Floyd Tidd:

He is risen. He is risen indeed. The words rang out that first Easter from one to another and then from another to yet another as they believed. And so through the centuries the mystery and the majesty of Easter has cascaded to generations of believers one after another echoing that declaration of faith he is risen and the response resounding he is risen indeed. General Albert Osborn in the middle of the last century wrote the words to the song The Well is Deep opening with this line, life is a journey long is the road. A few years later, the Beatles followed up with a song The Long and Winding Road. Perhaps for many of us that image of life as a journey resonates especially when we consider the road to be long. But in these past few weeks we would no doubt echo those words that say life is a journey and it's a long and winding road.

Floyd Tidd:

Paul McCartney describes the song as one he wrote at his farm in Scotland in 1968 inspired by the sight of a road leading up into the hills and the remote highlands. Based on further comments by McCartney we understand the lyrics expressed a reflection of his own anguish at the distress in his own life as well as the nostalgic look back upon the journey of the Beatles and what was an uncertain future emerging. It was released two years later, a month after the Beatles breakup. Life is a journey and the road is long and in recent weeks we would agree it's a long and winding road.

Floyd Tidd:

Two men walked a long and winding road that first Easter. The image of a journey punctuating throughout Luke's gospel, in its closing chapter Luke introduces two members of the wider circle of Jesus's followers on their journey, their journey now to the village of Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem. They had probably been in the city for the feast of unleavened bread and may well have stayed longer than they had planned as the events of the arrest and the crucifixion of their master and their Lord had unfolded, Jesus of Nazareth arrested and crucified. Not only had they loved him as their master and their leader they saw in him the promised Messiah and they hoped that he would exert his authority and redeem Israel from Rome's domination. They had likely witnessed or certainly been told by friends of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem earlier that week. And then they watched the events unfold, the events unfold that will lead to the crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus.

Floyd Tidd:

Then came the message that morning, the message from the women saying they had been to the tomb and the tomb was empty. The understanding that angels had appeared to the women and to others. Following Jesus had become a long and winding road, curves they never could have imagined nor could they understand and so they made their way down the road to Emmaus. As they walked they talked, questions they could not answer, confusion they could not understand, the unexplainable. They walked and they talked along the road to Emmaus and they're on the road. The long and winding road of life's journey even the journey of a disciple the road to Emmaus Luke records that Jesus himself, putting the emphasis upon himself Luke wrote Jesus himself not an angel with a message this time but Jesus himself drew near to these disciples. Jesus himself came up, walked along with them, he walked with them and he began to talk with them.

Floyd Tidd:

Just as so often before his crucifixion he opens with a question. Let's be reminded again that when Jesus asks a question it's not primarily to source information but rather it's an invitation, an invitation to step into a deep dialogue. Remember God knew where Adam and Eve were when he asked them where they were but he wanted them to know and he wanted to invite them into a deep dialogue, a necessary conversation. And so, here now in Luke 24 verse 18 Luke gives us the name of one of the two who were walking the road Emmaus, Cleopas who was surprised when the stranger who had joined them in the journey didn't know what had happened in Jerusalem these past days. But they saw in the stranger a genuine interest, a genuine interest and so they poured out their hearts and their anguish to him over the death of their Lord and their master. They poured out their confusion in the light of an empty tomb discovered that morning. They shared their hope, their hope that Jesus was the Messiah, their hope that had been dashed at Calvary with his death.

Floyd Tidd:

The struggle of hope and fear spilled from their hearts through their lips to this stranger. It's then Jesus this stranger still unidentified by the two on the road called them, called them for not looking at all the prophets had said. He took them back through the scriptures beginning with Moses and drew for them the crimson red line that traced the journey of life, of life eternal, the long and winding road of God's redemption throughout history leading to this very moment. All the prophets had said included not just the promise of a Messiah but that of a Messiah who would be a suffering servant, despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our inequities, that the punishment that brought us peace would be upon him and by his wounds we would be healed.

Floyd Tidd:

He traced for them the crimson line of redemption that brought them to this very moment and as he was about to leave them they insisted that he come and stay with them for soon it would be dark and there gathered together around the table they shared a meal. And as he broke the bread their eyes were opened and they recognized him. They recognized him Jesus once crucified buried now resurrected sitting with them.

Floyd Tidd:

Here the statement of Saint Augustine written years later was foreshadowed as Augustine wrote, "Faith is to believe what you do not see and the reward of this faith is to see what you believe." If ever we needed an Easter resurrection reality of Jesus drawing near and walking with us, it is now on this long and winding road that all of humanity is slowly walking in these recent weeks Jesus still draws near. Into the confusion and the chaos of our journey Jesus draws near. Jesus who by his spirit hovered over the chaos before creation and out of that chaos created as Genesis records Jesus still draws near in the midst of our chaos and confusion. Into the unexpected turns of dashed hopes and deep despair Jesus the source of a hope that does not disappoint because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the spirit whom he has given us Jesus draws near again today.

Floyd Tidd:

And even as the darkness was about to descend on the two on the road to Emmaus and now even as a sense of darkness would seem to descend again Jesus not only draws near he stays near with his enlightening presence. Jesus the light of the world draws near transforming the darkness as we walk this long and winding road as followers of the risen Jesus. If ever we needed an Easter moment of Jesus drawing near we need it now. So as we walk along and as we talk along the journey of these days hear are the reminder from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God."

Floyd Tidd:

Let us anticipate his question, his invitation as we walk and as we talk to share with him what we are talking about, our questions, our confusion, our dashed hopes, and open ourselves to his spirit and his word to trace his finger through the journey of eternity to this very moment and to each one of us with his redeeming love. Wherever you are in life, in life as a journey as General Osbourne penned Easter and the reality of the resurrection of Jesus meets you there today. Jesus was not only crucified and died for you and I but he rose victorious over death and darkness that our life's journey might have an eternal destination with him and that he has risen and our life's journey is to be accompanied by him. Jesus is drawing near to you today anticipate, be ready to allow yourself to be interrupted by him.

Floyd Tidd:

In closing, hear these further words from general Osbournes song, "Life is a journey and long is the road." And the second verse he outlines, "Life is a seeking, life is a quest." And then hear these words of the third verse, "Life is a finding. Vain wanderings cease when from the savior we claim all we have longed for solace and peace. All we have life in his name, life in the name of Jesus, the resurrected Christ who still draws near." He is drawing near to you today. God bless you this Easter 2020.