HOPE CHAPEL | GAWLER

WE HAD HOPED

The Road to Emmaus - Luke 24:13–35

Andrew Cole | Sunday 4 October 2026 | 9AM Gawler

Big Idea: *He was on the road with them long before they knew it was him. Your disappointment has never walked alone.*

The Scene - Luke 24:13–35

It is Sunday afternoon - the same Sunday that the women found the empty tomb. Two people are walking out of Jerusalem, heading seven miles on foot to a village called Emmaus. That's roughly two and a half hours of walking.

These were not famous disciples. Not part of the twelve. Only one of them is even named - a man called Cleopas. The other person is never named anywhere in the Bible. Andrew noted that some preachers have said the empty space is deliberate: anyone who has ever walked away can put their own name there.

Here is what these two had lived through in the previous 72 hours: the man they had staked their lives on was arrested on Thursday night, executed on Friday afternoon, and buried before sundown. What they had been expecting was a rescuer - a king who would drive out the Roman army and restore their nation. What they got was a cross and a sealed tomb.

Their problem was not that God had done nothing. Their problem was that God had done something completely different from what they had asked for.

> *It is Sunday. The resurrection has already happened. The women had already reported the empty tomb that morning. The best news in human history was already true - and these two were walking away from it with their heads down. They had heard the report but had not seen him yet, and they were done.*

And where was the risen Son of God on the afternoon of his own resurrection? He could have been anywhere. Standing at the highest point of Jerusalem for everyone to see. Walking into the palace. Appearing over the city. Instead, he spent two and a half hours on a dirt road with two people who had already quit.

The risen Jesus chose to walk seven miles with two people who had turned their backs on him - disillusioned, carrying a past they couldn't make sense of, a grief they were in the middle of, and a future they had already given up on.

POINT 1 | He Walks Your Road

The first thing Andrew drew out of this passage is where the risen Jesus was not. Not at the temple. Not at the palace. Not in front of a crowd. He came up behind two ordinary people on a dirt road, heading in the wrong direction - and he matched their pace.

Then Luke gives us a detail that can read strangely: they were kept from recognising him. Andrew said he believes this was deliberate. If they had known who he was at verse 15, they would have hit the ground and never said another honest word. They would have told him what you tell someone important. Instead, thinking he was a stranger, they told him exactly how they felt.

He concealed himself so they would be honest. Sometimes God stays quiet not because he is distant, but because he wants your truth first.

God can handle your grumbles, your tantrums, your anger, your tears, your disillusionment, your cynicism. He can handle your hatred. Whatever we carry that we would not say inside a church building - he can handle all of it. And he is walking alongside you while you carry it.

Andrew was honest here: he has had his own hissy fits at God, on seasons where something didn't work out the way he believed it would. He thought he was just venting into empty air. And all the time Jesus was walking his pace. On his road. On his seven miles. Wanting his honesty.

> **Genesis 28:16** *Surely the Lord is in this place - and I was not aware of it. (Jacob, waking on a rock in the desert)*

Jacob had slept rough in the wilderness, with stones for a pillow, and woke to find God had been there all night. He just hadn't known.

He Lets You Stop

Watch what Jesus does next: he asks them a question. What are you two talking about? He knew. He was there. He had the scars. But he asked - because grief needs somewhere to go.

Luke gives one more detail at that moment: they stood still and their faces were downcast. And Jesus let them stop. He did not hurry them past it.

> *Andrew named something that cost him personally during his own hardest season: no one let them stop. No one let them sit. No one was comfortable with them just being where they were. But he knew that God was all right with it, even when others were not.*

There are people in grief, in pain, in hurt, who are still processing. We cannot rush them past it. Sometimes we are not next to them to fix anything. We are next to them because Jesus is next to them. The healing presence is already there - and he lets them stop.

> **Psalm 139:7,9–10** *Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.*

> **Psalm 34:18** *The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Andrew put it plainly: you cannot outwalk him. You can only outrun your awareness of him. That is our biggest battle - not that he has gone, but that we have stopped noticing he is there.

Reflect: *Is there an area of your life where you have been walking away - from prayer, from church, from believing any of it - and carrying the assumption that God is standing back at the gate waiting to see if you come to your senses? What changes if you believe he is already on your road?*

POINT 2 | He Retells Your Story

Andrew named what he called the three saddest words in this chapter:

> **Luke 24:21** *We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.*

We had hoped. Past tense. Hope with an expiry date stamped on it. Andrew said it plainly: hope is the seedbed of faith. If you do not have hope, how can faith grow? You only need faith the size of a mustard seed - but if there is no hope, even that small seed has no soil to grow in.

