



## Third Sunday of Easter, Year A

*Pastor Jen Kiefer, Southeast Michigan Synod*

*Assistant to the Bishop for Congregational & Synod Life, Candidacy*

Gospel Text - Luke 24:13-35

### **Luke 24:13-35**

<sup>13</sup> Now on that same day two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup> but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" <sup>19</sup> He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> 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 took place. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup> and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him." <sup>25</sup> Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these

things and then enter into his glory?"<sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup> As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.<sup>29</sup> But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.<sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.<sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.<sup>32</sup> They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"<sup>33</sup> That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.<sup>34</sup> They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"<sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

## **SERMON TEXT:**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our parent, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

In 2019, I had the opportunity to take a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was a trip that brought the scripture to life in ways that I didn't even imagine possible, walking on steps that Jesus walked on, seeing the place where tradition states that Jesus was born, touching the stone of Golgotha, stepping into the waters of the River Jordan and the Sea of Galilee, it was a trip that I will never forget and one I hope to have the opportunity to take again. One of the things that struck me during this trip, was the lavish hospitality that we were met with. Shop keepers who fed us baklava, strangers on the street pointing us in the direction of the best shawarma I have ever eaten in my life. And after every place we went, Tony, the owner of the travel company asked us "did they treat you well?" and our answer was always yes.

When I asked Tony why he kept inquiring about the hospitality we received, he shared with me that for Palestinians, both ancient

and modern, hospitality is highly valued. If a member of a community failed to show hospitality to a neighbor or a stranger, it could become a great source of shame - not just for the individual and their family, but for the entire town. In the ancient world, however, the extension of hospitality was not just about honor and shame, not just about following the laws of the book of Leviticus that command strangers and foreigners to be treated as members of the community (Lev 19:33-34), it was also about survival. People took care of each other, communities were centers of care because they realized that they needed each other in order to continue to thrive.

It is in this time, place, and culture, that two people were traveling down the road one when they were joined by a stranger. It was a 7 mile walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus, one Cleopas and his traveling companion - possibly Mrs. Cleopas - had taken any number of times and one they would have known well. This time, though, the journey was different. Their footsteps were not light with the promise of getting to sleep in their own beds, bread dough that had been rising all day ready to be baked for dinner. They were tired and confused and filled with grief. All they could

think about was the events of the weekend. Jesus' arrest and trial, the way the Romans had treated him with such violence before they crucified him. He was the one in whom they had placed their hopes for the redemption of their people, but those hopes had been dashed when he breathed his last, his lifeless body placed in a tomb. What's more, his body was now missing and while the women said that they had seen an angel who told them Jesus was alive, the others did not believe them. What were they going to do now?

As they pondered and discussed all of this, a stranger comes alongside them and joins the conversation. After Cleopas and his companion get the stranger up to speed on the events of the past few days, the stranger begins to discuss the scriptures with them, portions of scripture about the messiah - from Moses and the prophets. And they continued in this conversation until they reached Emmaus and the home of Cleopas and his companion. Even after everything they had been through, the grief that weighed on them, their exhaustion, and - on top of that - what must have been a significant amount of bible study, (after all it takes an average of 2 to 2.5 hours for an able bodied person to

walk 7 miles), none of that got in the way of their instinct to invite the stranger in. "Stay with us, it is evening," they invite him as he appears to continue walking.

Despite everything else, the instinct to provide hospitality was front and center in their minds. And it is because of that, because of their willingness to invite in the stranger for the night, that they got a glimpse of the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread.

In these past months, we have seen an alarming number of examples of how fear can get into the way of our ability to provide hospitality, especially to the stranger. Dehumanizing language used by folks in power has had a devastating affect on how we see one another. For when we dehumanize and other our neighbors and the strangers, room is made to sow fear of those who are different from us. Fear has the great capacity to get in the way of hospitality. For hospitality is, ultimately an act of love, and the opposite of love is fear. And as the wise Yoda once said "fear leads to anger, anger leads to hatred, and hatred leads to the dark side."

And yet, in the midst of the fear mongering and violence, we have also seen love shining through in the ways that neighbors have been showing up for each other. Delivering groceries and meals to those who are afraid to leave their homes, showing up in peaceful protest, letting love lead the way through song and prayer and action that shines light in the midst of the shadows.

Beloved, as a nation, we find ourselves in a moment where what we desperately need is more hospitality. More love. More community building. Not just for the neighbor, not just for the people who look and think like we do, but especially for the stranger. Throughout the scripture, the repeated theme that runs through is hospitality. Abraham and Sarah entertained angels unawares. A widow fed Elijah with what she thought was the last of her oil and grain (spoiler alert, God made sure it wasn't). And two disciples who had had one of the worst weekends of their lives welcomed the Risen Christ into their home, and they had no idea it was him. And after getting a glimpse of him, their hearts were so on fire that they had to run the 7 miles back to Jerusalem to tell everyone they had seen the Risen Lord.

When we welcome folks in – to our church, to our homes, to our community, we are inviting Christ in. We are making room for Christ to be made known to us in the breaking of the bread, for his love to flow out of our hearts – that our neighbors and the stranger may know Christ’s love through us – and for the barriers that may exist between us to be broken down so that greater love may be known. It is our chance to reclaim the notion that our communities are stronger when they are places of care and concern – where everyone has a place at the table, where they are safe, loved, and valued. For it is then that we can continue to not just survive, but – more importantly – thrive. Together. Amen

---

Copyright © 2026 *The Sermon Supply*

This work is the intellectual property of clergy from the synods of Region 6 of the ELCA. It is provided for use by congregations within these synods for worship, study, and other ministry purposes.

This project is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)**.

This means:

- Congregations may use and share this material for **non-commercial purposes**, provided proper attribution is given to the *The Sermon Supply* and its contributors.
- The material **may not be modified or adapted** without explicit permission.
- Use beyond congregational purposes requires permission from the contributors.

For permissions beyond this license, please contact [rwissler@neos-elca.org](mailto:rwissler@neos-elca.org)

License Details: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

**New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition.** Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.