The Way of Life April 5, 2026 (Easter Sunday)
9 of 9 in *On the Way with Jesus: A Lenten Journey Through Luke* Luke 24:13-35

He is risen! *He is risen indeed!*

Happy Easter, and a warm welcome to all of you joining us in-person or online for this very special service. I'm Steve, one of the pastors here at Cornerstone.

Throughout Lent, we've been walking with Jesus through Luke's Gospel, where he's always "on the way"— resolutely moving toward Jerusalem, toward his cross. Along the road, Jesus shows his followers—including us—what life in God's kingdom looks like: bringing good news to the poor, welcoming those on the margins, healing the broken, and pouring out God's radical grace in ways that surprise and transform.

This year at Cornerstone, we're leaning into that same idea: that we too are "on the way" with Jesus, walking together with him into the future God has for us as a church, shaped by his Spirit and sent into the greater Markham-Stouffville community— into the places where we live, work and play— to continue his kingdom mission.

Today's passage, which Linda read a moment ago, begins with two disciples who are also on the way, not to Jerusalem but to their hometown of Emmaus. They think their journey is all but over because their hopes have been shattered; the cross has upended their expectations. They are no longer moving forward in faith; rather, they are retreating in confusion. And it's right there, on that road to Emmaus, that the risen Jesus comes to meet them.

By highlighting Jesus' appearance to these two disciples, Luke shows that the resurrection is not only a historical event—it's also a living encounter with Christ, who meets us in our confusion, our grief, and the everyday rhythms of our lives. In such encounters, our eyes are opened to the reality that his resurrection has launched a new creation, where death, brokenness, and despair no longer have the final word. This is *The Way of Life*— personally encountering and following the risen Jesus as we step into God's new creation, recognizing his presence with us, and becoming his witnesses—bringing reconciliation, hope and life wherever we go.

We're looking forward to celebrating some baptisms in just a little while—but first, let's step into our passage and follow **four movements along the road to Emmaus**. These movements speak into our own journey, as we encounter the risen Jesus on the way. The first movement happens when:

1. Jesus draws near.

The story begins with two of Jesus' disciples walking along the road, away from Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified. Their destination is a village called Emmaus, about 11 kilometers away. Luke tells us that one of the disciples is named Cleopas, and there is biblical evidence to suggest that the unnamed disciple could be his wife, but we don't know for sure. [1]

[1] John 19:25

As the pair is walking, talking and grieving, trying to process everything that has happened back in Jerusalem, Jesus himself draws near, and starts walking and talking with them.

But they don't recognize him. And this isn't unique—throughout the gospels, people often don't immediately recognize the risen Jesus. Which is striking, when you think about it.

Because it means that although his body had been raised—transformed, never to die again—his appearance must have remained remarkably— *ordinary*.

And that detail carries weight. Because if you were inventing a story about a risen Messiah, would you make him so unremarkable that he could walk alongside his two of own followers and not stand out in some obvious way? Unlikely. Cleopas and his companion surely expected that if Jesus had been raised, he would be somehow be unmistakably— *extraordinary*. But instead, they describe exactly what they experienced: an encounter with a man who for the most part seemed just like any other—until later, at the table, everything becomes clear.

That kind of detail doesn't feel fabricated. It feels honest— like an eyewitness account.

And it points forward as well. Because it gives us a glimpse of new creation. When Jesus returns, and we share in a resurrection like his, it won't be strange or otherworldly in the way we're often led to believe. It will be physical, real—familiar, yet transformed. Not less human, but more. Not less at home in the world, but more so. Glorious, yes—but also deeply, wonderfully *home-like*.

So, the two disciples don't see that the one who has joined them on their journey is the risen Jesus himself. And then Jesus does something that is so… Jesus. He asks a question:

> He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"
>
> They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"
>
> "What things?" he asked. [2]

Of course, Jesus already knows what things. But he invites them to tell their story anyway.

So, they unpack it all, telling how Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet powerful in word and deed, had been crucified. And then they add this very telling line:

> … <u>but we had hoped</u> that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. [3]

"But we had hoped…"

[2] Luke 24:17-19a (NIV)
[3] Luke 24:21a (NIV)

In their minds, they had a category for Jesus—but it was too small. They assumed redemption meant victory over their enemies and the restoration of Israel as a nation. They expected the Messiah to be God's appointed political king, who would defeat the Romans rather than be executed by them.

