

April 23, 2023
Third Sunday of Easter
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 24:13–35 (1 Peter 1:17–25)

EVERY DAY IS EASTER.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

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

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 24th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

For us Christians every day is Easter. Every day the tomb is still empty. Every day the One who was delivered up for your trespasses and raised for your justification, lives and reigns to all eternity at the right hand of the Father. For the sake of Jesus, every day you have forgiveness of sins, life, and eternal salvation.

Unfortunately though, not every day feels like Easter. There are times when your whole world is upended, and you are emotionally adrift in the open sea. There are days when your road is dark and lonely as you deal with broken relationships, sickness and disease, and even the prospect of death. While the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh tempt you to seek out human wisdom through self-help books, life coaches, or motivational speakers to set you on a new path, our Lord God saw you adrift in your open sea of turmoil and on your dark road of tribulation and sent you a Savior to save you from sin, death, and the grave. Every day is Easter because, in the words of St Peter in our epistle reading, you know:

“... that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.” (1 Peter 1:18–19)

On the day of Jesus’ Resurrection, two of His disciples are walking down a figurative dark road. Easter is happening in Jerusalem but they are leaving the city dejected, heading toward a town called Emmaus. Their world has been turned upside-down. Like you when your life is in turmoil, their hopes and dreams have turned into a nightmare, so they head for home to get on with their lives.

As they walk Jesus joins them from behind, but their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. This omniscient Stranger engages them in conversation, asking them about what they are talking about – wanting them to confess their problem so He can catechize them and open the Scriptures to

them. And being so distraught, they stop in their tracks and pour out their despair and sorrow – unknowingly – onto the **only One** who has the power to restore them and open their eyes in faith.

They told how they hoped that this Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people was the One who would redeem Israel. But now in their minds, He is crucified and dead in the grave. In their hearts, this Jesus is dead and buried forever. Sure they heard the reports: the women had seen a vision of angels who said that Jesus was alive; others went to the tomb and found it was empty; yet no one saw Him. To the Emmaus two, their hope was just as dead as they perceived Jesus to be.

After patiently listening to their sorrow and lamentation, Jesus does not try to console them with trite and empty words. He cuts to the heart of the matter, saying:

“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.” (Luke 24:25–27)

In their unbelief, the Emmaus disciples walked away from Easter, the empty tomb, and salvation. But rather than allow them to continue toward death and eternal damnation, Jesus comes after them, rebukes them for not believing what had been foretold in the Scriptures... that ***it was necessary*** that all these horrible things take place. So, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus opened up their hearts and minds to Scripture so that they might believe – which means that the entire Old Testament, in every thread and theme, points to Christ our crucified and resurrected Lord.

After a seven-mile walk, the day is almost over as they reach their destination. Yet the two desire to hear more, so they urge this Stranger to stay. When it comes time for the meal, this Guest assumes the place as head of the household. And by the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciple’s eyes are opened when they see something that they have seen before, likely at the feeding of the four thousand, (cf: Matthew 15:36) or at the feeding of the five thousand, (cf: Luke 9:16) or before Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners. (cf: Luke 15:2)

“... [Jesus] 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.” (Luke 24:30–31)

Notice that Jesus ***never*** forces Himself upon the Emmaus disciples. While still in their unbelief, literally walking ***away*** from faith and the Resurrection, Jesus comes to them with His Word. He does not force the conversation, but simply asks them what is on their minds. And the two pray, ***if you will***, pouring out their heart’s grief and sorrow. After their prayer of anguish and lament, God the Son comforts them with His Word, opening the Scriptures to them, while at the same time, God the Holy Spirit kindles faith within them until their hearts are no longer cold, but burning and enlightened. They begin to understand the Scriptures correctly as they had never understood them before.

Dear Christian, your broken relationships, sicknesses, disease, and even the prospect of death, are symptoms of living as a broken sinner in a broken and sinful world. The cure to the

brokenness and sin is not found in human wisdom, life coaches or motivational speakers. The cure is found in Christ crucified and resurrected. He alone has the words of eternal life. (cf: John 6:68) Are you blinded by unbelief? Are you looking through rose-colored glasses at the hopes and dreams you have in this temporal world? Is your trust in the pleasures and false saviors of the world? Or are you in the Word – regularly reading and hearing the proclamation of Christ crucified – for you – and trusting in Him alone for forgiveness, life, and salvation?

Our text teaches us that all are at risk, even those with strong faith can be misled and fall away. Without abiding in God’s Word and allowing the Holy Spirit to open the Scriptures, you cannot understand or grasp them. Lifesaving faith is more than to have heard the history of Jesus and be able to regurgitate it, for it is **then** that the devil comes and steals the faith that has been sown in your heart. (cf: Matthew 13:19) Being Baptized and confirmed in the faith without regularly hearing the Word and receiving ongoing catechesis... that is the ongoing fertilizing and nurturing of your faith... your faith has no root. So when, similar to the Emmaus disciples, your world is turned upside down and becomes a living nightmare, you are at risk of completely falling away. (cf: Matthew 13:20-21)

Christ Jesus, true God and true man, was really born in the flesh and really died. His resurrected body is eternal – both body and soul not confined by time and space. Doors and walls are no longer barriers to Him. He does not have to stay put one place at a time, but reveals Himself when and where He wills. And where He puts Himself today – He puts Himself there for you, and that is in the preaching of His Word and the administration of His Sacrament.

Fellow redeemed, in the waters of Holy Baptism you were:

“... born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ And this word is the good news that [is] preached to you.” (1 Peter 1:23–25)

All Holy Scripture has been written for your learning, so hear the Gospel proclaimed, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, allowing the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds so that, by the patience and comfort of God’s holy Word, you may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, through Christ Jesus.

He does not force Himself upon you. He does not give you visions or dreams. He does not mystically **touch your heart** or promise you temporal treasures and glory. He does not display His power through miraculous deeds and wonders. It is not that He cannot do such things, it is that He does not do such things because such things don’t create faith. Power, majesty, and glory do not save. No. It is only the Word of Christ. Scripture teaches that:

“... the gospel... is the power of God for salvation....” (Romans 1:16)

“... faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”

(Romans 10:17)

And the Emmaus disciple’s testimony is your proof.

In our text, Jesus sets a pattern for His Church. *First* there is the teaching, and *then* there is the eating. Scriptures are *opened* and then bread is *broken*. This is the pattern the Church has always followed from the very first days. The Word and the Sacrament, on the Lord's Day, in the presence of Christ. First, the preaching of the Gospel, Christ crucified and risen for you – and then – Jesus' Body and Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins – forgiving your sins of seeking out human wisdom to set calm your seas and lighten your path. To forgive you of not trusting Christ and His Word as you ought.

This is how our Lord God deals with the Christian. He comes in His external means in Word and Sacrament. The Divine Service is God's service to you. Today, as on every Sunday, Jesus is here among us, opening the Scriptures and breaking the bread, feeding you in body and soul unto life everlasting. The tomb is still empty. *Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.