**Cranmer Group Sermon, Worship & Prayers**

**April 26th - The 2nd Sunday after Easter**

**‘G-I-N’ (Luke 24:13-35)**

*Dear Friends,*

*I hope you’ve had as good a week as possible under lockdown conditions, and that you’ve been able to enjoy at least some of the beautiful sunshine.*

*As I’ve said before, if there are any of you who are struggling with being isolated, whether practically, emotionally or spiritually, do please get in touch with me (contact details below), and I’ll do my best to support you.*

*And if any of you have suggestions as to how better we can minister to you all at this time, please do call or email me to let me know – it’d be great to receive any suggestions you may have.*

*Some of you may have been able to join us in the videoconference of the East Bingham Deanery’s “Virtual Evening Prayer”, from Southwell Minster, on Saturday 25th. If you did, I hope it was a really enjoyable and spiritually uplifting time for you.*

*My best wishes to you all, stay safe, and God bless.*

*With love and prayers,*



**Rev. Tim Chambers
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Alleluia! Christ Is Risen! **He Is Risen indeed!
Alleluia!**

**The Collect for the 2nd Sunday after Easter
(Common Worship)**

Risen Christ,
you filled your disciples with boldness and fresh hope:
strengthen us to proclaim your risen life
and fill us with your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.
**Amen.**

**Open Our Eyes, Lord**

**Played by Deb Hubbard**

Open our eyes, Lord,
We want to see Jesus -
To reach out and touch Him
And say that we love Him.
Open our ears, Lord,
And help us to listen:
O open our eyes, Lord,
We want to see Jesus!

[repeat]

**Gospel Reading: Luke 24:13-35 (New International Version)**

**Read by David McCall**

**On the road to Emmaus**

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognising him.

17 He asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’

They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, ‘Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’

19 ‘What things?’ he asked.

‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.’

25 He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. 29 But they urged him strongly, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’

33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

**Sermon: ‘G-I-N’ - Rev. Tim Chambers**

Clare and I have a good friend, Kate, who is one of the Key Workers in the NHS, who are all striving in these tough times to keep every one of us safe. She works in a major hospital as head of the team responsible for infectious diseases, so you can imagine that her life has been just a tiny bit busy over recent weeks. Kate’s was brought up as a Christian; she’s always considered herself to be one; and tries her utmost to bring her Christian faith into every part of her life. She doesn’t just ‘keep it for Sundays’, but is as public as she can be in that environment, about how central her belief and trust in Jesus Christ is to her, and indeed to all of her family too.

I happened to catch up with Kate yesterday, and we were speaking about how she’s coping with all of the huge pressures that she and her team have been under, due to Coronavirus. And Kate explained to me the following: “It’s quite simple. When the going gets really tough, I have a Post-It note that’s stuck to the surround of my computer screen, and to keep myself going, I just look at that. And this is what it says on it: G-I-N.

“G-I-N. Some of my colleagues who know me pretty well, are a bit surprised that this is where I turn to, when things are really hard. I’m not saying that a quick Tanqueray and tonic of an evening is a bad thing, but that’s not what this Post It’s all about.

“G-I-N. God Is Near.”

In the toughest of times, the darkest of situations, God Is Near.

How appropriate this is, not just for the difficult times in which Kate and so many others are working, and in which every one of us is living right now, but *also* for our reading this morning, and especially for Cleopas and his companion, walking to Emmaus.

Luke’s story in many ways parallels the account in St. John’s Gospel that we heard last week, of Jesus appearing first to the majority of the disciples, locked in that upstairs room in Jerusalem, and then also to Thomas with them, a week later.

The central characters are possibly a man (Cleopas – that we do know) and a woman; possibly two men. We don’t know for sure.

But what we *do* know, from what they tell the stranger who catches up with them on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, is that they’re “downcast”. That they are absolutely desolate at the loss of the one whom, not only had they been following, but *in* whom they’d placed *all* their hopes - given *all* that he’d done; given *all* that he’d taught; given *all* whom he’d healed - / the one in whom they’d placed *all* their hopes, that he was the Messiah. The one who’d come to liberate the people of Israel. Jesus has been crucified. The disciples are desperate. Everything has been lost.

