

Sermon for April 26, 2026  
"The Road"

Luke 24:13-35

Picture if you will a dusty road. Along it two men walk, both looking down. They are dressed in the robes of common laborers. Let us listen in on their conversation.

"How did it happen," one says as he shakes his head. The other responds, "I don't know I just don't know." "And what will become of the others," the first asks again. "I guess they will all go home like we are; to Galilee or wherever."

Just then, as if out of nowhere, a stranger walks up to them and joins them. The stranger opens his mouth. "So what are you talking about?"

At that Cleopas stopped dead in his tracks. "Where has this guy been for the last week" he thought to himself. "Or for the last year for that matter?" Cleopas thought back. Back to the time his friends had talked into going out in the field to hear some Rabbi from Galilee. He recalled the grassy hill and the way that this Rabbi seemed to make sense where all the others never really had.

Then there was the miracle. It was late and he had begun to wonder where he would find his dinner when he looked up, and there was the Rabbi holding a piece of bread up to heaven and a basket of fish and four other loaves sat on the ground. Then Jesus broke the bread and blessed the fish and divided it into baskets and his followers started distributing it to the people. There must have been thousands there. Cleopas thought "There won't be any left when the basket gets to me." To his amazement the basket was full and everyone was reaching in and grabbing bread and fish and eating to their hearts' content. They had not seen or heard of anything like this since the days of Elijah or even Moses.

Cleopas recalled how from that moment he hung on every word Jesus spoke. He left his family and joined the group of disciples that followed Jesus around. He had even been anointed by Jesus and sent out with 69 others to spread the Good News, and he remembered how people heard the Good News and responded and how they celebrated when they returned to tell Jesus all that had happened.

He recalled the end of the journey to Jerusalem. How the crowds of people praised Jesus and sang, "Hosanna, save us!" while waving palm branches, and how Jesus had gone to the temple and drove out those evil money changers and chastised the scribes and priests. He remembered that night when Jesus was arrested and the way they treated him like a crook and crucified him.

Only a second had passed but it seemed longer. Cleopas looked up and said, "What distant land have you been visiting this past week? Haven't you heard any of the news or what has been happening in Jerusalem?" "What news?" the stranger asked. "The news about Jesus of Nazareth who was a mighty prophet, who performed wonders for all to behold." Cleopas had wanted to add "who was the anointed one" but after what had happened to Jesus, he thought better of it.

"The Chief priests had handed him over as a common criminal to be crucified. We and many others had hoped he would be the Savior of Israel. It was three days ago that they crucified him. Just this morning some of the women who followed him shocked us all. They claimed to have seen him alive. They had gone to the tomb and found it empty. When they came back, they were babbling on about visions of angels and whatnot."

The stranger replied, "But isn't that what the prophets said would happen?" Doesn't it say in Isaiah that the servant of the Lord would suffer? Don't the Psalms describe the Lord's anointed being put to death as in a crucifixion? Isn't it clear that the Messiah should suffer to enter into glory?" Cleopas and his friend listened in amazement as this stranger quoted scripture after scripture that made them see that Jesus was the Messiah and that all that had happened was fulfillment of prophecy.

In no time they reached the little town of Emmaus. They found an Inn and asked the stranger to join them. When they sat down to dinner the stranger took it upon himself to give thanks. He took the bread, blessed it and broke it. At that moment they recognized him. It was Jesus! There! Alive! And as soon as they recognized him, he vanished from their sight.

The two formerly dejected friends were suddenly ecstatic. Why had they not seen him before? As they thought back at the things, he had said they wondered "Why had we not recognized his voice." A year they had seen him and listened to him and yet at that moment when he broke the bread, they finally realized it had been him walking with them that whole day.

Cleopas realized they could not keep this to themselves. So before they lost their nerve, they both ran all the way back to Jerusalem. They found the other disciples and before they could say a word, they were told that Jesus had indeed risen and appeared to Peter. Then they shared their news of how Jesus had appeared to them on the road.

The thing that strikes me about this story is the fact that Jesus was with these disciples and they didn't see him. Luke says that "Their eyes were kept from recognizing him." It was as if Jesus were waiting for the right time for them to see that he was there. The disciples were despondent. Their disappointment can be seen in the words of Cleopas: "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."

Yet in the midst of their despair Jesus was with them, but they couldn't see it. It was not until a moment of revelation that Jesus' presence was revealed.

And at that moment their despair was transformed into Joy. They only recognized him for a moment and then he vanished, but they realized that he had been there all along comforting them on the road.

That is like our lives. We who believe in Jesus often walk down the road of life not realizing that the risen Jesus is our companion on the journey. We often despair and think that all our hopes have been killed. Then someone or something comes to us and we bear our souls just as Cleopas did, and surprisingly that stranger gives us comfort.

Then in some brief moment of revelation we realize that Jesus is with us. In the words of a friend or a simple action. We see the risen Christ, and in simple things like bread and wine and conversation we realize the Joy of God in the midst of our despair.

I don't know where you are on your journey to Emmaus. You may be in the midst of despair. You may be finding comfort in the words of a friend. Or you may have seen the presence of God in the journey behind. Wherever you are let me tell you that Jesus is alive, and he is with us, walking with us as a companion in our lives. Open your eyes and see the risen Christ in our midst!