

# The Risen Lord Opens the Scriptures on the Emmaus Road

By Rev. Justin Smidstra

**Bible Text:** Luke 24:13-35  
**Preached on:** Sunday, May 22, 2022

## **Grace Protestant Reformed Church**

O-11225 8th Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

**Website:** [www.graceprc.org](http://www.graceprc.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc](http://www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc)

I'm going to read the first half of the chapter beginning at verse 1. Then our text will be verses 13 through 35.

1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. 3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: 5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, 7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. 8 And they remembered his words, 9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles. 11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. 12 Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass.

Now we begin our text.

13 And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. 16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. 17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? 18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said

unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? 19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which 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 have crucified him. 21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. 22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; 23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. 24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. 25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? 27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. 28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. 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 tarry with them. 30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? 33 And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34 Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35 And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Thus far, we read the Holy Scriptures. May the Lord bless his word to our hearts.

Our text, Luke 24:13-35 takes us to the late afternoon of resurrection Sunday, and takes us to one of the roads going out of Jerusalem, the road that went northwest. It was a busy road because the Passover feast that had been celebrated the past week was now finished. The road is full of travelers, pilgrims that had come to celebrate the feast now returning home to their towns and villages in Judea and elsewhere in the land of Israel. And there was much, there was much to talk about for these travelers on their homeward way. Certainly it was a memorable Passover. Perhaps the Passover meal itself had been ordinary, much as it was previous years when they celebrated it, but the events that took place in Jerusalem surrounding the Passover were most definitely extraordinary. There were the things concerning Jesus of Nazareth who a week ago had ridden into Jerusalem upon a donkey to the hosannas and joyful exclamations of much of the populace in Jerusalem, and many of the pilgrims but who three short days ago had been crucified on Golgotha.

We can imagine the conversation many of those pilgrims were having as they shook their heads, replaying the events; perhaps they had seen Jesus hanging upon the cross and heard all of the mocking and reproach. "What a shame. He seemed to be a great man. He saved others but he couldn't save himself." But now Luke zooms in on two particular travelers on the northwesterly road toward the village of Emmaus. Emmaus was three furlongs from Jerusalem we're told, that's seven miles. They had a bit of a journey that Sunday afternoon, a journey of about 2 to 2 1/2 hours, plenty of time to be deep in conversation as we find them, and yet these two are deep in conversation about this Jesus of Nazareth in a very different way, their countenances downcast, they are sad because these two travelers belong to the broader group of Jesus followers; they're not among the 11 disciples that went everywhere with Jesus, but they were among his disciples, those that believed on him. And the events of the Passion Week had crushed them. Jesus died and they thought their hope did too, along with him.

Two troubled travelers. But now our text records a most extraordinary event that took place the evening of resurrection Sunday. It records the third appearance of the Risen Lord. His first appearance was to Mary Magdalene at the tomb. His second was to the rest of the women as they returned from the empty tomb to bring the gospel news to the rest of the disciples. Now the third is Jesus' appearance to these two travelers on the road to Emmaus. But he comes as a stranger, not revealing his identity, withholding that from them. He comes to comfort, to instruct them, and to show them that his death is not the end of their hope, but that his death has accomplished their redemption and that he is risen to newness of life for his people. He comes to explain to them what had happened in the days gone by, to explain from the scriptures the cross, and in this, there is much gospel comfort and instruction for us.

So let us enter into this well-known, beautiful event in the gospel of Luke considering it under the theme, "The Risen Lord Opens the Scriptures on the Emmaus Road." We're first going to look at these two troubled travelers; then the stranger who opened the scripture; and then finally the eyes opened and the hearts aflame.

Two troubled travelers meet a stranger on the road to Emmaus. Cleopas, the name of one of them, and his companion, whose name we don't know, were deep in conversation as they walked, in conversation as the text says about those things which had happened, and they communed together, and they reasoned, the text says, meaning they were searching for an explanation, some way to understand, to make sense of these things that had happened, the things concerning Jesus Christ, the events of his Passion Week, his arrest, his trial, his condemnation before the ecclesiastical as well as the civil authorities, his horrific death on the cross at Calvary, and then the news that they had heard from the women that morning that the body was gone and that angels appeared and said he was risen. And as they are absorbed in this conversation, they don't right away notice the stranger who shows up walking beside them, As the text says, Jesus comes and went with them, a stranger who is in fact the Lord himself, on the same road to Emmaus, not because he is traveling, but because he, the risen Lord, is seeking out these two troubled travelers, these two confused disciples.