Except of course that *we*, the reader, know - because Luke tells us the identity of the mysterious stranger right from the start – *we* know that the story has *not* ended with death on the cross. We follow the conversation between the two disciples and Jesus, knowing that it’s indeed him, the risen Christ, as he explains to them how all the Scriptures have been fulfilled in this one man – not that, at this point, they’ve realised who their travelling companion is.

It’s only - having been persuaded to join them staying overnight in Emmaus - when Jesus breaks the bread before dinner, that the two disciples see in him the echo of the one who did just this with his disciples at the Last Supper, and the scales fall from their eyes. It’s him! Jesus is alive! And although he disappears from them in that moment, the two are compelled to dash back, through the dangerous night, to Jerusalem, to share with the other disciples the miraculous news: It *is* true! Christ *is* risen!

The story of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus has become, for many, a focus for meditation, not least when people find themselves in difficulties. It has a power that speaks to *us*, in this extraordinarily challenging moment in the lives of everyone on our planet. Bring your problem, your agony, on the road to Emmaus, with Cleopas and his companion. Be prepared to share it in prayer with the stranger who approaches. Learn to listen for his voice, explaining, comforting, healing.

Perhaps this has been you in the past, and you have found restoration and renewal, in and through Christ? Perhaps this is you now, and that’s exactly what you are seeking today? If so, I pray that you’ll take comfort that Jesus walked with these two then; that you’ll take comfort that Jesus has walked with countless others since; and that you’ll take comfort that Jesus walks with you today, if you open your head and your heart to his presence alongside you. G-I-N. God - in the person of Jesus - Is Near.

Our story also tells us of the ability of Jesus to make sense of things. These disciples’ hopes and dreams are shattered: “We had hoped that he was the one who was going to rescue Israel.” All was lost. But then Jesus comes and talks with them, and the meaning of their lives once again becomes clear, and the darkness becomes light.

Cleopas and his companion don’t yet understand *fully* who Jesus is. “A prophet, powerful in word and deed”, but not yet more than that.

It’s *Jesus* who - through his presence, his words and ultimately his actions - enables these two disciples to make sense of his death; to make sense of the full significance of his life; and therefore to make sense of what, in turn, is the full significance of *his* life and death, for *their* life; and for *our* life too.

And the three ways in which Jesus does this to these disciples on the road to Emmaus, prefigure the ways in which Christ reveals himself to his church, after his ascension – to us, now.

First of all, Christ reveals himself in the scriptures. Jesus interprets to these two disciples “Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, …what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself”. It’s only when we see Jesus in the light of the whole of the rest of the Bible, *and* the whole of the rest of the Bible in the light of *Jesus*, that we understand fully God’s plan for His people, fulfilled in the person of his only son, Jesus Christ – and therefore his plan for each one of us.

It’s only when we read God’s Word - the person of God Himself revealed to us in the Bible - through the intermediation of Jesus; with his person and presence guiding us as we prayerfully engage with Scripture; it’s only when we do this, that we can even start to understand the true nature of God, and His desire for relationship with every one of us. G-I-N. In Christ, through His Word - God is near.

So, firstly, Jesus reveals himself in the scriptures.

Secondly, Jesus reveals himself in the sacraments. It was as Jesus “took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and began to give it to them” that the disciples’ eyes were opened, and they recognised him. The Eucharist, Communion, is what unites and sustains us as the Body of Christ, as we too journey on *our* road with him.

This time of social distancing is of course one in which many Christians - quite possibly including you - feel great pain as we’re unable to share in Communion. But *spiritual* communion unites each Christian, including each one of us, with Jesus Christ, with one another, and with the wider Church. And in addition, the Eucharist is right at the very heart of a *world* that’s sacramental; that’s an *outer* sign of a *deeper* reality – what a sacrament is. As we seem - in this strange time, with its slowing and quietening - to be drawing closer to the world around us, our hearts may be opened to the presence of Christ in a world made through him - a world that he continues, every second of every day, to sustain in being. G-I-N. In Christ, through His Creation, God is near.

