

[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 3

April 19, 2026

Didn't Our Hearts Burn!

Luke 24:13–35

¹³ Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ¹⁵ So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

¹⁷ And He said to them, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?”

¹⁸ Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ And He said to them, “What things?”

So they said to Him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. ²² Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. ²³ When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. ²⁴ And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see.”

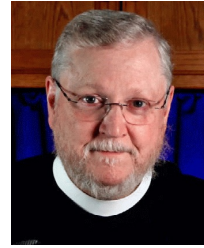
²⁵ Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

²⁸ Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. ²⁹ But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.

³⁰ Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

³² And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”

³³ So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 3

April 19, 2026

those who were with them gathered together,³⁴ saying, “The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”³⁵ And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

Here we have two of Christ's disciples walking together on the road to Emmaus. We know very little about them; we only know one of their names – Cleopas – and he's mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. Who they are, however, isn't important. What happened to them and how they reacted to it is what interests us today.

For context, we note that the events in today's Gospel occurred the same day that Jesus rose from the dead. So why would these disciples be so downcast? They'd heard the report of the women who'd seen the angels and learned that Jesus had risen, so why were they still unhappy?

Jesus knew the answer to that question, which is why He approached them on the road and began a conversation with them.

Cleopas was surprised by Jesus' apparent lack of knowledge concerning His own suffering and death; he thought everyone knew about the events they were discussing. Was Jesus merely a visitor to Jerusalem, and that was why He was unaware of what had happened?

And when Jesus asked him to explain, Cleopas detailed how a great prophet had been put to death, one they had hoped would rescue Israel from the hand of their oppressors. He even mentioned how the women had gone to the tomb early that morning and found it empty, and how the others went to the tomb, but didn't see Him. He observed that this was the third day, but there hadn't yet been any sign of the risen Jesus.

Can you see the cause of their depression? Their faith was misplaced. Cleopas didn't refer to Jesus as the Son of God – God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God – but as a “great prophet.” Jesus *was* a prophet – but much more than that! Human prophets received their word from God, but Jesus *is* God; His Word originates from Himself. Other prophets needed God's Word revealed to them, but Jesus is the Author of the book; He needs no revelation. These disciples didn't yet understand that. And so they were sorrowful.

Besides, they still thought of Him as a political Messiah, one who would free them from Roman oppression. After all they'd seen and heard, after all the events of His suffering and death, they still didn't understand that His kingdom was not of this world.

Because they misunderstood who Jesus is, they didn't believe the things He said. Yes, they heard Him say He would suffer and die, but they didn't really think it would happen. And when it did, they were utterly crushed. And, yes, they heard Him say He would rise again, but, since they didn't believe He would die, why should they be concerned about His resurrection? And, besides all that, here it was, the third day, and had anybody seen Him? Not as far as they knew. And now, late in the afternoon as it was,



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 3

April 19, 2026

they were really beginning to lose hope. Which is precisely why Jesus was now walking with them, though He hadn't yet revealed who He was.

So, how did Jesus handle this? His first response was to rebuke them for their foolishness. Then, He directed them to God's Word, drawing their attention to all the prophecies and how they fit together – all pointing straight to Jesus as the Messiah who would bring in a spiritual kingdom that would last forever, and how He would win forgiveness and everlasting life for all mankind. He opened their minds to all those passages that explain how the Messiah must suffer and die to pay for the sins of the world, and how He would rise again on the third day.

As He did so, surely they began to remember all the times they'd heard these things before, when they had sat quietly, listening to the Master tell of what He must do. Perhaps they felt relieved, understanding it all better than before.

When they arrived at the place to which they were going, it was almost evening, so they invited Jesus to come and have supper with them. As He broke the bread and blessed it, suddenly their eyes were opened; they realized this was Jesus. No sooner had He revealed Himself, He disappeared from their sight.

What do they say, now that He's vanished? "Didn't our hearts burn within us as He talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?" What was it that renewed their strength? It was the Word of God! The Word Himself had walked with them and talked with them, encouraging and strengthening them by reminding them of all the things He'd told them before.

Here we find the reason for His disguise. He wanted to point them to His *Word*. He would soon be leaving them, and they would no longer have Him to tell them about Himself, but the Word they would have always, and they could go to that Word again and again for strength and encouragement. So, He let the Word do the talking. The Word is the thing they commented on the most, not the fact that Jesus was the One who explained it to them.

The parallel to ourselves is easy to see. We often get discouraged and depressed. Sometimes we put our trust in things that are unreliable. Sometimes we misunderstand God's Word, thinking He's promised us things He hasn't. Other times, we simply don't believe what He tells us. We don't believe He's in control, that He uses the things that happen to us for His glory and our great benefit, or that all of His promises are for us personally.

You and I don't have Jesus in the flesh to explain these things to us. But, we do have the thing He directed His own disciples to – we have His Word. It strengthens us. It encourages us. It feeds us. It's through His Word that He reminds us of all His promises,



[Rev. Steven S. Billings](#)

Sermon for Easter 3

April 19, 2026

how much He loves us, and that He suffered, died, and rose again for us.

Beloved, I thank God that you're here today being reminded of these things, and I pray that you'll come every week to be fed here through this Word, that you'll receive it regularly in its visible form in the Holy Supper, and that you'll take up His Word each day this week, giving Him an opportunity to remind you again of His love for you, His never-ending love for you. If you do this, if you give Him the chance to pour out His love for you, you'll be able to say with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, "Didn't our hearts burn within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen