

Luke 24:13-35 – Easter 3 – Slow of Heart – April 19, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

Last week, I sent us home with a short assignment. Together, we read *The Sermon on the Mount* in Matthew's Gospel. I hope you found it as beneficial as I did. The Words of Jesus are new each time we read or hear them. Because His Words are alive and active, they pierce our souls. They transform our minds. They interpret our lives.

Martin Luther once said, "We need to hear the Gospel every day because we forget it every day." This is why I am trying to convince you to be Bible readers. If you get anything out of my ministry here at St. John, I hope it is this. Pick up the Scriptures—and let them mess with you. Listen to the Scriptures when they are read. Let them measure every little bit of who you are. Let them shape your prayers, your hopes, your faith, your life. Let them bring you to Christ.

And the Sermon on the Mount, especially, is fundamental for understanding what it means to follow Jesus Christ. And I challenged us to take a step—to have some courage—to change something—to shape our lives with the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is the Savior. And He is the Lord. And in His resurrection, our life comes into union with His. It is hidden with Christ in God.

This is the Spirit's work, of course. He is always at work when the Word is read, heard, and sung. But too often, we resist the Spirit's work. We don't sing. We don't participate in the liturgy. We don't keep a devotional life. We ignore His work. We forget because we don't think it's important.

But as we meditate upon God's Word—as we really give ourselves over to the Word—the Spirit changes us. God's Word is performative. It does what it says. It interprets us—and our lives. He enables us to follow Christ. And through the guidance of the Spirit—through the Scriptures—and through the Church—we begin the long, slow pathway back to where Christ would have us live.

We saw this with the Disciples last week. The resurrection of Christ changes them. This event brings them into the way of true discipleship—finally and fully. They become image bearers—followers of Christ—"little Christs"—as we talked about at Easter. This most certainly turns their lives upside down. They can no longer live like the world—with a Christian veneer. And they will turn their world upside down as a kingdom of priests—with the good news of Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

They are sent out as those who live in Christ. They don't expect Jesus to do things their way anymore. They start doing things Jesus' way. They pray. They discipline their lives. They put sin to death. They go deep into the things of Christ. They don't just want to be called Christians—they want to be Christians. And they become the foundation of the historic and apostolic Church.

We meet a couple more disciples on the road to Emmaus today. The major subject of this passage is the same as the previous one—the resurrection. Jesus lives. He rose—even His humanity—both body and soul. The Easter season continues.

But the initial reaction of these disciples to the good news of the resurrection is rather disappointing. They are talking about the things that have just taken place in Jerusalem. That's something. But following the cross—and even reports of the resurrection—they simply go home. They went to the Passover in Jerusalem—just like always. And now they are walking home—just like always. Not even the resurrection of Jesus Christ can change their schedules

or their habits. Now, as they are walking home, Jesus appears to them. And He keeps them from discerning who He is—at least for a time. And He asks them what they are talking about. And they are incredulous. This Man doesn't know about everything that just happened in Jerusalem?

And what they tell Jesus is interesting. It gives us a glimpse of what they are working through. Jesus was a Prophet. That's a start anyway. The chief priests and the rulers of Jerusalem condemned Him and had Him crucified. They had hoped He was going to redeem Israel from Roman rule—although that hope seems to be gone now.

But even more perplexing was the account of the women at the tomb. They had seen angels. The tomb was empty. All Jerusalem is reeling with this startling news. They are baffled by it all. And with all of this happening...they simply go home. Just like always. And with this decision, they return to their ordinary world. And they are well on their way to ruining everything.

This is easy enough to do. They haven't put themselves where they need to be. They do what everyone else is doing. They don't search the Scriptures. They don't wait for Jesus. They leave behind the Apostles. They don't continue in the way of Christ.

We need to know that Paul presents the Christian life as an endurance sport—one that we may lose if we are not careful. He says, "So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

And it is with this concern that Jesus then rebukes these disciples. He calls them foolish—and slow of heart to believe. They still didn't understand the Scriptures. They lack faith. They are in a spiritual fog. They wallow in their spiritual immaturity. And this is a very easy place to find ourselves.