So, firstly, Jesus reveals himself in the scriptures. Secondly, Jesus reveals himself in the sacraments.

And, thirdly, Jesus reveals himself to these two disciples through the fire of the Spirit. As they look back on what’s happened, the disciples realise that, as Christ was “open[ing] the scriptures to [them]”, their hearts were “burning within [them]”. Through the activity of the Holy Spirit within them, the words of scripture “ignite” their hearts. The Spirit unlocks for each believer a realisation both of the power of scripture and of the grace of the sacraments. G-I-N. In Christ, through His Spirit, God is near.

So, as each of us navigates through these uncharted times, with so much uncertainty, hardship and fear all around us, let’s take comfort from this great story on the Road to Emmaus. Let’s remember the one in whom we already have the victory, through his death and resurrection, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
And take greater time, if we’re able to, at this strange moment, to find our strength, nourishment and inspiration in Him; through scripture, sacrament and Spirit.

Through them, we know, no matter how chaotic the storm that rages around us, G-I-N. In Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, God is near. Amen.

**Intercessions**

**Led by Sarah Hadfield
(and featuring Steve Hadfield as the congregation!)**

When I say “Lord, hear us”, please respond with “Lord, graciously hear us.”

Lord, our world feels strange,
our churches are closed causing us great anxiety.
Help us to calm our fears and put our trust in you.
Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for all leaders and politicians who are having to make decisions about all the problems caused by the coronavirus.
Help them to be strong and fair in all their deliberations.
Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Help us in this time of isolation to be aware of our neighbours, who may be afraid, lonely, depressed and desperate.
Surround them with your comforting arms and give them peace. Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We think of those who are ill, those who are suffering from the virus and the very many people who would have had treatment
for cancer or other urgent problems.
Now they have to sit and wait and hope.
We entrust them to your loving care;
comfort them in their anxiety.
Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for our families who we cannot see,
and with whom we cannot share happy times together.
Keep them safe and well.
Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We pray for doctors, nurses and scientists,
and all who are working so hard to help the sick.
Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

And now I would like to read some words written by C S Lewis. He was the author of the children’s Narnia books, but he was also an important theologian. He wrote these words in 1942, when Britain was being bombed:

Satan:
“I will cause anxiety,
Fear and panic.
I will shutdown
businesses, schools,
places of worship
and sports events
I will cause economic turmoil”.

Jesus:
“I will bring together neighbours,
restore the family unit,
I will bring dinner back to the kitchen table
I will help people slow down their lives
and appreciate what really matters.
I will teach my children to rely on me
and not the work.
I will teach my children to trust me
and not their money and material resources.”

These words are so pertinent today.
During these times of uncertainty and distress, Lord, help us to remember that your love will sustain us throughout this difficult time.
Help us to put our trust in you and to keep us safe.
Lord, hear us.

**Lord, graciously hear us.**

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

**The Lord’s Prayer**As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

**The Collect for the 2nd Sunday after Easter
(Book of Common Prayer)**

Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life: Give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
**Amen**

**Hallelujah! Sing to Jesus
Played by Deb Hubbard**

Hallelujah! Sing to Jesus,
His the sceptre, His the throne;
Hallelujah! His the triumph,
His the victory alone.
Hark! The songs of His peaceful Zion
Thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation
Hath redeemed us by His blood.

Hallelujah! Not as orphans
Are we left in sorrow now;
Hallelujah! He is near us,
Faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received Him
When the forty days were o’er,
Shall our hearts forget His promise,
“I am with you evermore”?

Hallelujah! Bread of heaven!
Thou on earth our food, our stay;
Hallelujah! Here the sinful
Flee to Thee from day to day.
Intercessor, friend of sinners,
Earth’s Redeemer, plead for me,
Where the songs of all the sinless
Sweep across the crystal sea.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Glory be to God on high;
To the Father, and the Saviour,
Who has gained the victory;
Glory to the Holy Spirit,
Fount of love and sanctity.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
To the triune majesty.

**A Closing Blessing**

God the Father,
by whose power Christ
was raised from the dead,
strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life:
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you & remain with you always.
**Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**