They expected redemption *from* suffering. But God was bringing redemption *through* Jesus' suffering—not only for Israel, but ultimately for the whole world.

And so, these two disciples on the road to Emmaus are confused. They're disoriented. They're walking *away*. Yet in the midst of their doubt and despair, Jesus has drawn near to them.

Jesus still does the same today. **Even when we're walking away, Jesus draws near to us.**

> Even when you don't recognize him.
> Even when your understanding is incomplete.
> Even when your hope has collapsed.

Maybe you've been walking around downcast like the two disciples in our passage, feeling forsaken by God, and Jesus is saying to you this morning, "Don't you see? I'm right here with you."

He draws near to you on the road. He meets you in your own "but we had hoped" statements—in all the places where your expectations have gone unmet, where your dreams have been delayed, where your heart feels crushed—and invites you into a hope that goes far beyond what you ever imagined.

And for some of you, that's the word you most need today. You may feel like you're drifting, doubting, disappointed. But Jesus led you here this morning to let you know that he has drawn near, and you're not walking alone.

The second movement on the road to Emmaus is that:

2. Jesus reframes the Story.

As the two disciples relay their story to this stranger, still not realizing who it was, Jesus jumps in:

> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. [4]

In other words—Jesus takes them through the whole story of the Bible. And he shows them something they had missed— that the Messiah had to suffer, and then enter his glory. This wasn't a tragic interruption of God's plan—this *was* the plan.

All along, the story had been pointing here. Not to a Messiah who avoids suffering, but to a Messiah who takes suffering onto himself, for you, for me, for a broken world. Not to a God who stands at a

[4] Luke 24:25-26 (NIV)

distance from human sin and all the mess and pain it causes, but to a God who enters into it, bears it, and overcomes it.

As Jesus explains the Scriptures to them, their story begins to shift. Later they'll say:

> "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" [5]

Despair begins to give way to hope—not because circumstances have changed, but because the Story has been reframed. To borrow the words of *The Lord of the Rings* author J.R.R. Tolkien, through the resurrection, "everything sad will come untrue." In Christ's cross and resurrection, every sorrow, every loss, every pain is not the final word—God meets us in it, works through it, and will one day redeem it, bringing about a joy and glory far greater than we can imagine.

This matters deeply, because often what we need most isn't immediate answers or quick fixes, but a larger story. We need to see our lives not as isolated events, but as threads woven into the grand Story God is unfolding in and through Jesus.

When Jesus reframes the Story, we learn that: **What looks like the end of hope may actually be the place where God is doing his deepest work.**

In our text, Luke shows us that we can truly encounter the risen Christ—and have our blinders removed—when we seek him in the scriptures. What did Jesus do on the road to Emmaus? "…he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures *concerning himself*."

The two disciples knew the Scriptures well, but they had never learned to read them with the key that unlocks the whole story: *Jesus himself*. Every passage, every promise, every prophecy ultimately points to him. The invitation for us is to approach scripture with that key in hand. Whether through sermons, personal scripture reading, small group study, or Cornerstone's Bible workshops, when we see how the text leads us to Jesus himself, our hearts ignite, and our own stories are reframed with steadfast hope.

The third movement on the road to Emmaus takes place when:

3. Jesus is revealed at the Table.

Eventually, our travelling trio reach Emmaus, and Jesus acts as though he's going farther. But they urge him to stay with them, and he does. They sit down at the table to eat, and something extraordinary happens:

> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. [6]

[5] Luke 24:32 (NIV)
[6] Luke 24:30-31 (NIV)

According to Bible scholar N.T. Wright, this moment is especially profound because it echoes the first meal in Genesis 3, where another pair—Adam and Eve—ate together and "the eyes of both of them were opened"—except their eyes were opened to sin, shame, and death.[7]

But here, at this table, the roles of host and guest are beautifully reversed. The two disciples, who welcomed Jesus into their home, encounter him as the risen Lord as *he* serves *them*. In that moment, their eyes are opened to the reality that the reports they had heard are true— Jesus is alive!

This is the great reversal of the Genesis 3 meal, because through his cross and resurrection, Jesus opens our eyes to the fact that he has defeated sin, shame and death once and for all— he has undone the curse of the Fall, and ushered in new life—the dawn of God's new creation.

