

*Christ Church New
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

16 April 2023

Welcome

1 Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless king
through all eternity.

2 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save;
his glories now we sing
who died and rose on high,
who died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

3 Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified;
no angels in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends their burning eye
at mysteries so bright.

4 Crown him the Lord of years,
the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity.

Song: Our God is a great big God
Our God is a great big God
Our God is a great big God
And he holds us in his hands

He's higher than a skyscraper
He's deeper than a submarine
He's wider than the universe
And beyond my wildest dreams
He's known me and he's loved me
Since before the world began
How wonderful to be a part of
God's amazing plan

Reading: Luke 24.13-31

¹³ On that same day two of Jesus' followers were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking to each other about all the things that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed, Jesus himself drew near and walked along with them; ¹⁶ they saw him, but somehow did not recognize him. ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "What are you talking about to each other, as you walk along?"

They stood still, with sad faces. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have been happening there these last few days?"

¹⁹ "What things?" he asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus of Nazareth," they answered. "This man was a prophet and was considered by God and by all the people to be powerful in everything he said and did. ²⁰ Our chief priests and rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and he was crucified. ²¹ And we had hoped that he would be the one who was going to set Israel free! Besides all that, this is now the third day since it happened. ²² Some of the women of our group surprised us; they went at dawn to the

tomb, ²³ but could not find his body. They came back saying they had seen a vision of angels who told them that he is alive. ²⁴ Some of our group went to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said, but they did not see him.”

²⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?” ²⁷ And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther; ²⁹ but they held him back, saying, “Stay with us; the day is almost over and it is getting dark.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight.

Prayer

We lay our busy lives before you, Lord.
Sometimes, like those on the road,
we do not recognise you.

Forgive us, Lord.

At other times we only realise much later on
that we were in the presence of Jesus.

Forgive us, Lord.

For the times we never noticed you at all,
forgive us, Lord.

For the opportunities that we might have
missed:
to speak a word of healing or
encouragement

to someone in need,
forgive us, Lord.

For the times we have just wanted to go our
own way,
even when we know it's not your way,
forgive us, Lord.
Amen.

Song: Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
Open the eyes of my heart
I want to see You
I want to see You

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord
Open the eyes of my heart
I want to see You
I want to see You

To see You high and lifted up
Shinin' in the light of Your glory
Pour out Your power and love
As we sing holy, holy, holy

All age activity: Hope & Joy today (1 Peter
1.3-9)

Prayer: As Cleopas and his companion
walked along the road,
they talked about all that had happened,
and Jesus came to them.
Lord, as we read and reflect on your word,
come to us, that we may know you.
Amen.

Sermon: A bigger table

In the Emmaus Road story, there are two
main images. Walking along the road with
Jesus, and around a table with Jesus. Today,
we're going to think about the second: the
table. We will think about how the table
works in the biblical story and what a table
might mean as a symbol for us as a church.

Drawing alongside two followers of the Lord, Jesus chats to them on the Emmaus Road. As the day is nearly over, the followers ask Jesus to stay with them. They sit down for a meal at a table.

What does Jesus do at the table that is special? First, v 30 Jesus takes the bread ...

Instead of guest, Jesus becomes the host, he starts serving. He takes the initiative and begins the meal. In every sense of course, Jesus is always our host. At every meal he is present. Every piece of food we have is because of all that God has created and given to us from his care for us.

He then says the blessing ...
The traditional Jewish prayer would have been 'blessed art thou, oh Lord, thanks for ... And this grace would have been said looking to heaven. At this table Jesus acknowledges God's provision and care for him and the disciples whom he is eating with.

Then Jesus breaks the bread as he prays. As we think about breaking bread at a table now, we are reminded of communion, aren't we? Though here there is no wine, nor any words from Jesus are recorded. It's most similar to how Jesus prays before he feeds the 5000. When Jesus feeds the 5000, he prays and says thanks to God and then a miracle occurs! After the physical miracle of producing a picnic for a town from a few fish and two bits of bread, a second miracle takes place – the disciples start to recognise who he is. Peter suddenly realises the man before him is the son of God.

We don't know exactly whose house this is, Cleopas + 1, maybe his wife, maybe his brother. Maybe they had been at the feeding of the 5000, maybe they had eaten with Jesus before, but sitting down together with Jesus

became a place of revelation for them. As he broke the bread, they realised who he was.

