

Luke 24:13-35
Third Sunday of Easter
April 19, 2026

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

To the two disciples, the risen Jesus *drew near* – the Greek word ἐγγιζω is used very commonly in the Gospels to refer to one of three types of drawing near:

- (1) The kingdom of heaven drawing near
- (2) Jesus drawing near to Jerusalem on the way to the cross
- (3) The day of His glorious return drawing near

All of those could easily be meditated upon beautifully in connection to the risen Jesus drawing near to these downcast disciples on the evening of His glorious resurrection. But, they could not recognize it. Interestingly, we do not know – the Scriptures don't exactly say – *why* they could not recognize him; true, "their eyes were kept from recognizing him," the text says. But was that so because the Lord prevented their recognition, so as to serve His purposes later? Or did they not recognize him because of their grief? Perhaps it's safest to simply conclude and recall that the sinner cannot see the truth of the Gospel clearly by his own natural Old Adam... even when his eyes

behold the resurrected Jesus, he will interpret it through unbelief and despair. Thus, Jesus reveals himself to sinners as it pleases Him. And so, as he draws near to them, he prepares to overcome their grief, for that grief over his death had crushed their hope... crushed their hope because all that hope depended on His promises being true.

And now we easily tie ourselves to those forlorn disciples. For, like the two disciples before us, we often live as if – in our grief – we are tempted to lose hope. Isn't that what St Paul hints at when he exhorts the Thessalonians, "We do not want you to be uninformed [about the coming of the Lord... the Lord who ascended and seems so distant. He is coming again! We do not want you to be uninformed about that], brothers, that you may not grieve as those who have no hope." That doesn't mean the Christian doesn't weep tears of sorrow; we do! And Christ himself wept at the tomb of Lazarus. But we weep temporally *with* hope eternally, *with* defiant confidence, *with* certainty – even before the open jaws of the gaping grave... for Jesus has revealed himself not only to eyewitnesses of the resurrection, but to us personally in His blessed means of grace; and thus, He has brought us out of mourning and sorrow and into joy and gladness.

But, if we are to remain focused on that, we need to hear again and again that which St Paul says "is of first importance" – the historical record of God's Christ suffering, dying, and rising again.

And, in our text, we hear that record through the words of Cleopas. Perhaps most fascinating about this testimony of Cleopas is that it must be one of the longest, if not *the* longest, monologues in the Gospels by anyone other than Christ.

Indeed, how important is this to the Holy Spirit, that He would cause it to be recorded for every generation to hear the ‘raw’ testimony of one who – even in their hour of grief – gives a simple, straightforward testimony of what had occurred. No one can claim Cleopas is exaggerating, for he in his grief no longer thinks Jesus is of any value – “*we had hoped* that he was the one,” Cleopas confesses. Thus, empty of any current hope, his testimony cannot be viewed as un-objective or subjectively favorable toward painting the situation in a better light than its due. No, this Jesus of Nazareth *had* been mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, but he was hated by the religious leaders, delivered up to Roman authorities and sentenced to death by crucifixion. That was three days ago. And now some women were making some nonsensical noise about seeing angels who claimed Jesus was alive. Some of the men went to see for themselves and, “yeah, the tomb is empty, but we haven’t seen Jesus for himself.” What to make of it all?

It’s quite a fascinating testimony and record for all the cynics of history to wrestle with. They can claim Jesus’ zealous followers overstated things; but they cannot claim those in grief, who had

written him off, had any zeal left with which to overstate things.
What incredible testimony!

And yet, not testimony filled with faith, but with fear and fatigue and – by the risen Jesus’ own description – foolishness. Not foolishness because they would claim such impossible things to be true... but foolishness because they would even hesitate to recognize it all as that which had long been foretold them!: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

Some great words in here to consider: “foolish” comes from the Greek word that means “without understanding.” It’s used six times and always refers to those who are either opposed to God and the Gospel or those who have been tricked to doubt the gospel (such as the Galatians – “You foolish, Galatians, who has bewitched you?” Paul asks). So also here... their grief and their own eyes had bewitched them to forget that this had all been foretold.

A second word of great importance here: βραδεις, rendered “slow of heart.” The epistle of James uses this word in a *positive* sense – the Christian is to be slow to pass judgment, slow to get angry. But, here, Jesus says, there is no reason to be slow to draw the proper conclusion – the prophetic word has come to pass! Why would anyone sit and deliberate over that which is so plainly obvious... precisely because it conforms with the Word of God!

The third word to take to heart in this response of Jesus is the word *spoken*... “slow of heart to believe all the prophets have

spoken.” The Word of God is living and active... God utters into nothingness and speaks into existence a creation. He utters through His prophets and speaks into existence the promise of salvation, the resurrection, the new creation - all enfleshed in Jesus of Nazareth. The prophets didn’t just write; they spoke. They may have died and still to this day lay in the dust; but they still speak through their recorded word. And they speak of something so profoundly and plainly obvious, that we would – by Jesus’ own testimony – be *fools* to not believe it.

