

Their Eyes Were Opened, sermon by Rev. R. Randy Day, April 19, 2026

Scripture Readings: Acts 2: 14a, 36-41 and Luke 24: 13-35

I want to say some things about this famous story that many of us have heard many times. These two disciples are walking to the village of Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, as the scripture says. We've often talked about the road coming up from Jericho, from the east, coming into Jerusalem—so Emmaus was the other way; they think it was over to the northwest. But they were walking back.

And do we know why they were going there? No. Maybe that was their home. It would seem to me like that was their home, because they went in there later and broke bread. I don't think they were just passing through or dropping in.

Let me point out a few things. This is for us, the third Sunday of Easter—how do we know that? It says it on the front of the bulletin. We say, "Well, Easter—oh yes, a couple weeks back, all the celebration, the resurrection, all the joy." Do we still have all the joy? Yes, we do. But the scripture says, "On the evening of the same day." Catch that. This story is not three weeks later. This is Easter evening. Just so we have it clear—I think that's important.

I read a number of commentaries, as I usually do, and I'm leaning on one British chap. I thought it was interesting—he said Luke seems to be saying that Jesus had an agenda. Rising from the dead would have been all that could have been on a list for that day. Might he not take the rest of the day off, read a book or do something like that? British humor—you're going to like it or not like it. But here is Jesus, joining them on the walk and asking them, "What are you talking about? What has happened?"

They were astounded. They stopped. They were crushed. They were disciples, along with the eleven and the women we talk about so often. They had all these hopes. Think about it—three years. For three years you were involved in a movement, a ministry, and you had a lot of hope. Things were going to be different. You listened to him. You watched him heal people. You watched him teach. You were there for the miracles. All of that was encompassed in those three years.

And now suddenly it's over with the crucifixion. You can imagine how their hopes had just been shattered. So they are leaving Jerusalem. They are walking home. They are not in a joyous mood. They are not in an Easter mood. They are sad, because it seems like it's the end of the world for them. All their hopes are dashed.

All of us have had those moments—when we've lost a loved one, and you're very, very down, going through mourning. That's where they are.

So the story of Emmaus, found only in Luke, brings together two of Luke's great themes. One is the shared meal, and the other is the journey. Here Luke brings the two of them together near the end of his gospel.

The shared meal, the time of fellowship, is so important. We look back through those three years—how many times was Jesus involved with people at mealtime? A whole bunch. At weddings—changing water to wine—and he was criticized for eating with the wrong crowd, the wrong people, the wrong side of the tracks. Why was that important? Because that seems to be the center of community.

Many of us understand that. We come from multiple cultures around the world. I've lived in some of these places, traveled in many others. I can't think of a place on earth where fellowship and mealtime is not important. Often it is the central thing that happens. Many of you grew up in rural areas, small towns. After church, you went home, and that was the big meal of the week. People gathered together. No one worked. It was a day of rest, a day of fellowship. In many cultures it is the same—the breaking of the bread. In the Middle East, in some places, when bread is offered, it is kissed first before it is given to a companion. The bread is so central, so sacred. And the whole meal time is a time of a sacred community together.

And the journey—my goodness, the journey is something we all relate to. In American movies, what's the favorite scene? The chase. We love journeys. And tomorrow it's the marathon. That's a journey—a pretty intense one.

So Luke is saying the meals are important, and the journey is important. And here they come together. Jesus was about to walk on, and they said, "No, no, it's late in the day. Stay with us." That's very practical—there were no street lights in ancient Palestine. When it gets dark, it's dark. You don't want to be traveling alone. There could be thieves, animals—you could just trip on a rock. So they invite him in.

They break the bread—and in the breaking of the bread, they recognize him. That moment is so important.

And we as a community continue that. On Palm Sunday, the Mission and Outreach team went to Hyannis and served food to homeless persons. Our sister church in Iowa had a meal after Easter for those who might not have had anywhere to go. The church council is planning Café Church, lobster lunch, all kinds of gatherings. Game day meals—Joyce and Bud Abbott made that possible with help from many of you.

So here's a thought—someone here may want to write a poem. What is your favorite meal? Wouldn't that be something to write about?

My favorite meal is pretty simple: a cup of coffee. Same time of year. The extended family gathers in Orleans, at Nauset Beach. There's a late-night crew and an early-morning crew. I'm in the early group. We get up around five, and my sisters-in-law and I take a cup of coffee down to the beach just in time to see the sun rise over the ocean. That's my favorite meal. It's happened many times, up and down the Atlantic coast.

Sunsets are wonderful—those of you who love the Gulf Coast know that—but there is something about the sunrise. There's something very powerful about it.

Luke's story ends with rejoicing and excitement. Sadness turns to joy. Death turns to resurrection. And broken hearts turn to burning hearts—that's the phrase in the scripture. These early disciples were full of fire and compassion and energy. That's how they spread the faith.

But after the resurrection, there was fear and doubt and confusion. Many did not recognize him. In this story, they recognize him in the breaking of the bread. So the question for us, as disciples in 2026—do we recognize the risen Christ? Something to ponder. Because that risen Christ is certainly reaching out to us.

We saw that image of the earth—blue, beautiful. About two-thirds covered with water, just as our own bodies are. And deep in those oceans are creatures we are only beginning to understand. Take the zebrafish. I have seen hundreds of zebras in Africa, but I knew nothing about a zebrafish until recently. Yale researchers have

discovered remarkable genetic similarities between zebrafish and humans. They are now using them in studies related to autism and other conditions. These tiny fish—who knew?—are helping us understand ourselves.

So we live in extraordinary times. We send people around the moon. We discover new things in the depths of the ocean. We write poems, as last Sunday I invited our members to do.

And the first of those poems that came to us was by Phyllis Sweet:

“Soft air softens winter’s hold
Dunes awake from drifting cold
Sea grass glistens in April light
Gulls return in breezy flight
Tides whisper secrets to the shore
Footprints fade then return once more
On Cape Cod, spring takes its time
A quiet windswept gentle rhyme
The church bell rings, the choir sings
We thank God for the beautiful flowering things.”

“Tides whisper secrets to the shore”—what a line.

Many who wrote hymns were poets. And sometimes we skim right over the words, especially the familiar ones. But listen to the words of the hymn, *The Church’s One Foundation*, by Samuel J. Stone that we are going to sing next:

“Called forth from every nation, yet one o’er all the earth;
Her charter of salvation, one Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy Name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses, with every grace endued.”

And then:

“Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of her war,
We wait the consummation of peace for evermore.”

He wrote that in 1866, just after the Civil War—the bloodiest war on this continent. He knew what he was talking about. “Peace for evermore.” Not a flickering peace, not a temporary peace, but lasting peace—peace with justice. Have we achieved it? No. We have known many wars since then.

And yet we, as the church, still crave what he longed for. So when we sing those words, let us embrace them, as we continue on our Easter journey. We wait the consummation of peace forevermore, not a flickering peace, not a little bit of peace like just kind of like for now and then, but a peace forevermore. Today we call a lasting peace, peace with justice, lasting peace. We use those words in the church all the time,

That same idea was there lasting peace after the Civil War. Did it happen? No, we fought them. We made war against the American Indians. We slaughtered many of them. (Watch “Dances With Wolves” movie again). And

then we had the Spanish American War. I know a lot about that, because I lived in the Philippines a couple years. And then we had World War One, the war to end all wars. Then we had World War Two, and we had the Korean conflict, and we had Vietnam, we had Iraq, we had Afghanistan. Now we have Iran. How many times have had the Middle East maps displayed during worship? So we've had plenty of wars, yet we, as a church, crave what this author, this poet, was craving in 1866 and that is: peace forevermore.

Peace forevermore.

So when we sing it, let's embrace it as we continue on our Easter journey we wait for the consummation of peace forevermore.

Amen.