Paul will say something complementary in Philippians 2 and 3. First, he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." And then he continues, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

That's where Jesus wants us to be. He wants us free from worn-out habits and spiritual ruts that keep us from straight paths. Full of hope. Full of faith. Striving forward. Thinking God's thoughts. Wrestling with the good news of Jesus. Pressing into Christ. Lives built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. And on the path to spiritual maturity.

And that is exactly what Jesus provides for them right here. He is disappointed with these disciples on the road to Emmaus. They are slow of heart to believe. But He still appears to them—even though His appearance is hidden and ordinary at first. He explains the plan of God for a suffering and dying Messiah. He explains the plan of God for a resurrected and triumphant Messiah.

He takes them through the Scriptures—Moses and the Prophets—verse by verse. He explains from the Scriptures all the things concerning Himself. What a treasure to be able to hear from the Lord Himself all of these details. Luke really should have recorded the whole conversation. What was he thinking? And they can't get enough. They aren't bored. They aren't daydreaming. They aren't distracted in some other conversation. They listen. They

learn. They grow. Their hearts burn within them for the Word of God—and the good news of Jesus Christ—crucified and risen. They understand the value of this proclamation. Christ comes to them. And they come into the way of Christ.

They say, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” They even pray those words that make it into our service of Evening Prayer, “Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening, and the day is almost over.” Instead of making a ruin of their faith, Christ brings them back to His path. They return to the Church. They turn around—a key expression of repentance. They go back to Jerusalem to that tiny little community of believers that gathers with the Apostles. And that apostolic witness strengthens their faith even further.

It is interesting. There is one specific moment when they recognize Jesus. They first made it all the way to Emmaus, roughly seven miles away. They invite Jesus to stay, as we have noted. And Jesus joins them for a meal around their own table. And here, Jesus takes over. He takes the bread. He blesses it. He breaks it. He gives it to them. And this is the moment they finally understand.

Back in Luke 22, we have the same kind of language. This is at Passover—just a few days earlier. Luke tells us, “And Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’”

Our eyes might not easily recognize Him. But this is where we know Jesus as well. This is where Jesus pulls us back from making a ruin of our faith. This is where we find spiritual strength and hope. This is where we get on the road to spiritual maturity. This is where we find the true presence of the crucified and risen Christ. The Sacrament is not symbolic.

So, which way is your life going? Which way are you walking? Are you going anywhere? Let’s be on guard against spiritual stagnation—spiritual drift—even spiritual apostasy. Be careful with the habits and routines of your life—self-imposed or imposed by the world. Don’t be slow of heart to believe all that God has revealed in Jesus Christ.

“This is what we have always done,” or “this is what everyone else is doing,” are rarely good reasons to do anything. Evaluate your life and see if you are following Jesus. And then pick up the habits of Christ. Read His Word. Meditate upon what He says. Pray. Believe. Follow.

Because Christ has risen from the dead, Christians are walking in a very specific direction. We follow our Lord. And we come under the spiritual direction of the Church. We go to His Church—because we encounter Him here. And the Scriptures present His life—one that we are to take up.

Christ comes to us still—in the Holy Scriptures—and in the breaking of the bread. We often talk about Word and Sacrament ministry around here. That’s what you want me to be doing. That’s the one thing the Church is doing that no one else does. And that’s where you want to be day by day—week after week. In His Word—and in His Church. This is the foundation we need. This is the way in which Christ keeps us to the end.

I started this sermon with comments about *The Sermon on the Mount*. And let me conclude in the same way. These words will be very familiar to you. This is from the very end of *The Sermon*. It’s the way Jesus concluded His remarks. Remember that He is preaching to His Disciples. So, I guess it is okay for me to conclude in the same way. It’s a little heavy. It is

full of both warning and hope. But Jesus makes clear what I am trying to say. May His Word serve His purposes today. And may they give us pause to think about our own lives.

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+