

Luke 24:13–35; Acts 2:14a, 36–41; Psalm 116:1–4, 12–19; 1 Peter 1:17–23

OPENING ILLUSTRATION

Life often feels like a road walked under partial understanding. We keep moving, but we do not always see clearly. We speak of faith, we remember what we hoped God would do, and sometimes we discover that disappointment has settled over our hearts like fog.

There is a story from the Big Island of Hawai‘i about what locals call the “invisible cows” near the road up Mauna Kea. When the fog is thick and the night is dark, cattle sometimes lie down on the warm asphalt. A driver may be on the right road and still not see what is right in front of them until the last instant. That is why there has been a warning sign: “Beware of Invisible Cows.” The cows are not truly invisible. The problem is not that they are not there. The problem is that fog and darkness can hide what is plainly present.

That is a lot like the road to Emmaus.

The disciples are on the right road, but they cannot yet see what is right in front of them. **Jesus is with them**, but grief has fogged their vision, maybe disappointment has narrowed their understanding. They had hoped... but the cross shattered their expectations. Now, the truth is standing beside them, **and yet** they do not recognize him.

That is where the Emmaus story begins. Two disciples are walking with heavy hearts and broken expectations. They are moving, but they are not seeing. They are talking, but they are not understanding. And then the risen Jesus comes near.

That is still how he meets people.

He comes near to the confused disciples. He does not abandon them in their sorrow, and he does not leave them inside their misreading of God’s work. He opens the Word, makes himself known, gathers a people, and sends them back changed.

So the question this morning is not only whether Jesus is risen, but what happens when the risen Jesus is truly recognized?

Here is the heart of it: the risen Jesus is made known in the opened Word and the shared table, and when he is recognized, he gathers, reforms, and sends a holy people..

And this is the truth beneath it all: when Christ is truly seen, the old life does not stay the same..

INTRODUCTION 1: CONFUSION ON THE ROAD

Start Reading Luke 24:13–24.

The disciples on the Emmaus Road are not hostile to Jesus. They are disappointed with him. That is one of the most striking things in the text. They say, “*But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel*” (Luke 24:21). That sentence is full of pain. They had a script for what the Messiah was supposed to do, and the cross shattered it.

This is where many people live: not open rebellion, but disoriented disappointment, not atheism, but confusion. They know the story of Jesus, but they do not know what to do with suffering, delay, grief, unanswered prayer, or unmet expectation. They had hoped - we had hoped. I thought God would do this. I thought the answer would come by now. I thought the healing would happen. I thought the family would mend. I thought the burden would be lifted.

That is the **first truth** we meet today: confusion is real, but confusion is not the end of the road.

Many times, risen Jesus draws near to people who do not yet recognize him: grace comes before clarity, presence comes before perception. Before they understand him, he is already with them. Before they can name what God is doing, God is already at work among them.

Right now, many of us are walking and talking, but we are not yet seeing.

And that is why the next move in the story matters so much. Jesus does not leave them in their confusion.

MAIN IDEA: THE OPENED WORD

Read Luke 24:25-27.

Luke tells us that beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus “*explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself*” (Luke 24:27). He does not begin by giving them a private spiritual feeling. He teaches them. He interprets Moses and all the Prophets and shows them the things concerning himself. The risen Lord opens the Scriptures, and as he does, their hearts begin to burn within them.

This is where the heart of the gospel really comes alive: understanding Scripture requires the Spirit’s illumination. Scripture must be read by the same Spirit that gave it.

That means the problem is not merely a lack of information. The problem is that without the Spirit, we can hear words and still miss Christ. We can know texts and still misread the gospel. We can be religious and remain spiritually unopened. **We can carry Bibles, sing hymns, attend worship, and still fail to recognize the living Lord...** So, what does it mean for the Spirit to be active?

It means the Spirit is presently opening the Scriptures, revealing Jesus Christ, convicting sin, gathering the church, and empowering obedience. **The Holy Spirit is not a doctrine we merely affirm. The Spirit is the living agent of God’s present work among us, taking the written Word and making it a living address.** The Spirit does not invent a new Christ; he reveals the true Christ. The Spirit does not flatter us in our condition; he exposes what must be confessed and healed.

This is why Emmaus and Pentecost belong together.

