

On the Road Again

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Date: 04 April 1999

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[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on April the 4th 1999 the preacher is Phil Melman and his sermon is entitled On the Road Again and is from Luke chapter 24 verses 13 to 36 Lord God we pray that you would open our hearts and our minds to what your word has to say to us and may it live in us and bear much fruit to your glory Amen Please be seated I think I just have to get the record straight I got here at 8 o'clock this morning or before that to set up and there was a tiger on the leptin Yesterday the swans lost But I would like to let you know that in the first minute of the last quarter

I had given up all hope and I was focused on today by then Paul was still in despair I think in the last minute of the last quarter but that's his problem He said Richmond has to be 15 goals ahead for him to think that they might actually win a game It's ridiculous Oh well A few years ago a movie came out called Summersbee and it's set during the American Civil War and the main character is played by a guy called Richard Gere and he's put on trial for crimes that he did or did not commit Now the difficulty with this movie is that we're left confused and unsure as to whether he is or isn't guilty Now Barb and I saw this movie and it was a great movie but it was also terribly sad but as we discussed it it was obvious that we were both confused about the conclusion and we discussed it at length So we decided that we would watch it again but we'd wait till it came out on video or on the TV I can't remember and then we would make a decision about whether Richard Gere whether the main character was guilty or not We were just as confused the second time around and still today I can't decide whether or not Summersbee or Richard Gere is guilty within this movie Well this same sort of confusion that I felt about this movie is perhaps a bit like the confusion that we read about with these disciples who were travelling along the road to Emmaus in Luke chapter 24 You may like to open to it if you've got a Bible near you on page 860 These two disciples are confused by the events of the past few days and all that they have witnessed about the life of Jesus and they have all sorts of unresolved issues in their minds and they need someone to explain to them just what has happened

Sure they've seen all the bits and pieces of the life of Jesus but they don't know how these pieces connect together They're not sure how to make sense of it just like I wasn't able to make sense out of the movie Summersbee What they need is for someone to come along and explain it to them Well who then to explain this movie could be better or explain this incident better than the character himself the main character and I would feel so much more at ease if I could get Richard Gere to come here and to explain to me and interpret the meaning of the movie Summersbee and to explain whether or not he in fact was guilty or not Well it seems that the disciples' confusion about the events of Jesus' life are eventually put at ease along this road to Emmaus because the main character does come alongside and he asks them what they're discussing and the person who comes alongside them of course is the risen Jesus the very one who is their topic of discussion as they've been discussing all these things but we're told in verse 16 that their eyes were kept from recognising him why is this?

simply it is because God wants it that way now I believe Jesus prevented these disciples from seeing him as their risen Lord in order to show them who they were at this moment without him as well as how much they needed him to continue living out their lives on this earth to the glory of God and for their spiritual joy now how often we get caught up in the hopelessness of a situation blinded to what God is doing beyond the current circumstances we hear the truth of God but the eyes of our hearts are prevented from being enlightened because we choose to invite despair to overwhelm us we often don't understand the immediate events of our lives and allow perplexity and sadness to confuse us to the point where we settle for the physical or historical interpretation of what is going on around or within us thus we become blind to the spiritual realities behind all those events now

Jesus wanted the disciples here to articulate the cause of their sadness and this person named [5 : 48] Cleopas is the first time we see mention of him in the gospels he questions this stranger who we know is Jesus he questions him and he says are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place in these days and Jesus said to them what things you see Jesus was going to let them review who he had been before he showed them who he is for at this moment these people these two disciples were living in the past and he was living in the present and he still is of course so what then is Cleopas going to tell this so-called stranger about the events of the past few days well he starts with the person who has had such a deep impact on his life in recent times and if you look at verse 19 he starts talking about

Jesus of Nazareth now there were many men who were named Jesus at that time there probably are today but this man that Cleopas is talking about is Jesus of Nazareth the one who was given his name even before he was born by God if you look at Matthew's gospel in chapter 1 and what does he say about this Jesus he says he was a prophet note that he uses the word was he was a prophet he was a prophet mighty indeed and word in the sight of God and all the people perhaps Cleopas thought that he was the prophet that Moses spoke about in Deuteronomy but unfortunately he was a prophet who was not is and about this prophet he was mighty in he was a prophet he was mighty in deeds he did many signs and miracles when he was alive and Jesus' deeds are perhaps best summed up in his words to John the

Baptist who was sitting in prison if we look back earlier in the gospels questioning whether or not Jesus was the Messiah and Jesus instructed two of his disciples to go to John and say to him in Luke chapter 7 go and tell John what you have seen and heard the blind receive their sight the lame walk the lepers are cleansed the deaf hear the dead are raised the poor have good news brought to them this prophet was mighty indeed this prophet was also mighty in word when Jesus spoke his words reign with the power and authority of God himself if you look at the end of the sermon on the mountain Matthew records that when Jesus had finished saying these things the crowds were astounded at his teaching for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes this Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet mighty in word mighty in deeds but what happened to this Jesus this mighty prophet whom God loved and the common people loved