But, you might say, Christ knows we are by nature *foolish*. He does not leave us to figure it out for ourselves, nor Cleopas and his fellow traveler to figure it for themselves. Rather, he begins with the rhetorical question: “Wasn’t this all necessary to fulfill the promise? Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer and die and enter into his glory?”

And then, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” What a weighty statement that is. We hear it again in verses just after this text, that Jesus goes through the same exercise – not just with these two – but with the disciples in the Upper Room some time later in this same evening, as he appears to them and says, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” It’s the same thing he

said to the Jews who scoffed at him, when he said to them, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them is eternal life; these are they that speak of Me.”

In short, on three separate occasions, Jesus clearly and plainly tells *you* how to read the Old Testament. You do not read it as a blueprint of how you are to earn God’s favor or live like the Israelites. You do not read it to study the great heroes of the faith (and all their horrible sins and failures). You do not read it to try and copy all their laws and customs in Seder Meals and Passover traditions and supposed Jewish-Christian partnerships of faith. You read the Old Testament to find in it Jesus, all the prophecy that points to Jesus... Jesus is in the Old Testament concealed, so that He may be in the New Testament revealed. To read the Old Testament *any other way* is unchristian, for it does not follow the Christ who plainly said, “Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms – they all point to Me.”

But Jesus isn’t just about teaching us; he’s also about fellowship with us – table fellowship with us. This is true all throughout Luke’s gospel – Jesus teaching the crowds, then feeding the crowds; teaching tax collectors and sinners, then dining with tax collectors and sinners. Luke’s gospel repeatedly shows how Jesus brings the Gospel to us sinners – He teaches and He dines with us. Word and Sacrament. And, in this final episode of teaching and table

fellowship in Luke's gospel, we see it quite clearly for the sacramental beauty that it is.

Thus, we hear, "when he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them." How does Luke say it of the Upper Room three nights prior? – "He took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them." Do we, in slowness of heart, try to explain away the obvious parallel? No, here the risen Jesus plainly proves that His desire was not just to recline with those in the Upper Room (for neither Cleopas nor his traveler were in that room on the night he was betrayed)... no His desire is to recline with and sacramentally reveal himself to all who had hoped in Him, that they might have their eyes and minds and hearts opened anew and strengthened to believe the Word.

In fact, isn't that exactly where the two disciples go when putting two-and-two together. Once they recognize the sacramental realities of the table fellowship, they ask each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Yes, the burning of faith when hearing the Word – "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ" – and that faith is strengthened when being fed the Word made flesh – "This is my body; this is my blood."

Now, it's important to hear this line of the text correctly: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road?" If you stopped there, the charismatic enthusiasts – those who believe

that the Holy Spirit speaks to them in the burning of their heart – they would have a field day with this verse, if allowed to be pulled out of the text. They would say, “Jesus has revealed himself to me directly. I can feel the burning in my heart, just as Luke says! Yes, I asked God, and He put it on my heart, and He gave me a revelation.” How often – in charismatic Christianity – do we hear that? And, how do you respond? Easy! You say, “And God put it on *my* heart, and gave me a revelation that says yours is wrong.” Now, which of you is right? If you both claim God ‘made your heart burn,’ but God cannot contradict himself with two opposite revelations, which is right? Must you not judge by *going to the written Word*? How is this verse *actually* read in context? – “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” Jesus didn’t speak them away from the written Word, but right back to it: “Here is what the prophets had spoken! O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe that written Word that still speaks with the authority of God!” Did Jesus not pray in the High Priestly Prayer on the night on his betrayal – just three days before this – “I pray not only for these apostles, but for all who will believe in me through their word.” That word that continues to this day to ring out in proclamation that explains, expounds upon, simply gives audible report of the Scriptures, the *written Word*.

And, suddenly, we’re right back to teaching and table fellowship. Indeed, the Word and Sacrament work together, don’t

they? We ought never pit them against each other, for Christ always ties them together. Teaching and Table fellowship. Anything less is not Christ's sacramental care of His Church and, thus, is not Christian.

In short, Christ cares for his church through right doctrine – which *does* cause hearts to rejoice, to burn with the zeal of a clear conscience, faith in God, and fervent love toward one another. And that fervent love for one another means going to one another and reporting to each other and sharing in joy with one another, that we now live in the truth of, the era of, the resurrected Christ and, thus, at the threshold of the resurrection to come.

It's this joy that the disciples share as they excitedly swap stories, Simon, the eleven, the Emmaus disciples. And, in exchanging to each other reports – the Word of God – how does Luke end, but in a grand finale that says the two disciples “told what had happened on the road (teaching) and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread (table fellowship).

You know the exact same thing. May it never become dull to you, a bore to you. How foolish if you ever take it for granted. The risen Jesus this morning gives you to share in the same teaching and table fellowship known by those who rejoiced that first Easter day. And, by this sacramental care, He opens anew our eyes to recognize him, so that he may temporarily vanish from our sight (the ascension), for we no longer need to behold him according to the

flesh of the old creation, for we have certain hope that his risen body and blood will one day appear again in glory and raise our body and blood into the resurrection unto the new creation.

In the Name of the Father
And of the Son
And of the Holy Spirit.
+ AMEN +

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