This meal also recalls the Last Supper, where Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it as a sign of his body given for us. Perhaps this is why the two disciples finally recognize him—in the familiar, grace-filled way he takes, blesses, breaks, and gives—revealing that the crucified one is risen indeed, and has been present with them all along. [8]

And take careful notice where this moment of revelation happens— at a table, in the ordinary rhythms of life, in shared space, through hospitality, and in the midst of community.

This is why, of course, when we gather for the Lord's Supper today, sharing bread and wine, that we too encounter the risen Jesus, who is present with us as we remember and receive his body broken for us, his blood shed for us.

And as a church, whenever we gather for worship, welcome one another, and share life together in so many other ways, we're not just building community—we're creating space where Jesus makes himself known— not only to us, but to anyone who walks through our doors.

One of our Cornerstone's Guiding Priorities for the next ten years is to become a *hub of belonging* in our greater community— a place where our Markham-Stouffville neighbours from all walks of life can come as they are, pull up a chair, and encounter the living Christ.

But it's not only about what happens within these walls. Each of us can also extend that same hospitality in our homes, and on our streets and in our workplaces and schools—inviting neighbours, friends, and colleagues into shared meals and ordinary moments—so that the risen Jesus can be revealed to others in and through the everyday rhythms of our lives.

So, will you make room at your table? Will you open your home and your heart? Will you lean into community? Because in doing so, we become participants in God's new creation, and give our neighbourhoods a chance to encounter the risen Jesus.

That relates to the fourth and final movement we see on the Emmaus Road:

4. The disciples return to bear witness.

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[7] Genesis 3:1-7
[8] Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

As soon as they recognize him, Jesus disappears from their sight. But the two disciples don't linger. They get up at once and return to Jerusalem, retracing the very road they had just traveled.

Before, they had come plodding, discouraged, walking away from it all. Now, they head back, urgently, hopefully, brimming with purpose. Because that's what resurrection does. It doesn't just comfort—it sends.

They arrive back in Jerusalem and find the others:

> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. [9]

Despair becomes delight. Confusion becomes clarity. Their story becomes witness.

This matters for us today. Because the good news of the risen Jesus isn't meant to be kept to ourselves—it's meant to be shared, over and over, in word and in deed. As a church, this is exactly what we're stepping into as we continue "on the way" with Jesus:

Guiding Priorities for Cornerstone's Next Chapter

- Deeper and wider discipleship
- Building bridges across difference
- Joining God in our neighbourhood
- Cornerstone as a hub of connection and belonging

These priorities are a living continuation of the story Luke tells—a story that points to Jesus.

Resurrection people don't stay where they were. They move. They tell. They invite. And as they do, others are drawn in to follow Jesus on the Way of Life. *Who will you invite to join the journey with you?*

Our baptismal candidates have been drawn to follow Jesus on the Way of Life. Are you ready to cheer them on as they follow him into the waters of baptism?

In Romans 6, the Bible says that in baptism, we are plunged into Jesus' death and resurrection, dying to the old and rising to new life in him. [10]

Today, we're baptizing five people in our 9:30 service—Andrea, Micah, Vanessa, Lydia, and Evan—and one more in our 11:30 service—Candace. All of their written testimonies can be found on our website at cornerstonechurch.ca/baptism, and most of our candidates will also be sharing spoken testimonies this morning, showing how Jesus has met them on the way, and continues to lead them forward.

Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, they also have encountered the risen Christ, and have become his witnesses, inviting all of us to join the journey and walking the Way of Life with Jesus.

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[9] Luke 24:35 (NIV)
[10] Romans 6:3-5

- Do you believe you are a sinner in need of a Saviour? If so, say, “I do.”
- Do you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rode from the dead so that you could have eternal life? If so, say, “I do.”
- Do you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord? If so, say, “I do.”
- Do you believe in your heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead? If so, say, “I do.”
- Do you renounce Satan and all his works? If so, say, “I renounce them.”
- Do you intend to follow Jesus the rest of your days? If so, say, “With all my heart.”
- Do you accept God’s summons to join him in fits the gifts, talents, and callings he gives you? If so, say, “I do.”

Benediction

May the risen Christ go with you on every road you travel.
May he meet you in your confusion, your grief, and the ordinary moments of life.
May he open your eyes to God’s new creation and set your hearts ablaze with his presence.
And may you go from here as witnesses of his resurrection—sharing hope, reconciliation, and life wherever you go. Amen.