



1616 W. Mequon Road, Mequon WI 53092
(262)241-3121 www.stjohnsmequon.org
Email: office@stjohnsmequon.org
Pastor James Tiefel
(262) 853-9723 (cell#)
Email: pastortiefel@gmail.com

The Second Sunday of Easter

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The Risen Christ Restores Our Hope

So often the challenges and tragedies of life compromise happy and hopeful living. The media screams bad news and along with our own disappointments and fears, we're left emotionally and spiritually exhausted. This is how two followers of Jesus felt as they walked from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus on Easter Sunday afternoon. Despite the rumors about a resurrection, they were puzzled, sad, and disillusioned. Then Jesus appeared. He explained God's promises to them and joined them in an evening meal. Jesus may not join us for supper, but he opens the Bible to us and shares with us the truth about life and hope.

Sermon

Luke 24:13-35

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

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ 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?"

¹⁹ "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. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ 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. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ 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.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² 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?"

³³They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Introduction: There are some things that happen in our lives that are inconvenient: our phone goes dead or the ham gets overcooked on Easter. Well, it's not the end of the world and we forget about it. There are some things that happen in our lives that are more than inconvenient; they're serious and maybe even scary. The car breaks down on vacation or your blood pressure keeps rising. You don't forget about it at the end of the day or even at the end of the week, but at least you know how to fix it: Triple A or a few extra pills. But there are some things that happen in our lives or at least in the lives of some people that are more than inconvenient and more than serious and scary. There are some things that happen in people's lives that are absolute gut busters; I mean, they just take your breath away. You own a home in Mississippi and a tornado rips it apart and levels it. It's like a kick in the gut. Your family owns a farm in Texas and a fire destroys 18,000 head of cattle. You feel like fainting. A police officer knocks on your door and tells an out-of-control driver has t-boned your husband's car and killed him. You can't breathe. You can't think. It's like somebody kicked you in the gut. I've never experienced anything like that. Maybe you have or maybe you haven't but even if we haven't, we can probably understand what it must be like.

So maybe we can understand at least a little what it was like for two of Jesus's disciples on Easter Sunday afternoon. For them—and really for all of Jesus' followers—the death of Jesus was an absolute kick in the gut. We don't know how the others spent the early hours of Easter. We know most were hiding because they were scared. Thomas, the cynic, was off some place. But Luke tells us more about these two. Were they bitter? Disillusioned? Of course. Three years of listening and learning and walking and watching—now nothing but a colossal waste of time. Were they broken? Did they feel deserted? I'm sure. Their plans had changed, their hopes were ruined, and their dreams were shattered. They knew inconvenience; they knew serious and scary. But they had not known gut busters. They did now.

Luke tells us their story this morning not because he wants to prepare us for gut busters. We hope none of us ever experiences leveled homes or tragic car accidents. What Luke wants to show us is how Jesus dealt with these two disciples on the way to Emmaus because how he dealt with them is how he deals with us. And so Luke wants to lead us to the same request these two disciples made of Jesus as Easter evening approached so long ago: **Abide with us, for it almost evening and the day is far spent.** And so today we pray.

Abide with Us, Lord Jesus

1. We don't know who these two followers were. Luke identifies one of them was Cleopas, but he never appears again. They seem to have been with the apostles and other followers earlier in the day and now they were heading for home in Emmaus. The last three days were all they could think about, all they could talk about. It was all just a gut buster.

Well, Jesus always could go where wanted to go and be who he wanted to be, so he joined them but didn't show them who he was. Jesus wanted them to talk, to open up. **What are you discussing together as you walk along?** They looked at Jesus like he was a zombie and they were downright rude. **Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?** Jesus led them on: **What things?** And then it all came pouring out. They were talking about **Jesus of Nazareth.** First, what they believed about him: **He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.** Then the horrendous event: **The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.** Then their shattered dreams: **We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.** Then the

ultimate confusion: The women and some of their companions found the tomb empty. The women said an angel told them Jesus had risen and then the women said they saw Jesus with their own eyes. But they were women; this was nonsense, silly talk. Peter and John saw the empty tomb, but they hadn't a body; none of the men had seen Jesus.

Jesus wasn't quite ready to be Jesus, but he was ready to be the teacher. He kind of put it to them man to man: **How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"** They knew all the passages; they had memorized them as children at their mother's knee, around their fathers' table, and in synagogue school. But Jesus repeated what they knew and he let the power of the Word do its work. **And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.** It would be great if we knew which passages Jesus reviewed. There was plenty of time; it took at least two hours to travel the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Maybe the promise from Genesis 3 about **crushing the serpent's head**. Maybe the suffering servant from Isaiah 53: **The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all**. Maybe the ultimate victory in Psalm 118: **The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone**. Of course, Jesus knew the whole Old Testament and whatever he said was incredible. Later they said: **Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?** All this was enough to lead them to say at the end of the day: **Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.**

There's an old revival hymn that goes like this: "I come to the garden alone while the dew is still on the roses and the voice I hear fall on my ear the Son of God discloses. And he walks with me and he talks with me and he tells me I am his own and the joy we share as we tarry there none other has ever known." The truth is that Jesus doesn't communicate in gardens as he walks with us and he talks with us. Even on that road to Emmaus Jesus walked and talked with the Word of God. Everything going good in life? Jesus guides us with his Word. Inconveniences sometimes? Jesus calms us with his Word. Is life serious and scary? Jesus comforts us with his Word? Events that take your breath away? Gut busters? Jesus conquers them with his Word. We have to get over any idea we might have that the Bible isn't much more than an old book with some good stuff in it. Or that we come to church primarily to be loyal Lutherans and reserve a place in the cemetery. There is a power in God's Word, even in words we've heard before and words we know by heart, power that leads our hearts to burn within us, power that gets rid of guilt, power that compels love, power that guarantees our future. Do you think the Emmaus disciples wanted Jesus to stay for supper just because they wanted to be nice to him? No, they wanted him to be nice to them, to provide more of what he provided on the road to Emmaus. And so do we and so we say **Abide with us Lord Jesus with the power of your Word.**

2. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. Well, there was the body that was missing! There was the solution to the confusion. There was the hope that seemed gone. And there was the proof that all the words of God Jesus spoke to them were accurate and reliable. With his resurrection Jesus guaranteed what he had told them in his Word.

But all at once Jesus was gone. The pieces of bread lay on the table; the chair was empty. Did the gloom come back? Did the disappointment return? Were they back at confusion? **They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem.** I doubt they walked; I'm sure they ran. They went straight to the apostles. **They told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.** Jesus was alive and they had to share it.

The risen Jesus doesn't sit at our tables or eat our hot dishes. But in a very real way, Christ is the unseen guest at every meal. He is alive and provides his power every day: power to believe, power to hope, power to love,

power to share. Two Emmaus disciples raced to share the good news. May Jesus give us some of their energy and some of their joy! And so we pray, **Abide with us Lord Jesus with the power of your presence.** Amen.

I'm all in favor of the new translations of the Bible, but there are some words and phrases I can't get out of my head. Swaddling clothes from Luke 2; mansions from John 14. And now Abide with us from the story of the Emmaus disciples. But however you say, say it again and again: Stay with us...Tarry with us...Abide with us, Lord Jesus, with the power of your Word and the power of your presence. Amen.