Cleopas goes on to say in verse 20 our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him they crucified a good man a great prophet and perhaps a possible messiah this has shattered our dreams and our hopes you see initially the disciples viewed the cross where Jesus was killed they viewed that as a failure he almost made it he almost made it but he failed he got caught on two stupid charges blaspheming and declaring himself to be a king and as a result they nailed him to a cross but let me ask you is the cross a failure one writer says this about the crucifixion true it was the world's blackest hour but also the world's brightest hour it was the blackest hour because human hatred came to its fiercest focus it was the brightest hour because divine love came to its fullest flower at Calvary hatred was seen in all of its horror but there also love revealed the heart of

God Calvary stands at the crossroads of human history at the cross all the sins of the ages were placed on the heart of the sinless son of God as he became the representative of all humanity from the cross salvation flows to every believing soul this is the gospel the greatest good news that the world has ever heard but the disciples whom Jesus was speaking to on the road to Emmaus had missed it at this point the cross was a failure well the disciples continue on to speak of their shattered dreams and their hopes in verse 21 Cleopas says we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel the popular thought of the popular hope in Israel at the time of Jesus was that the Messiah the one chosen by God would usher in the new world order the kingdom of God in which [11 : 44] Israel would once again become the true vine the salt and the light and the righteous nation which would bring salvation to the nations and you can almost hear these disciples saying if he was the prophet the Messiah if he promised us he would rise again from the dead where is he after all it's been three days now Jesus had told his disciples if you look through the book of Luke he told his disciples four times that he would in these sorts of words that he would be delivered to the Gentiles that he would be mocked that he would be mistreated that he would be spat upon and that after having scourged him that he would be put to death on the cross and that he would rise again on the third day but at that time for these disciples the full meaning was hidden from them and now they were slowly beginning to understand on the third day but were showing impatience because of their shattered dreams and hopes they went on to tell

Jesus of the mystery of the empty tomb relating all the events from the story of the women to the disciples own investigation and these strange things left them saddened for they were blinded to the spiritual realities behind this apparently tragic event of the past few days they didn't fully understand that it was necessary for Jesus to go to the cross as the perfect innocent unblemished lamb of God in order to cancel the sin to cancel guilt and the shame of humanity for each and every individual believer who placed their faith in him as Lord and Saviour they didn't understand that well Jesus lovingly and patiently listened to his disciples trapped in their blindness trapped in their despair their grief their perplexity and their incredible unbelief and then he moved from this apparent tragedy of the last three days to a higher spiritual plane if you like a place of spiritual reality and once again reminded them of the eternal truths which had been written by the prophets concerning the suffering and the glory of the

Messiah in verses 25 to 27 we read on that Jesus told these two people that they as well as the other disciples were suffering from a spiritual illness and the symptoms of this illness if you like were foolishness in their thinking and slowness of heart the problem for them was that they kept foolishly hoping that the Son of Man which is a title that Jesus uses of himself would be the great warrior Messiah who would come with an army and defeat this Roman army which was oppressing them and set up his physical kingdom here on this earth instead what do we know Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey on Palm Sunday on Palm Sunday symbolizing peace and desiring to set up his spiritual kingdom in the hearts of his people and Jesus said on more than one occasion the Son of

Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost his offer has always been a message of spiritual salvation not a war against Rome and now he is about to show that this is true from scripture Jesus now takes this teachable moment that he has with these two people and we read in verse 27 that beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures now Jesus had seven miles or so to walk with these disciples and explain the scriptures as he went along I've only got 20 minutes or so but in explaining or summarizing the scriptures it may be something along these lines that he was speaking about that he would have showed them from the books of the Old

Testament that in the book of Exodus for instance that the Christ or the Messiah is the Passover lamb in the book of Exodus he was perhaps saying about the prophet to come in Deuteronomy that the Christ is the prophet to come in Deuteronomy in the book of Isaiah that the Christ is the sheep that was led to the slaughter in Isaiah that he was the suffering servant and that in the book of Jeremiah that the Christ is the branch of righteousness and so on well he would have gone on explaining the scriptures explaining the suffering and the glory of the Messiah and what a Bible study that would have been for these two disciples as they're walking along this Emmaus road and how blind they had become how blind but Jesus spent the time there to show them that he was on every page of the Old

[17:22] Testament he reminded them of what the scriptures taught of his need to suffer and to die for the sins of humanity and that on the third day he would be raised from the grave by the power of his father well the truths that Jesus shared with the disciples on the road to Emmaus I think have important applications to us today you see Jesus was the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 which Paul preached on on Friday but he is now the risen Messiah the one and only son of God the saviour of the world as well as the righteous prophet priest and king over all of humanity back in the past and in the present and in the future he is not a has-been Jesus is not a has-been and he desires to be that prophet priest and king within our hearts he wants to work out his plan of redemption in and through us his people but how one writes at

