. Where do we expect to recognise Christ? In clarity? In answers? In everything making sense? Or here — in the taking, the blessing, the breaking, the giving?

And then — just as suddenly — he is gone. And they say: "Were not our hearts burning within us…?" In other words: We did not see it at the time, but something was happening. So where does that leave us?

We may not be wrong about our lives, we may be naming things truthfully, but we may not yet be seeing the whole story. Some of us are still holding things. Some of us are walking — trying to make sense of what has happened. Some of us are quietly saying: "We had hoped…" And the temptation is to think God is absent. Christ is not here. Nothing is happening.

But Emmaus suggests something else. That Christ may already be walking with us — even when we do not recognise him. That our story may not be finished — even when it feels closed. That what we see is not false — but it may not yet be complete. And that recognition — often comes, not in control or clarity — but in encounter. So the invitation

today is not: Work it all out! It is simpler — and harder than that. It is this: Keep walking, and when Christ draws near — even unrecognised — say: “Stay with us.”

Because this remains true: wherever you are on the journey — Jesus is already there. And here — as bread is taken, blessed, broken, and given — we remember: This is where they recognised him. And perhaps — here, we too — will begin to see.