Disillusionment is not the same as never having believed. It is worse. It means you did believe - and it cost you something real, and it did not turn out. And so you quietly moved that hope into the past tense, where it can't hurt you again. That is what self-protection sounds like in the language of faith.

They had all the facts and none of the meaning. The arrest, the trial, the cross, the tomb, the women, the angels - every detail correct, every conclusion wrong.

They were on the right day, in the right story, with completely the wrong ending. And here is what Jesus does: he does not soften it. He calls them foolish and slow of heart. Because real love is not always gentle in its wording. Sometimes the kindest thing a person can do is refuse to agree with your conclusion.

If Jesus had said, yeah, maybe you're right - they would have been lost. He didn't. And he doesn't in our lives either.

Walking Them Through the Whole Bible

Starting from Moses, he walked them through the whole of scripture - page after page, showing them that what they thought was the moment the plan failed was actually the plan.

The cross was not an ending. It was the thing the story had been pointing to from the beginning.

> **Isaiah 53:5** *He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

They would have known Isaiah 53 word for word. They had the text. They did not have the meaning - until Jesus retold the story from the inside.

He did not change the facts. He changed the meaning. The very wound that broke their hearts is the wound that heals the world. He took the exact events that had shattered them and showed them what those events actually were.

> *Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 50:20: you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done - the saving of many lives. The facts were the same. The meaning was completely different.*

That is what allows you to lift your head. Not that the painful things did not happen - they did. But that the God who was walking alongside you the whole time was weaving something through them that you could not yet see.

> **Reflect:** *Where have you stopped at we had hoped - a prayer that didn't get the answer you were expecting, a situation that didn't go the way you trusted it would? Is it possible that you have the facts right but the meaning still incomplete? What would it mean to ask Jesus to retell that part of your story?*

Closing - The Moment They Recognised Him

The story ends at a table in Emmaus. They reached the village, and because Jesus looked like he was going further, they invited him in. Urged him, in fact. And at the table, when he broke bread, their eyes were opened - and they recognised him. And he disappeared from their sight.

The first thing they said to each other was: were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road? The fire had been there the whole time. They just hadn't known who was walking beside them.

And they got up that same hour - after two and a half hours of walking - and walked seven miles back to Jerusalem to tell the others.

The road back is always shorter than the road away. When you know who was with you, you run.

If you are in a season of walking away - from prayer, from church, from believing - hear this: God is not standing at the gate with his arms folded. He is on your road. He is matching your pace. He is asking what you are talking about, not because he needs the information, but

because he wants your honesty. And when you are ready, he will retell the story in a way that makes the facts make sense at last.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

Use these on your own during the week, or with your LifeGroup.

1. The two on the road had staked everything on Jesus being a particular kind of rescuer - and got something completely different. Have you ever had a season where what God did was completely different from what you asked for? How did you carry that?

2. Jesus concealed himself so they would be honest with him. Andrew said God sometimes stays quiet not because he is distant, but because he wants your truth first. What is the honest thing you have been carrying that you haven't said out loud to God yet?

3. Andrew said: you cannot outwalk God, you can only outrun your awareness of him. Where in your life have you been interpreting God's quietness as absence rather than presence?

4. He let them stop. He let their faces be downcast. He did not hurry them past it. Is there someone in your life who needs you to stop rushing them past their grief or pain - and just be with them where they are?

5. The saddest words in the passage are we had hoped - hope stamped with an expiry date. Where have you quietly shifted something from present tense to past tense? Where has disillusionment moved hope into the past?

6. They had all the facts and none of the meaning. Jesus didn't change what happened - he changed what it meant. Is there a painful chapter of your story that you have the facts of but are still waiting for the meaning? What would it look like to bring that to Jesus and ask him to retell it?

Key Scriptures This Week

- Luke 24:13–35 - The Road to Emmaus (read the whole passage this week)
- Luke 24:15–16 - Jesus came up and walked along with them - but they were kept from recognising him
- Luke 24:21 - We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel
- Luke 24:27 - Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself
- Psalm 139:7–10 - Where can I go from your spirit? If I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me
- Psalm 34:18 - The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit
- Isaiah 53:5 - By his wounds we are healed
- Genesis 50:20 - You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good