

Welcome and Notices

If you are watching this at around 10am, we invite you to link up with a Lifesize coffee chat after the service from around 11am. The links to hosts are in the email which was sent out yesterday afternoon. If you don't receive the email for whatever reason please let me know.

Happy birthday to Angela and Pat Manning for last Wednesday, Sharon for last Friday, to Amy for yesterday, and Kevin celebrates one of those birthdays ending with a zero on Wednesday next week.

Gathering prayer

God, we gather as your people.
We come to walk a journey together,
to talk and to share along the way,
to meet and to know Jesus.
Help us to marvel at all that Jesus has done for us.

Praise: In Christ alone

<https://youtu.be/Ry4CW5pte98>

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath,

Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand
Till He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

In Friday's devotion we found Paul encouraging his hearers to do their level best to imitate the Lord, and to walk in his ways as best they can.

Thank you for responding so amazingly to our request for photos of your shoes. James was inundated with photos of your favourite footwear.

He has done an amazing job in putting together this short video – see if you can spot your shoes!

This is a great reminder that even though we are not able to do as much walking as we would normally do, this experience is teaching us to walk in different ways, and in so doing, still reflect his love and goodness in our lives.

Our Bible story produced by the Bible Society of the Emmaus walk will follow the video.

Feet Video

Bible story

<https://youtu.be/ndtnZV-5QTo>

Sermon: Somewhere between where you are and Emmaus

Times of transition – we've all faced them at times of great joy, at times of sorrow and all those moments in-between. Experiencing something for the very first time isn't easy is it? Who thought I'd be talking to a camera like this, and behind it rows of empty chairs!

What I am beginning to realise is that behind that lens are people, you are all there, wanting to hear, to share, to sing to pray to be part of. I know it's not easy, but that's what being in a time of transition is all about.

Two disciples travelling to the village of Emmaus.
The tumult and tragedy of that transition week in Jerusalem had deeply traumatized them.

It was then they admitted their own faithlessness. 'Some women of our company have astounded us: they went early to the tomb this morning and failed to find his body . . .' They were neither cheered nor bewildered by this account. Nor had they gone to the tomb themselves to find out if it was true, they had simply and sadly tramped home.

But as darkness began to fall in earnest, these two dejected disciples invite a stranger to stay with them, a companion who had been offering them surprising solace on their journey.

In their honesty about their confusion and depression, their “slow hearts” began to beat faster with a rhythm of hope. They began to hear a song of divine possibilities and dreams.

As they walked and talked with the unrecognized resurrected Jesus, they received their own personal instruction. They began a new way of understanding scripture, a new way of understanding the Messiah, a new way of understanding suffering love, a new way of understanding true redemption.

In the nineteen-twenties AA Milne decided to put down a few stories and verses about his young son, a four-year-old named Christopher Robin. Like all four-year-olds, Christopher Robin doted on a large collection of stuffed animals.

In the final chapter of “The House at Pooh Corner,” Christopher Robin is preparing for a transition: he is being sent away to school. It will be an ending, and it will be a whole new beginning.

Christopher Robin understands this; his simple stuffed animal friends, not so much. But as the one who knows, and the ones who don’t know walk forward towards this new future, they find their feet guided by these simple steps: Participate, Anticipate, Relate, steps not unlike the Emmaus Road encounter of Jesus and his disciples.

The First Step of Transition: Participation.

When the stuffed animals sense that their beloved Christopher Robin is going away (even though “nobody even knew why he knew that Christopher Robin was going away”), they felt compelled to show their appreciation and express their emotions. So Eeyore wrote a bad poem. They all signed it and presented it to him.

But the awkwardness of transitions is difficult. And they quickly move away. All except Pooh, that is. Needing to figure out for himself “what is going on?”, Christopher Robin takes his beloved bear on a last walk, heading for “an enchanted place.” They walk the road. They chat on the path. Together they would try and make sense of what was going on.

To understand what is going on now and in the future requires us to appreciate what went on before and participate in the challenge of what is before us.

The time of finding ways to do church differently is a huge challenge for all of us. We’re in uncharted waters here. We draw on the experiences of our fellowship in normal times, where we were able to share together face to face and benefit from that true sense of community. Now it’s very different. How will it all work out?

Second Step of Transition: Anticipation.

As they walk Christopher Robin uses this last little-boy conversation with Pooh to ask him what he likes doing best in the world. Pooh starts to say “Eating honey,” but then

he remembers how “there is a moment just before you begin to eat it which was even better than when you were, but he didn’t know what it was called.”

Pooh is describing, of course, the joy of anticipation, the sweet taste of honey-yet-to-come. The Emmaus Road travellers felt “anticipation” only AFTER their eyes were opened to Jesus’ presence at their table. They remembered how their hearts “were burning” while he spoke to them on the road.