<https://www.thefuelcast.com/library/2022-02-18-building-a-bigger-table-part-1-jesus-sets-the-table-r3>

Hayley Young is the President of the Baptist Union. Every president has a theme and hers is: Building a Bigger Table. She is encouraging Baptists to think about how Jesus used tables in his ministry and how we might extend our table to others. Hayley particularly is keen that the church connects with millennials and expands our digital presence.

Hayley says this:

What strikes me most when I read the Gospels is Jesus' table ministry; the way he so often used the act of sharing a meal; the act of breaking bread, as a way of letting people know they are seen and heard, known and respected.

For us today, as we see Jesus at tables throughout the scriptures, we too can learn about who he is. Jesus presence at tables in Luke's gospel tell us about his priorities – in Luke 5 he eats and drinks with sinners, in ch 10 with Mary and Martha asking them to listen over fussy with fancy food, in ch 14 he is given a place of honour at the Pharisees house and ch 19 is where Jesus eats with Zacchaeus – the most hated man of the village.

Jesus eats at tables to include others and bless others. Who do we have eating with us? Who do we break bread with and learn from ? If we welcome others into our homes, around our tables, not only are we doing what Jesus did, we also can experience new revelation about God. For at this Emmaus table, the followers of Jesus, suddenly discover that the living Lord is in front of them at the bread board.

Did you see that the followers had a critical role in Jesus' presence too? They invited him in. they cajoled him, they said 'you must, we won't take no for an answer'. Now when we read the story, we all know this is Jesus. They do not. They know he is a stranger who knows a lot about scripture. If you met a bible spouting stranger on a dark road when you were grieving deeply for your friend, would you take the risk? Hospitality like this was not unknown in the biblical era, but it was still an intentional act. They had to really persuade him to come in. How often are we determined to seek God's presence when we meet? How often are we determined to seek God's presence when we least expect it? How bold are we at inviting God to be with us?

The revelation these disciples found was in scripture and knowing more of its meaning, and of sharing food with the Lord and each other. This amazing opportunity only came about because they were willing to listen to Jesus, happy to learn more, keen for him to stay, and determined to be hospitable to strangers.

For the same Jesus that Cleopas and companion meet, is the same Jesus who is at every table where he is invited and at the great table in heaven to which we are all invited.

Michelle Obama's memoir 'Becoming'.¹ She ends the book with these powerful words: 'Let's invite one another in. Maybe then we can begin to fear less, to make fewer wrong assumptions, to let go of the biases and stereotypes that unnecessarily divide us. Maybe we can better embrace the ways we are the same. It's not about being perfect... There's power in allowing yourself to be known and heard, in owning your unique story, in using your authentic voice. And there's grace in being willing to know and hear others. This, for me, is how we become.'

The story of the Emmaus Road encourages us to be risky Christians, to invite one another in – for we might learn more about God than we ever expect. To be a follower of Jesus requires bravery – to speak to those we don't know, to invite strangers to our tables. And somewhere in the midst of eating, learning and risking faith – inviting others to join with you, being kind to strangers is the place where we learn the most about Jesus, where he gives us sight to see him, to catch a glimpse of his presence that moves our souls.

When we sense his presence, we can feel his care, his provision, his welcome, his presence as the lord of this church then I pray we too will be a hospitable church, making a bigger table for all to discover the risen Christ every anew.

Song: Jesus, you call us to this, your table,
meeting our hunger
with living bread;
now, as we share in your broken body,
so our hearts are fed.

*This is our communion,
gathered here in union with you,
we are one.
Yours will be the song we sing,
evermore remembering your cross,
and all you've done,
until you come.*

Jesus, you draw us to taste your mercy,
meeting our thirst
with your cup of wine;
now, by your blood, you declare us holy,
filled with life, divine.

Jesus, you send us to love and serve you,
meeting the world
with your truth and grace;
now, by your Spirit, you lead us onward,
to your glorious praise.

Communion

Prayers for the world

Song: Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my
heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true
word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise
Thou mine inheritance, now and always
Thou and Thou only first in my heart
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art

High King of heaven, my victory won
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's
sun
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my vision, O ruler of all

Blessing