

# Encountering Jesus

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Welcome to the kitchen here at the Vicarage. Last Sunday morning the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, gave his message from the kitchen at Lambeth Palace. So I thought not to be outdone, I'll move from the lounge and come into the kitchen just for somewhere different. And what a message we've got to share with you this morning. You've heard the reading already.

And two people are on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. On the road to Emmaus, it's only about seven miles. We only know one of the people's names. He was called Cleopas. And we don't know whether it was a man or a woman or two men together. Some people suggest it was his wife.

There were two people. They've been returning home to Jerusalem at the time of Jesus's crucifixion. They'd seen Jesus crucified. They didn't know that he'd risen from the dead. They were despondent.

They were downhearted. Clearly they were followers. Maybe we would know what that feels like in our bereavement of a friend. But they were definitely despondent as they walked home. Suddenly they're aware of this person that's alongside them. And this person says to him, well, what are you discussing?

Now, I think these people are amazingly gracious. Because if I was in the middle of a conversation with somebody and a total stranger comes up and says, excuse me, mate, what are you talking about?

[ 1 : 3 5 ] But these people are amazingly gracious. They stop. And they say that, well, aren't you aware of what's been happening in Jerusalem?

They take a huge risk. They share their faith. They share their story. And this person, the risen Jesus, but they don't know it's him yet, listens and hears as they walk along.

Jesus longs for us to converse with him, longs for us to share our hearts with him. So as they walk along this road and talk, then Jesus begins to talk to them.

And he starts revealing things about scripture that points to the future. They are intrigued. They know there is something special. Is this man a teacher? What does he know?

They get to their home and it's obviously getting late. And as is the custom, they invite him in. And he sits there at their table.

[ 2 : 4 0 ] They've taken a huge risk. They're followers of Jesus. They're followers of the way. They don't know who this stranger is, but they've taken a huge risk in sharing their faith in this time of persecution.

What amazing people these two people are. They're sat at the table and imagine the moment. He takes bread, he gives thanks, he broke it and he gave it to them.

And they knew that it was Jesus. Wow. Jesus at our table. We've been with him. We've walked on the road.

Jesus is risen. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. I can't even imagine what their emotions were like at the time. They asked each other, were not our hearts burning within us while he walked on the road and opened the scriptures to us?

This was it. A moment ago, their hearts were heavy. They seemed like hope was gone, that there was no future. But now Jesus walks into their life, into their kitchen, sits at their table and everything's changed.

[ 3 : 53 ] There is fresh hope. There is a new beginning. Things will never be the same again. Jesus does that when he comes and walks into our lives and we recognise him.

What an amazing moment. They are believers, but now they encountered the risen Christ. Something had changed. So much so, it takes on a whole new perspective.

They didn't hesitate. They go back to Jerusalem. They'd left there a few moments, hours before maybe, walking home. I don't know how long it took them.

But as they walked back along this road, back to Jerusalem, they were changed people. They had left there despondent. They returned excited, enthused, empowered, excited because they had met with the risen Jesus and wanted to tell people.

And they told people so much so that Luke records it for us to be excited and enthused by their story today. Often in a crisis, Jesus reveals himself in ways that bring fresh hope.

[ 5 : 04 ] And he certainly brought fresh hope to them this day. Maybe you've experienced that meeting with Jesus. Maybe you haven't experienced that yet, but long to do that.

Maybe you've been a Christian for some time, but you're seeking that fresh encounter with Jesus that brings this excitement, enthusiasm and power back to your life.

Maybe you just want to share the story as these people did. Ask him to come and join you. That's what these two people did. Come and join us. Come and join us at the table, Jesus.

And he revealed himself to them. Have you shared your story of meeting with Jesus? It's a powerful thing. I take every opportunity that I can to share the story of meeting with Jesus.

Not that my story is any different than anybody else's. It's very powerful. And people, believe you me, want to hear it as they did on this great day for these two people here.

[ 6 : 19 ] It's a contagious story. It empowers people and it encourages them. These two people are there. Presumably, I don't know where they stay there.

In Jerusalem. I pray that they did. Because when we read on in the book of Acts, the whole world was changed as the Holy Spirit came. And people were empowered afresh.

I would love to hear what these people's story is. I will on that great day when we all meet together. The thing was that when you meet with Jesus, you can't hold it in. I don't know about you.

I've been catching up on some films while we've been at home. And one of my favourites, Billy Elliot, as you probably know. And I love that bit in the film. He's not really done well at the audition.

He knows that he hasn't done well. But one of the women on the audition panel says to him, What does it feel like when you're dancing?

[ 7 : 20 ] Billy. He pauses. And then he said, It's like electricity. It's like electricity in every part of my body.

You watch the panel look at each other because they know. Because they've experienced that themselves. They know what it's like. It's great sharing your story.

When we as a church, the people of God, in a few months' time, I pray that when the virus is moved on and we move back to a new normal, that there will be people who we have encountered whose lives have been changed because we shared our story with them.

We've shown kindness and love and they met with the risen Jesus in new and exciting ways. They were hungry to meet with him.

These two people invited Jesus in and if you're doing that for the first time, you haven't invited him in, I'd encourage you to do that. Just sit there and say, Lord, just come and be with me.

[ 8 : 32 ]    Reveal yourself to me, I pray. Listen, watch and pray wherever you are. And as we watch this, I would encourage us as Christians to go and share our story.

Continue empowered afresh to tell our story because it makes such a difference.