

04.19 CCV

Luke 24:13–35

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight oh Lord our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Dear Friends,

Two disciples are walking away from Jerusalem. It's the first day of the week the same day, in fact, that some women had come running with an impossible story about an empty tomb and angels speaking of resurrection. But these two aren't running toward anything. They're walking away. Seven miles to a village called Emmaus, and with every step, they're putting distance between themselves and the place where everything fell apart.

Luke tells us they were talking together about all the things that had happened. The Greek word he uses suggests something more than casual conversation, they were wrestling, debating, trying to make sense of the senseless. And then he adds this detail: they were sad. Their faces downcast. These are people in grief. These are people whose hope has died.

We know that posture. We know what it is to walk away from the place of our disappointment. We know the weight of dashed expectations, the heaviness of a story that didn't end the way it was supposed to.

And then a stranger joins them on the road. Jesus himself, Luke tells us, but they were kept from recognizing him. There's mystery here that the text doesn't explain. Whether it was something supernatural in their seeing, or simply that grief has a way of blinding us, or that the risen Christ is somehow different enough that recognition doesn't come automatically, we don't know. What we know is this: Jesus is with them, and they don't know it.

He asks them a question. "What are you discussing as you walk along?"

Now, you have to appreciate what happens next. They stop. They stand still. And Cleopas—one of the two, the only one Luke names, looks at this stranger and essentially says: *Where have you been? Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know what happened this weekend?*

There's almost irritation in it. How could anyone not know? The whole city was buzzing. The trial, the crucifixion, the darkness at noon, the torn curtain, the sealed tomb—and now these strange rumors. Everyone knows. How could you not know?

And Jesus says, simply, "What things?"

This is one of the most remarkable moments in all of Scripture. The risen Lord, who knows all things, who has just conquered death, who holds the universe together by the word of his power, asks a question. He invites them to tell the story. He wants to hear it from them.

What things?

And they pour it out. "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. How our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him."

And then - here it is - the sentence that reveals everything: "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

*We had hoped.*

Past tense. The hope is dead. They'd followed him believing he was the Messiah, the one who would finally set things right, who would restore the kingdom, who would fulfill every promise. And now? Now he's three days in the grave. Now the movement is scattered. Now they're walking home, trying to figure out what to do with the rest of their lives.

*We had hoped.*

This is the prayer of every person who has watched a marriage collapse, who has buried a child, who has lost a job they loved, who has watched a diagnosis unravel every plan. We had hoped. We thought the story was going somewhere. We thought God was doing something. And now? Now we're just walking away.

Jesus responds, and here I want you to pay attention, because what he does next is not what we might expect.

He does not immediately reveal himself. He does not say, "Look, it's me! I'm alive!" He does not short-circuit their grief with a dramatic unveiling.

Instead, he teaches. He opens the Scriptures. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interprets to them the things about himself in all the Scriptures.

He walks them through the whole story. The seed that will crush the serpent's head. The ram caught in the thicket. The Passover lamb. The suffering servant. The one who would be pierced for our transgressions. He shows them that the story they thought had ended in tragedy was actually heading exactly where it was always meant to go.

The cross wasn't the failure of God's plan. It was the fulfillment of it.

"Was it not necessary," Jesus asks, "that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

Necessary. The suffering wasn't a detour. It was the road. The way to glory ran straight through the grave.

Now they're approaching Emmaus, and Jesus acts as though he's going farther. But they urge him, that word in Greek is strong, they practically grab him "Stay with us. It's almost evening. The day is nearly over."

So he stays. He goes in with them. And at the table, this guest becomes the host. He takes bread. He blesses it. He breaks it. He gives it to them.

And their eyes are opened. They recognize him. And immediately he vanishes.

They're left holding broken bread, staring at an empty chair. And what do they say? "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

The fire was already there. The recognition was being kindled all along the journey. But it was in the breaking of the bread that they finally saw.

Here is the shape of how Jesus meets us still.

He comes to us on our roads of disappointment often unrecognized. He walks with us in our confusion. He asks us questions that invite us to pour out what's really happening, even though he already knows.

And then he opens the Scriptures. He shows us that our suffering, our confusion, our unanswered questions exist within a larger story, that bends toward resurrection. He doesn't explain away the pain. He sets it in context. He

shows us that God has always worked through breaking, through loss, through death that gives way to life.

And then he sits at table with us. He takes bread. He breaks it. He gives himself to us.

This is why the church has always gathered around Word and Table. This is what we do every time we come together we hear the Scriptures opened, we receive the bread broken, and in these ordinary means, the risen Christ makes himself known.

The story doesn't end at the table. The moment they recognize Jesus, these two disciples who were walking away from Jerusalem get up immediately, that same hour, Luke says, despite the darkness and they walk back. Seven miles, the other direction. No longer heavy with grief but burning with news.

They find the eleven gathered together, and before they can even get their story out, they hear: "The Lord has risen indeed!"

Resurrection creates community. The risen Christ sends us back to one another. The good news is not meant to be held alone. It propels us toward others, back to the fellowship, back to the body, back to share what we have seen and heard.

So here is the question this text leaves with us: Where are you walking?

Are you on the road to Emmaus? Are you walking away from the place of your disappointment, trying to make sense of a story that didn't end the way you thought it would?

If so, know this: Jesus has a way of joining us on that road. Often unrecognized. Often through the words of Scripture that slowly set our hearts on fire. Often in the breaking of bread, in the ordinary means of grace, in the community of other disappointed people who have somehow learned to hope again.

The disciples thought the story was over. They were wrong.

We had hoped, they said. Past tense. But hope is not past tense. Hope is risen. Hope is walking beside you on the road, even when you don't recognize him.

Stay with us, Lord. The day is almost over. Come in. Break bread with us. Open our eyes.

And then send us running back to tell the others: He is risen indeed.

Amen.