TAKEAWAY: ACTS 2

In Acts 2, Peter does publicly what Jesus did privately on the road. He opens the Scriptures, proclaims the crucified and risen Jesus as Lord and Messiah, and the hearers are cut to the heart. Peter says, “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah” (Acts 2:36, NIV). And when the people hear it, they are pierced. They ask, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37, NIV).

That is not mere emotion. That is revelation pressing toward obedience. That is what happens when the Spirit opens the Word and Christ is truly recognized.

And here is the truth we must not miss: where the Spirit opens the Word and Christ is truly recognized, the old life cannot remain untouched.

But Emmaus does not stop at explanation. The opened Word leads to the recognized Christ.

TAKEAWAY: CHRIST PRESENT AT THE SHARED TABLE

Read Luke 24:28–32.

Luke tells us that when Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and began to give it to them, “*their eyes were opened and they recognized him*” (Luke 24:31, NIV). Their hearts had already begun to burn on the road, but now their eyes are opened at the table. Word and shared table belong together. Truth and presence belong together. Christ is not merely explained; he is recognized.

So, Emmaus is not only a lesson in interpretation but also a revelation of presence.

The risen Jesus forms recognition in shared life.

And that matters for the church. Jesus does not save isolated religious consumers. He gathers a people. He is recognized in the life he forms among them. The table becomes more than food; it becomes communion, memory, fellowship, and the sign of a new people under a new Lord.

That is why Psalm 116 fits this day so beautifully. “*What shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people*” (Psalm 116:12-14). The one delivered from death does not remain private. Worship becomes communal thanksgiving. Gratitude becomes public. Salvation becomes lived among the people of God.

That is the church at her best: not a crowd gathered by preference, but a people gathered by the risen Christ; not a loose collection of private spiritualities, but a body formed around the opened Word and shared life in Jesus.

And once Christ is truly recognized, life cannot go on as before.

BRING IT TOGETHER: A HOLY PEOPLE SENT INTO THE WORLD

Quickly read: Acts 2:36–41 and 1 Peter 1:17–23.

This is where 1 Peter speaks with such force. Do you hear the logic? If you have been ransomed by the precious blood of Christ, if you have been born anew through the living and enduring word of God, then your life must become holy. Not performative religion. Not legalistic strain. Not outward polish with inward compromise. Holy obedience flowing from union with the living Christ.

Because our spirituality is shaped by union with the living Christ, sin cannot be excused, sheltered, or negotiated with. What is discovered must be confessed, repented of, and put away.

That is not moralism. That is resurrection realism.

When Jesus is truly recognized, he does not merely comfort us; he reforms us. He does not simply reassure us; he sanctifies us. He not only forgives, but he also gathers a people who begin to live differently.

CONCLUDING

The gospel does not leave us where it found us.

The risen Christ does not enter a life merely to decorate it.

He gathers, reforms, and sends a holy people.

And this is important for us as Friends. Holiness is not a private glow or a vague religious mood. Holiness is the life of Christ taking shape in a people who have been met, taught, gathered, corrected, and sent. Holiness is what happens when the risen Jesus is not merely admired but obeyed. Holiness is what happens when burning hearts become surrendered lives. Holiness is what happens when a meeting is not merely busy but actually gathered under the living Christ.

So here is the movement of the text and the claim of the gospel.

- Some of us begin on the road of confusion.
- Then the Word is opened.
- Then Christ is recognized.
- Then a people is formed.
- Then holy obedience begins.

Emmaus is not just a resurrection memory. It is the pattern of Christian life.

CONCLUSION

And that means this morning is not only about what happened to them. It is about what Christ is doing among us now.

Some among us may be walking in fog this morning. The road feels uncertain. The future feels unclear. Your heart is full of “we had hoped.” Hear the good news: confusion is not the end of the road. The risen Jesus still comes near.

Some among us may know the words of Scripture but have not yet felt the living Christ disclosed through them. Hear the good news: the Spirit still opens the Word.

Some among us may want comfort without change, reassurance without repentance, blessing without obedience. Hear the good news and the hard news: when Christ is truly recognized, the old life cannot remain untouched.

So let us ask for more than comfort, for our open worship this morning:

Let us ask for opened eyes.

Let us ask for more than inspiration.

Let us ask for holy obedience.

Let us ask that the risen Jesus would so open the Word, so make himself known among us, and so reform our life together that this church becomes what he means it to be: a gathered, holy, and sent people, living the gospel of God in the holiness of Christ.

And may it be said of us, not only that our hearts burned, but that our lives were changed.

Amen.