

## **Knox Uniting Church Cluster**

**Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup> 2026 – (Year A. Easter 3)**

**Sermon (reflection) by Russell Croxford at Rowville Uniting Church**

**Bible passages: Acts 2:14a, 36-41 and Luke 24:13-35 (NRSVUE)**

***“Watch this space!”***

### ***PREAMBLE (early introduction to theme)***

I'm giving my theme today the title “Watch this Space”. We use this saying to mean that some information about a coming event has already been given, but it's only a small *part* of the full information that's required. There is more information that will need to be revealed in due course. But you don't want to miss out on any future updates, so you need to “watch this space”! The journey of the disciples throughout the gospels was for them a case of ‘watching this space’, and over time the real and full truth about Jesus was gradually revealed and understood by them. It didn't happen all at once. Some would say they were slow to learn. But in the end, they got it! They finally understood the complete truth of who Jesus was and why he came. In today's story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus it was a classic example of how they came to full recognition, eventually – but only after ‘watching this space’ during their journey along the road with the risen Jesus. This speaks to us in so many ways!

### ***MESSAGE***

When it comes to great movies, it's hard to go past a really good ‘Who Dunit?’ movie, like the famous Agatha Christie story, *‘Murder on the Orient Express’* featuring the best detective in the world, Hercule Poirot. Everyone on the train is a suspect in a murder and the detective must try to piece together all the intriguing pieces of evidence to finally get to the answer.

Well, there is now a modern version of Poirot. It's a private detective by the name of Benoit Blanc, played by Daniel Craig, and he appears in the recent ‘Knives Out’ series. Sophie and I watched the most recent of these the other day, called ‘Wake up Dead Man’ about a priest who is killed in his own church, and all the parishioners are the suspects, along with the priest's dedicated assistant. All through this long movie you get to see small pieces of evidence, which on their own don't make sense. Of course, in the end, Benoit Blanc puts all the pieces together to solve the mystery. For the viewer, the only way to understand the final answer is to ‘watch this space’. That is, carefully watch for the revelation of all the facts as the story unfolds.

The gospel story is a bit like this. The mystery, in this case, is not an unsolved murder. The mystery is Jesus himself, and the disciples must put the pieces together in their effort to finally work out who Jesus really is and why he came. They must ‘watch this space’, taking in everything they've heard and seen, until it finally makes sense.

Progressively throughout the gospel story, Jesus reveals his identity and purpose to his followers in a number of ways. But it appears that the disciples are very slow in making sense of it all. We may wonder why it took three years for them to finally get it.

Today's story from Luke 24, about the two people on the road to Emmaus, is a perfect example of the disciples trying to piece it all together, even in the last chapter of Luke!

The walk to Emmaus is a favourite bible story, with its very human and very divine moments. It is still Easter Sunday, but later in the day, when two disciples, probably from the wider group of Jesus' followers are leaving Jerusalem on a 3-hour walk to Emmaus (possibly their hometown) to stay the night.

Why are they leaving Jerusalem? Maybe because the Passover festival has finished. Maybe because there was no point in staying because their Master was dead. Maybe because of fear for their own safety. But one thing's for sure, they were depressed about recent events. This was evident in their words, "We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel: (v21). We had hoped. It's a statement we can relate to, because this is often how we feel about things too! Their feelings of disappointment connect us with them. How many times have we said, "We had hoped....."

Being 'on the road' was a typical setting, in Luke for things to happen in the lives of Jesus and his disciples in Luke's gospel (often referred to as Luke's 'travel narrative'). And things certainly *did* happen on that road, that day.

One of the key happenings is that the risen Jesus met them on the road, but, as it says in verse 16, "their eyes were kept from recognizing him". This lack of recognition is a theme you can trace right through Luke's gospel. So often the disciples are 'blind' to the truth. Jesus' identity and purpose are concealed and hidden from them. Yes, they see and hear the facts. Yes, they are 'watching the space'. But they can't seem to piece it all together. One reason for this is that it just didn't make sense to them that a Messiah would suffer and die, when a Messiah was meant to conquer and redeem.

