

## THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

*"I shall be telling this with a sigh,  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood and I—  
I took the one less traveled by  
And that has made all the difference" (Robert Frost)*

Scripture (to follow along with the message):

### **Luke 24:13-35 On the Road to Emmaus**

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him.

<sup>17</sup> He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast.

<sup>18</sup> One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

<sup>19</sup> "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

<sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

<sup>25</sup> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

<sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

<sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

<sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has

appeared to Simon.”<sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

### **MESSAGE:**

The road we choose to take determines where we will end up. Of course we take lots of different roads in the course of our lives. Major highways—like the Interstates—determine the overall direction our lives: decisions about who we marry and what kind of career we pursue. Others are more like tributaries, deriving their character and direction from the major choices—things like who we work for, where we settle down and how many children we bring into the world. Then there are the daily mini-choices: Shall we go out for dinner? Shall we watch TV or read? We’re all familiar with these choices. But there’s one choice of roads which is far more important than all the other choices we make: Shall we walk in the way of Christ—or some other way? That choice makes all the difference.

Our Gospel lesson for today tells about two men who were walking down a road to cynicism and despair. Their journey is one many people take—people who base all their hopes for happiness on what the world has to offer and end up disappointed and bitter. But these two men are joined by a third man who shows them a different road—one that leads to peace and joy. A road that makes all the difference. As we hear their story, why don’t you follow along in your bulletins and see if you recognize yourself in it.

### **VSS. 13-16.**

On the day Jesus rose from the dead, two men start out on a journey, taking the road from Jerusalem toward a small village by the name of Emmaus. Christ is not with them; you might say they are alone with each other. Their conversation is filled with the daily news—which, as far as they are concerned is bad news. Jesus joins their company and begins to walk along with them, but they don’t recognize him.

Doesn’t this sound a lot like us? Every morning we set out on our daily walk through this world, conversing with other people about the news of the day—which is normally bad news. More turbulence in Washington, more violence in the Mideast, earthquakes in Japan, protests around the country. Jesus tries to join us—to find a place in our thoughts but we’re focused on the news and there’s no place for Jesus. He’s always seeking us out, walking along with us, but we’re too busy with each other to notice him.

### **VS. 17.**

So Jesus asks to join their conversation. *“Let me be part of what you’re talking about.”* Our Savior doesn’t always wait to be invited into our daily lives—sometimes he opens the door before we knock. His entrance into these two men’s thoughts stops them in their tracks. We’re sad, they indicate. Things have not gone well for us.

### **VS. 18**

A fair and honest question. Who is this who doesn’t know what has just happened in Jerusalem! Must be a stranger. If they only knew!

### **VSS. 19-21.**

And now the reason for their sadness comes out: *“The One we called our Lord has failed us. We had hopes—oh we had high hopes—that he would save us and all Israel. He*

*seemed so powerful. But we were wrong. The religious and secular rulers were more powerful than he was. They prevailed and now he's dead—dead for three days in fact. He can't help us. So we're off to somewhere else where we can make a fresh start.* How many times in our lives have we concluded that the Lord either can't or won't help us and that we're on our own? How many times have we asked *"What kind of God would allow that to happen?"* How many times have we said: *"God, where ARE you?"*

#### **VSS. 22-24.**

Oh yes—some women (and you know how trustworthy their tales are!)—some women claim that his body wasn't where it should have been. They even claimed that some angels told them that he was still alive. Uh huh. Then some of our friends when to the tomb and saw that it was empty but they couldn't find him anywhere. The women were dreaming—it's all a fairytale. The simple fact is that he claimed to be Lord but he wasn't or he would be alive and sitting on a throne in Jerusalem right now.

#### **VSS. 25-27.**

Jesus cuts through their ignorance, their self-pity and their despair with the sharp sword of four words: *"How foolish you are!"* Then he tells them exactly what their problem is—and it's yours and mine too, my friends. They were ignorant and foolish because they chose to believe what the world told them rather than what God had promised. He says, *"How slow of heart you are to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"* The Word of promise had always been there for them to see and hear, but they didn't trust it any more than you and I trust it when it doesn't square with what the world is telling us. And we especially don't trust it when it tells us what we don't want to hear: *that there is no detour around the cross. "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"* We want a King of glory who invites us to share his glory, not a suffering servant who invites us to share his suffering. But if Christ is to be our leader, if we are to follow in his footsteps, that is exactly what he asks us to do. *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me....And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."*

And so Jesus—the Word of God—did what he always does: he pointed them to the Scriptures and, through the Scriptures, to the cross. What a Bible lesson that must have been! Jesus explaining the Old Testament to a class of two! Jesus uses the Scriptures to explain that if we really want to follow him, we have to travel down the road he has laid out—the road that leads to the cross. Death must always come before resurrection! But our cross is so much easier than his! Our cross is not to die in agony, but to live lives of Christian love. We weren't saved from our sins so that we could spend our lives at Cedar Point; we were saved so that we could love others as Jesus loved us. That's why the cross Jesus wants us to take up is easy and its burden is light.

#### **VSS. 28-29.**

Maybe they got the point. Maybe we do. The end of their journey was near, night was falling. Their hearts have been turned toward him and they beg him to stay with them. And of course he agrees to remain with them because when one of his wandering sheep asks the Good Shepherd to stay, he always stays. Then, later that evening, when they were eating dinner together, he gave them the greatest gift of all.

### **VSS. 30-32**

Consider what is taking place in these verses. The Lord takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it and gives it to his disciples. They may not have even known that they were his disciples yet. All they knew was that they wanted Jesus to remain with them. But as soon as he serves them at table by speaking the same Eucharistic words he used at his last supper with his disciples three nights before—their eyes are opened and they recognize their Lord and Savior. Then he disappears and at that same exact moment, his words come alive in their hearts! The Scriptures are opened up to them—they recall how His words made their hearts burn within them. Word and Sacrament have come together to open their eyes and change their hearts.

How much plainer can it be? We want—oh how we want—Jesus to abide with us, *and he does!* But he does it in His way—not our way. It's as if he were saying, *"From now on, this is where you can find me! This is my body, the body of Christ, coming to you every time you come to my table. And if you sup with me, I will sup with you and make my words burn in your hearts. You are walking down a different road now. You are walking in my way—not the way of the world."*

So what do they do?

### **VSS. 33-35.**

They immediately get up and return to Jerusalem! There they find their brothers and sisters in Christ and tell them the Good News! *"It's true! He's alive!* Contrast their reaction with Peter's visit to the empty tomb: *"Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened."* Two nobodies—Cleopas and someone whose name is not even written down—see what Peter fails to see! He's alive! We have seen him! And he has shown us where we can always find Him: he will come to us and abide with us in the breaking of the bread!

What a wonderful meal they miss who fail to discern the body of the Lord in the Lord's supper! Why do they doubt? Does God, who came to us in the physical body of Jesus Christ—the Word made flesh, who died a physical death on a wooden cross and whose human body rose from a stone tomb with wounds still visible in his physical flesh, who sat and ate fish with his disciples by a campfire after he had arisen from the dead—does such a God disdain to come to us physically through physical elements like bread and wine and water?

Our God continues to abide with us here. In Word and Sacrament he is always near us—in our ear, in our mouth, in our heart, in our bodies, in our minds and in our souls.

Amen.