

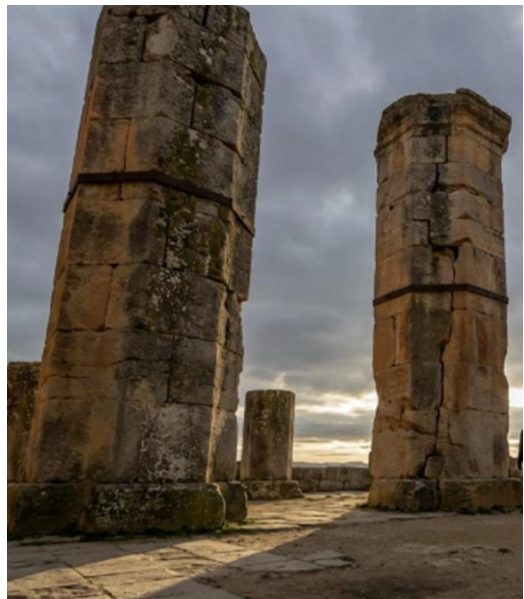
Run Free

Bible reference for sermon Luke 24:13-35

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

Many of you are well aware I've been having treatment for cancer. And you'll have heard me talk about one of the side effects I've experienced with neuropathy in feet and leg ache. Some days and nights I described my legs as being cement blocks. They were heavy and often they dragged my mood and heart too.

We know what it is to be down cast, heavy burdened, stuck, don't we. This past week as a community of faith, a village of faith we received the news of the deaths of two people, two dear Peters, Peter Leslie and Peter Westhorp...the sudden death of Peter Westhorp in particular came as a shock, and many have commented on the depth of their grief and their love for Pastor Sue and Jonny. Weighed down by grief. Stuck in muddy grief.



So, it was on the day of resurrection life for two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were downcast, going nowhere in grief and a real funk.



Why?

Well as they'll tell Jesus as he joins them, it was because of him. Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.

They had put their hope in Jesus, but now he was gone. Where are you Jesus? Ever been down and wondered this? Ever said it? Ever yelled it, said through incessant sobbing.

God where are you?

Luke tells us of two disciples who felt this way, Cleopas and another who is not named, on the day of resurrection on the road to Emmaus leaving Jerusalem. They are downcast. They are grief stuck. They don't understand.

And to disciples such as this, Jesus comes on the day of new life. Jesus comes and does something so amazing, so wonderful, so gracious that their cement legs and heavy-laden hearts are about to be miraculously brought to life.



What's the first act of God for people in need?

Listen in...¹⁵ **While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them.**

Jesus comes to them where they are, with heads bowed down and focusing on "woe is me". Jesus himself came near.

The same Word who became truly

human flesh and who suffered and died and who was raised to new life comes to dwell among people today including people who are struggling to go on, burdened, weighed down with grieving hearts and cement spiritual legs. Stuck! Luke reinforces that Jesus drew near to them and went with them!

On the day of your baptism Jesus promised you "I am with you always." On the 9th of March 1946 this was his promise to Peter Leslie and on 11th January 1948 this promise too was given to Peter Westhorp. I am with you and I am with you to the end. And for those of you who grieve and struggle today this is God's promise to you in Christ. I love the saying "Jesus walks with you". It reminds me of this baptism promise to me made on May 20 1962. I am reminded that God is gracious and true. God does not leave me or forsake me. God in Christ Jesus himself walks the walk of life with me, even and especially when I am wobbly, grief stricken or stuck to the spot with cement legs.

And, like these two on the road to Emmaus, Jesus does not give up on me or you when we are slow of mind. But rather he calls me and you to walk with him and to listen as he speaks. Lifelong listening to Jesus is our call as disciples.

Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"
²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

He calls us on life's journey to learn of him, to hear his voice and what his life, death and resurrection means for me, for you and for all.

Jesus helps me to move on, to walk with him, by teaching me and by being the gospel for me.

And he goes to the home of the disciples where they urge him to come in.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.
²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So, he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Our risen Lord comes to where we are in our homes and in our church community to serve us. He serves us at his table with the bread of life, with his true body and blood for our forgiveness and life.



On other occasions the risen Lord comes to disciples frozen to the spot hiding in a room and brings peace through his forgiving presence and sends them to bring that same forgiveness and peace just as Pastor Sue proclaimed to us last Sunday.

Our risen Lord comes to Peter, the disciple who denied knowing him in the Maundy Thursday courtyard and restores him by his presence and sends him with the command to feed his sheep.

The risen Lord still comes today to disciples in need. He comes to where they are and sits and stands with them, and walks their walk, your walk and mine and he teaches us and feeds us and forgives us, assures us and equips us to feed others with the same bread of life.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

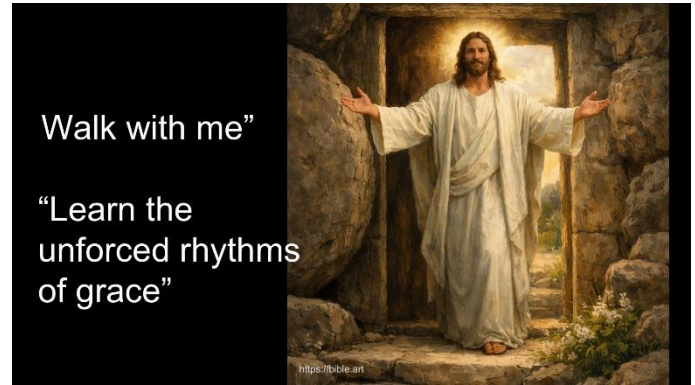


The disciples who only a little earlier had been so downcast, stuck, heavy laden now run with the freedom of new resurrection life all the way back to Jerusalem to share the good news with others.

Jesus comes to where you are.

And where you are he invites you to be with him

“Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”



The risen Lord breaks the heavy chains and bonds of death and comes to us to pick us up in our struggles. By his presence and as the Spirit teaches us new life through the Word, through worship, in the meal, so God changes us from people without hope and who are stuck with cement feet in the grave, to people who are learning to live freely and to run lightly to others with the good news of resurrection life.

The final theme of the seven we identified in late 2024 for us at St Paul’s is



Outreach and engagement: Particularly around engaging more deeply with the needs of the local area, actively going out of the church instead of expecting people to come in.

That’s living the resurrected life. Running to others with the good news of Jesus for them

It is the risen Jesus who walks with us, teaches us, hosts us transforms us to run freely and lightly and in unforced rhythms of grace.

And as we remember the 2 Peters whose funerals will be held this week, I am reminded of the words of the song I learned as a young person:

As a dream receive your history
From the martyrs and the saints.
Let their story be your story,
Yours the laughter, yours the pain.
We will rise, we will rise,
We will rise up on wings like eagles,
Run and not be tired.
Show us your dreams and visions,
Warm our hearts with tongues of fire, Tongues of fire. Amen

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul’s Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>