



[Pastor Steven Billings](#)

Sermon for the Third Sunday of Easter
April 23, 2023

The Breaking of Bread

Luke 24:13–35

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹ And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some 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 And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The early morning events are now over. Most of Jesus’ disciples are back in Jerusalem behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. The afternoon sun is approaching the horizon as two disciples are walking out of Jerusalem. As they leave the city that kills the



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prophets and stones those sent by the Lord, they speak to one another about the latest Victim.

Cleopas and the other disciple talk about all that has happened, both the historical facts about the betrayal, trials, condemnation, crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus, and the word of mouth reports concerning angels and the empty tomb. Their hopes for the redemption they sought had centered in this Jesus, a prophet of Nazareth who was mighty in deed and word before both God and man.

Somewhere along the way, a stranger comes to them and joins them in their journey. He asks them what they're talking about and the two disciples answer by stopping their walk, expressions of sadness on their faces. Cleopas asks the stranger: "Are you the only one who doesn't know the things that have happened over the weekend?"

The Stranger is the only one who *does* know what's going on but responds: "What things?" The disciples relay their hopes and fears – hopes that have been dashed by the humiliation of Jesus – fears that have risen in their hearts and minds. Then it was that the Lord spoke to them and led them to what we may call "The Divine Service at Emmaus."

He said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So He went in to stay with them. When He was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished out of their sight.

Listen to Jesus, beloved: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" These men have been through a trauma which drained their hope and made them doubt God's power. Jesus tells them that they are foolish and slow to learn. In truth, they were listening to the wrong voices. They were seeing things through the eyes of their flesh and not through the eyes of faith.

Has a sudden downturn or trauma in your life ever caused you to despair of God's love and to doubt His ability to help you? If so, you were listening to the wrong voices. False teachers will tell you that things should always go well for those who have enough faith. Health, wealth, and prosperity, they say, is the way of God's people. Such hopes should be dashed because they're false.

The Emmaus disciples had such false hopes about Jesus and Jesus had to say to them: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" This may sound a bit dismissive, as though He were about to send them away, which is really what they deserved. And it's what we deserve when we doubt God, isn't it. Everlasting condemnation is what is due those who disbelieve. But instead of condemning them,



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Jesus showed them mercy. Great mercy! He asked them a leading question: “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?”

It’s a rhetorical question, really, which can only have one answer: Yes! But such questions aren’t simply answered off the tops of our heads; we give proof from Scripture. Do we not? “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” This is nothing other than what we call the Service of the Word. It’s that part of the Divine Service where the Word is read and explained.

And notice *how* the Word is to be explained. It’s explained in a “Christ” way. Scripture is, after all, a “Christ” book; it’s a book about Jesus. So Jesus took the Emmaus disciples on a tour of the Old Testament, and everywhere they went in those sacred scriptures, the Lamb was surely shown.

In Genesis He must have shown them that He is the promised Seed of the Woman and the Ark of Salvation.

In Exodus He would have demonstrated that He is the Fulfillment of the Sacrificial System, the Priesthood, and the Tabernacle worship, for He *is* the Tabernacle, the High Priest, and the Perfect Spotless Lamb.

“Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” This is what happens in the Divine Service, especially in that part called the Service of the Word. It’s the pastor’s task in this part of the service to answer your dashed hopes and despair by pointing you to the necessity of Jesus suffering for your sins. He’s not a “human potential guru” come to fulfill all your desires and enable you live up to your expectations. He’s the suffering, resurrected Savior who fulfills the Law of God for you, takes away your sins, and leads you to resurrection. The hopes and dreams you have for yourself in this life may or may not pan out, but heaven is a certainty to all who believe the Scriptures which tell of Jesus.

But back to our story. The shadows of the day lengthened as the trio approached Emmaus. As they drew near to the village to which they were going, He appeared to be going further, but they constrained Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.”

Their guest agrees but then comes a surprise. The guest becomes the host. He takes the bread, blesses it, and distributes it. The *guest* becomes the *host!* This, now, is that part of the Divine Service we call the Service of the Sacrament. Jesus is at the head of the table as host and is serving up His body and blood to those who are instructed in the Word.

Emmaus is a foreshadowing of the Divine Service. The Holy God in the person of Jesus serves you. He serves you by opening your foolish, slow hearts to the truth of His suffering, death, and resurrection. He serves you by giving you the meal of immortality.



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Order is important. The teaching of the Word comes first. After that, the sharing of the Meal. The order is Word and Sacrament, Scripture and Supper, Catechesis, then Communion. This is why we require all children to be instructed before receiving Holy Communion. It's why we require all adults to be instructed before receiving Holy Communion. Those who have not been catechized should not be receiving Holy Communion. It's a Meal to be taken only after careful preparation in the Word. But, after such instruction, oh, what a difference! Look what happened in the Divine Service at Emmaus: "Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him."

You see, it all comes together in Holy Communion. The teaching of Scripture makes sense in the Breaking of Bread. The Breaking of Bread! Remember that phrase. In the Book of Acts, written by the same St. Luke, we read that the first disciples devoted themselves to the "Apostles' doctrine and to the breaking of bread."

This devotion continues today and in every Divine Service here at Trinity and in every church that remains faithful to the Word of God. You, dear brothers and sisters, are like the disciples on the Emmaus road. During the week you go through many experiences, some very troubling. You suffer times of doubt and despair. You hear false teachings – in the media or from your own family and friends. These false teachings trouble your faith and disturb your hope. But on the first day of the Week, the day of resurrection, you come to the Divine Service. Jesus comes, too. He listens to your heart, and gives you what you need. He gives you Himself in Scripture and in Supper. Thanks be to God He does! For in this we recognize Him and our hearts are set ablaze with faith and trust. In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen