

Emmaus Road - Broken Open

Have you seen those pilgrimage programmes on the BBC? A group of celebrities travel to different holy sites - the most recent one sees them journeying to Holy Island, in the way of St Cuthbert - it is both an inward and outward journey. As they walk, talk and have different experiences on the way, many of them are 'undone' or loosened up in some way. Walking with intent will often do that to you. You may have experienced this yourself - especially on Good Friday walking up Bredon Hill.

Often, if I am stuck with my sermon, I will take a walk with Jesus and the thoughts begin to emerge as I go along and more often than not, the ideas shake loose.

We see this 'being undone and shaking loose' in our story today.

Our two friends begin their journey home with so many thoughts and questions buzzing around their heads. What does it mean that the tomb was empty? Did the women really see some Angels? Where has the body gone to? Could Jesus really be alive? Searching questions for the road ahead. And perhaps there is some grief mixed in here too - their friend was killed, crucified no less - they were still processing their loss when the stranger moves - in-step - beside them.

As they welcome him into their conversation it all comes tumbling out. Hopes, dreams and what if's are shared with the stranger as if to an old friend. The more they walk, the more they talk - everything is opening up.

A shift of pace - and the stranger responds. And he begins by calling them 'fools'... Not necessarily a way to ingratiate yourself to people, but perhaps a way of redirecting them - helping them to

pause - before opening their minds and hearts to what was there in the Scriptures all along.

And so beginning with Moses and the prophets, Jesus lays it all out for them as they continue their journey homeward. The Word, explaining the word, as their hearts are kindled with the fire of faith. Have you ever noticed that on your journey with Jesus? Something stirring inside, when a passage is explained, or a verse slips into your undefended heart. You can't quite explain it fully but something has shifted and you have a new kind of understanding. Without knowing it Cleopas and his travelling companion, are being undone by the gospel of Jesus. Whatever was stopping them from seeing the Christ before them is slowly loosening up, ready for the big reveal to come.

This is so often the way, even on pilgrimage, bit by bit, step by step, the old way of seeing things releasing its grip, perhaps revealing what was there all along. Jesus not only interprets the Scriptures but 'unveils' them, so that they can be viewed with fresh eyes and a new understanding.

The road has done its work...

Night-time descends and as they arrive home, Jesus makes a move to travel further - in unison the couple say "stay with us - we want to know more."

And you, do you have a hunger to know more?

They enter the family home and when supper is ready they recline at the table. The stranger is asked to offer the blessing. He takes the bread in his hands - feels the weight of it - and searches his memory for the last time he did this. Surely it was just a few days ago, but it felt longer, like a lifetime had passed.. He breaks the

bread, 'Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth...'

As the bread is broken open, so too are they.

The work that began with the breaking open of the Scriptures on the road comes to completion with the breaking of bread around a simple table. Word and Sacrament revealing the hidden Christ.

Breaking open is not the same as breaking apart! Breaking open is about sharing not shattering. Bread and Bible are opened to create connection and community. This is what we are doing today, hearing the readings and sharing communion together - they are broken open so that we can be drawn together.

'We break this bread to share in the body of Christ - though we are many we are one body because we all share in the same bread'

As the 'broken open' body of Christ we are called to all the broken people and places of the world - which is also the body of Christ.

Matthew 25

"Then these righteous ones will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? 39 When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?'

40 "And the King will say, 'I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters,[f] you were doing it to me!'

Our broken-openness, is a catalyst for sending us out to love our neighbours in word and action - bringing the light of Christ into the brokenness of our world.

But my friends, we are not fixers, we are fellow pilgrims called to travel alongside the brokenhearted - drawn outward by the love of

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Christ to open the Scriptures for hungry hearts and our store cupboards for hungry bellies.

This is how we journey on...

so - May the God of the pilgrim pathways fill you with good things.

May the saviour draw near to your side

And may the Spirit light a fire in your heart. Amen

Rev Chris Gaynor - April 19 2026