It was as if there were 'layers' of misconceptions clouding their minds, and these layers had to be peeled away, one by one, until they could see things fully. This causes me to ask myself, 'What layers still exist in my own faith journey?' 'What still needs to be peeled away?'

For the two disciples on the road, the layers were being removed by this 'stranger' on the road. Then it would seem that the final layer was removed at that moment when Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. It is reminiscent of the last supper isn't it? Although it's possible these two followers were not with Jesus in the upper room. What is more likely is that they had shared a meal so often with Jesus. This is another recurring theme in Luke's gospel. Moments of insight often happened in a meal setting.

But was this 'breaking bread' moment, the *final* moment of truth? It's often taught that way. But when we read on into the next passage, where the two disciples have now joined with the eleven back in Jerusalem, and where Jesus appears again to them all, yes there was joy, but there was still some fear (v37) and doubt (v41). It wasn't until Jesus finally 'opened their minds' (v45), that the 'penny dropped' and it finally all made sense.

So, Luke's gospel is all about 'watching this space' and it's only in the last few verses (when Jesus left them in the ascension) that the mystery is solved. End of story. Roll the credits.

Actually...no. *Not* end of story. For as we know, Luke's gospel has a "to be continued" at the end (not literally!). Luke has a sequel. Luke is book one in a two-book story. The sequel is Acts, written also by Luke, which picks up exactly where book one left off. It's fair to say that, for Luke, the gospel story is incomplete without the book of Acts.

I've been using the saying 'Watch this space' up to this point. I'm now going to change it to another term, "Watch and act".

We are familiar with this term in times of natural disasters. It's a warning to people to "Watch" meaning observe all the information about the threat and "Act", meaning to do all things necessary to keep yourself safe. Luke's first book is about the "watch". The second book is about the "act" – or the actions that flow out of the watching, learning, growing and empowering that happened for the disciples while Jesus was with them.

So often, in Acts, these 'actions' come in the form of 'witnessing'. They became 'witnesses' to all they had discovered. There were healings, preaching, caring, teaching, sharing – all under the umbrella of *witnessing* to what they had learned from Jesus.

In our other reading from Acts 2 we see this witnessing in full flight. Peter gets up before a big crowd, having been empowered by God's Spirit and boldly declares that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah, as foretold in their scriptures, in spite of all the misconceptions about him. Peter gives them the evidence and he challenges them to repent and be baptized. This shows that Peter, finally, in the end 'got it', and now he puts it into practice in his witness to the world. And 3,000 people were added to their number that day (v41). Things really started to happen in the book of Acts.

Watch and Act. How do we do that? As I reflected on this it occurred to me that we can and should do them both together. We don't wait until we have finally solved all God-mysteries before we put our faith into action. It's while we are 'watching this space' and learning that we simultaneously share with others. The disciples are seen in the gospels to be witnessing, even though still somewhat 'in the dark' about Jesus. And even as they witness in Acts there are many instances of learning along the way.

We might call this 'action-reflection' and it's a good way to go about living as people of faith.

So today, as we reflect again on this Emmaus Road story, we might ask ourselves, how does Jesus keep revealing more of himself to us? And how do we reveal him to others? How do we 'watch and act'.

When we look at what took place in this story, we see that Christ is revealed to these two people in companionship on the journey; conversation; care; discussing the scriptures; and in hospitality. These are exactly the things that happen in our own journeys, through which our eyes of faith can be opened to a greater understanding of who Jesus is. And these are exactly the things that we can use to reveal Jesus to others:

Companionship on the journey. Conversation. Care. Discussing scripture (when that's needed), and offering hospitality, in all the ways we can show hospitality. Sharing a meal, being a perfect setting in which to reveal who Jesus is.