We tend to remember more what we anticipate than what we actually experience. Childhood memories are not of the ripped-off wrapping paper or the too-stuffed tummy.

Childhood memories are of the pile of brightly coloured parcels awaiting Christmas morning, or of the heavy-laden table decked out with favourite foods and goodies.

The Emmaus disciples - and all disciples since - recall best those moments just BEFORE our eyes and spirits are opened to the truth.

Anticipation is another name for “hope.” And “hope” is another name for Christians. We are the people first known for our “great hopes”, despite having to deal with tough times. We live as people who know that just around the corner, God turns up and surprises us!

Third Step of Transition: Relation.

After Pooh recalls the anticipation of eating honey, he suddenly remembers something that ranks even higher on his “best in the world” list. Better even than the anticipation of eating honey is the delight he feels in eating honey with those he loves.

The very, very best thing in the world, he says, is “Me and Piglet going to see You, and You saying ‘What about a little something?’ and Me saying ‘Well, I shouldn’t mind a little something, should you Piglet,’ and it being a hummy sort of day outside, and birds singing.”

Pooh’s insight is the greatest learning of the disciples from the Emmaus Road Seminar: life’s ultimate delights are not delightful unless shared with those we love.

Disciples of Jesus are people who relate, relate, relate. And this is exactly what we are being forced to do in these very strange times. It may be at the other end of a telephone or a computer, but we are relating and getting to know each other in ways we never thought possible.

It’s a strange way to relate when we can’t be with one another in the flesh, but at the moment this is all we have.

The good thing is, on this strange journey we’re taking, that stranger that appeared to those disciples, He is with us. The stranger is with us, helping us to cope with these strange times.

Somewhere between where we are and Emmaus, God turns up and makes this time of transition an opportunity, a huge step in faith.

Midst our loneliness and frustration, this stranger on the road wants to walk with us and reveal more of himself to us as we journey on. He wants to listen to our concerns and our fears. And if we are prepared to share those with him, in silence or in prayer, he will reveal himself in some truly wonderful ways.

Praise: All heaven declares

<https://youtu.be/Bm5NbY5yEnQ>

All Heaven declares

The glory of the risen Lord

Who can compare

With the beauty of the Lord

Forever He will be the lamb upon the throne

I gladly bow the knee and worship him alone

I will proclaim

The glory of the risen Lord

Who once was slain

To reconcile man to God

Forever you will be the lamb upon the throne

I gladly bow the knee and worship you alone

Prayers of Intercession:

Living Lord,

we bring to you the needs of the world.

We pray for those who consider themselves to be strangers and outcasts.

Help us always to welcome the stranger, whatever the cost, not sitting comfortably and ignoring people we think don't fit in,

not taking the easy way.

May our homes and churches be places of welcome, hospitality and love,

that all may have the chance to recognise and see you in the warmth of those around them.

We pray for countries where food is in short supply.

May we farm sustainably and eat sensibly, so there is enough to feed the whole planet.

May we not look only after ourselves but seek to offer the same opportunities to all.

Help us not to be selfish, but always to consider others.

Lord, we long for the day when all in society will be equal.

May we be a part of making that happen.

We pray for those who are lonely and have no one to eat with them.

May we open our doors to our neighbours, so that love and friendship can flourish, and all can enjoy the feast.

We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Sending out prayer:

Lord Jesus,
as you walked on the road to Emmaus,
walk with us on the roads we travel.
Help us to know your presence with us,
and to be your presence to others.
And, at the end of the day,
may we all enjoy your feast.

Amen.

Song: Emmaus Road

Who is Jesus Christ?
The question echoes down Emmaus Road
Dead or raised to life
The same doubts spoken first so long ago
When a stranger came
To two men on their journey
And it was not long before
Their broken hearts were burning
Somewhere between where you are and Emmaus
A stranger wants to come and walk with you
Somewhere along the way your heart will be burning
Drawn into the holy flame of truth
Right now He may be a stranger to you
What will he be when your journey's through
Somewhere between where you are and Emmaus
The Saviour wants to walk with you
Some ask Him in to stay
As night falls on their own Emmaus Road
Some push Him away
And never see the mystery unfold
But those who take to heart
The word that has been spoken
As He breaks the bread of life
Their eyes will open
Somewhere between where you are and Emmaus
A stranger wants to come and walk with you
Somewhere along the way your heart will be burning
Drawn into the holy flame of truth
Right now He may be a stranger to you
What will he be when your journey's through
Somewhere between where you are and Emmaus
The Saviour wants to walk with you
Somewhere between where you are and Emmaus
A stranger wants to come and walk with you
Somewhere along the way your heart will be burning
Drawn into the holy flame of truth

Right now He may be a stranger to you
What will he be when your journey's through
Somewhere between where you are and Emmaus
The Saviour wants to walk with you
The Saviour wants to walk with you