Dallas seminary I had a Greek professor he left a profound mark on my spirit sitting in his class I would listen as he opened up the Greek text in the gospel of Mark he not only taught us Greek but he would share his thoughts on the spiritual truths and the mysteries of a particular passage I can still remember the first time I had the courage to ask him a question about his view of a verse in Mark he looked at me paused and then said my friend are you reading the Bible because all the answers are right there in front of you isn't that our problem too we often have lots of questions about life issues and lots of questions about the Bible but we don't bother to consult the book that has the answers and that is the Bible now these disciples had a very difficult weekend the despair which already filled their hearts was made more intense in the meeting of this stranger who seemed to have missed all the events of the past few days in

Jerusalem surrounding Jesus' life his death and his burial and to make matters worse this stranger began to rebuke them from the scriptures about the Messiah's need to suffer before he could actually enter into glory but their despair was about to turn into a living hope in verses 28 to 32 upon reaching the village of Emmaus these two disciples asked this stranger to stay with them for the sun was setting and it was the time for dinner and a night of rest was needed by all Jesus sort of feigned it as if he was going on but they asked him to stay well after dinner was served Jesus reached out he took the bread and he blessed it and then he handed it to them and it was at that moment that their eyes were opened and they recognized him for here he was serving them again but this time with nail pierced hands and then what happened he just disappeared leaving them to ponder everything that had happened that afternoon and to ponder this revelation now the disciples saw their road of despair begin to turn into a highway of hope and they said to one another in verse 32 were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road while he was opening or explaining the scriptures to us finally we understand what the scriptures mean because the risen Christ has explained them to us the spirit of God has entered our hearts and they were set on fire because we knew what he was saying was true now these two people Cleopas and his other companion were wandering down the road trying to find answers to the questions the song that we played before the service started was a song which raises questions going down the road the answers to these guys questions were answered by the risen Lord Jesus he answered them from scripture he opened their eyes and their hearts were burning within at present the Bible is the most published book of all time Bibles in the Western world are freely available to whoever wants one you can go to virtually any bookshop and you can buy a Bible and they're hungered for the Bibles are hungered for in eastern blocs nations and so on we can find Bibles in hotel rooms and libraries and wherever but to read the Bible just to read it and put it down is not really to understand it the Bible I think can only be really understood by people spiritually hungry people who are willing to depend on our risen Lord Jesus to explain the spiritual truths which are contained within now the Bible isn't a magic book we need the spirit of God God's spirit to open our eyes and to show us who Jesus Christ is and then our hearts too will start to burn within us and we will desire to learn more about the risen Lord Jesus and the life that he desires for all of us to live to his glory and our joy well these disciples they they go up the highway of hope they run they run right back hope had replaced their confusion and hope in the

[24 : 00] Lord Jesus Christ can even replace despair in a disappointed swan supporter and after rising from the table these disciples began what I'm sure was a steady run up the hills to Jerusalem and were soon reunited with the rest of the disciples and as these two sweating but joyful disciples entered the room their hearts filled with good news they walked into a cluster of men and women all confirming for one another and anyone else who would listen the good news that the Lord Jesus had risen Mary Magdalene who we read at the beginning of chapter 24 had seen touched and spoken with Jesus in the garden John chapter 20 records that for us and Peter who had been struggling with his own guilt over denying Jesus at the trial related how he also went to the tomb and found it empty and then sometime during that same day Jesus had appeared to him and finally the two disciples were given time in the midst of all this rejoicing to share their experience on the road to Emmaus and how they finally recognized him and how they recognized him in the breaking of the bread well what a weekend these guys have had what a weekend they've had to endure and go through first they felt great despair and confusion because they saw the cross as the end of Jesus life the end of their hopes and the end of the story their hopes and dreams were shattered but what a difference on that first Easter Sunday evening the gloom and the confusion ending as they finally came to the realization that Jesus had indeed risen from the tomb their despair and confusion turned to hope not hope that existed for its own sake but hope in the truth of the resurrection based on the physical evidences here of at least four other people of Mary

Peter Cleopas and his friend those of you who are not only struggling with Jesus as the risen Lord and the world's savior but are also struggling with the hopelessness and despair of your own lives I want to encourage you to go by faith to the risen Lord and the savior Jesus Christ go to him with your unbelief and ask him to open the eyes of your heart to see from scripture and from Christian friends that Jesus is the risen son of God and is willing to become your Lord if you would place your faith in him as your personal savior what a difference that decision could make for you today if you were willing to do it now I doubt that I will ever understand the real interpretation of the movie Summersbee and all in all it doesn't really worry me I'll probably still be a little bit confused but

never despairing but there can be no greater joy for me than knowing the significance of Jesus death and resurrection and how that affects me spiritually and now for eternity and my prayer is that if you are not sure of the significance of Jesus death and resurrection that you seek to find the answers and in doing so that you will turn to the living God through the Lord Jesus Christ Amen Amen