He comes to bring them comfort and instruction and yet they do not immediately recognize him. Why? Well, verse 16 of the text, "But their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Jesus concealed his identity from them. He powerfully withheld recognition because it served his purpose at this present time to appear just as a stranger. And so Jesus comes alongside these two troubled travelers, and the master teacher that he is, he employs the same device that he often did, he asks questions. Verse 17, "What words? What words are these that you cast back and forth to each other?" Their countenance was sad. It was downcast. He could tell from the earnestness of their speech that something weighed upon them and so Jesus asked, "What is it that you're talking about?" Jesus isn't searching for information, Jesus knows, but Jesus is using these questions to draw out of the hearts of these two troubled travelers, draw out of their hearts what is really really making them struggle, the problem with which they're wrestling, the sorrow that is weighing upon their heart.

Cleopas answers and he answers with astonishment as the text reports, "You really don't know? Where have you been? Are you only a stranger in Jerusalem? Everybody knows what's happened in Jerusalem these past few days. Everyone knows." Jesus' Passion Week was public. After all, everyone had seen him come into the city, everyone had heard his preaching, everyone had heard about his crucifixion. But Jesus then presses the question in verse 19 as he draws out of Cleopas, and his companion what is weighing upon their hearts, "What things?" And what follows is an eruption of words from the hearts of the two troubled travellers and they said unto him, they said, they both start talking, talking over one another, spilling their hearts out to this stranger and verses 19 through 24 in the text now are that eruption of words, the spilling out of their hearts. The two travelers tell Jesus all that had happened that weekend, the things concerning Jesus.

"He was a prophet," they said, "this Jesus of Nazareth, mighty in deed and word before God and before all people. What mighty miracles he wrought. Surely you heard of them? What authority he taught with, unlike the scribes and the Pharisees. He was blameless both before God and before men." And it is clear that these two travelers thought he was much more than a prophet, he was the prophet, the promised prophet, the Messiah of God. Verse 21 makes clear that that's what these two travelers believed, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." There is only one about whom that can be said, and that is the Messiah of God. That's who they believed he was. The text can be rendered this way, "We hoped that he was the one, the one coming to redeem Israel. And by every appearance he was, never has there been one like Jesus of Nazareth."

And they go on, "But then our chief priests, our rulers, who should have rejoiced at his coming killed him. They brought him before Pontius Pilate and accused him. He was condemned. They and the people demanded he be crucified, and the governor delivered him over. And on Friday he was nailed to an accursed tree atop Golgotha, and it's been three days now since these horrible events. And now on top of it all, just this morning, many of the women from our company went to his tomb to finish their last act of love, committing his body to the ground, and they found the tomb empty. And they saw angels

who said he is not here, he is risen just as he said. But nobody else saw him. We don't know what to make of these things. We don't know what to think. The one certain thing is he died, his body is gone, and that's what troubles us. That's why we're so sad and confused. That's why our countenance is downcast, oh, stranger. We believed he was the one but he died." Here's what Jesus was after, here's the heart of what these two troubled travelers were struggling with. He died, the Messiah died, crucified, and to them, that contradicted everything they believed the Messiah would be. They were perplexed by the cross.

That comes out very clearly when you look at verse 21 again, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel." What those words convey is doubt. "We trusted that it had been he, but we're not sure now. It had been he which should have redeemed Israel, but we're not so sure now because he died, he died. The Christ, the Messiah isn't supposed to die. He's supposed to conquer. He's supposed to establish a kingdom. He's supposed to reign forever. Last Sunday, you should have seen him ride into the city upon a donkey to the cry Hosanna and the waving of palm branches. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. We lifted our voices as well. But now he's dead. Can the Christ of God be crucified like a criminal? How can he possibly redeem Israel if he died on a cross?" This they thought was certain, in their minds it was certain the Messiah of God can't die like this, and the conclusion that these two troubled travelers were coming to is that, "Our hope must have been in vain. It must be that this Jesus was not the one who will redeem his people." They stumble at the cross and now we understand why they are such troubled travelers. We see the spiritual pit into which they are sliding. The cross, the very thing by which Jesus did, in fact, redeem his people, they see as utter defeat. The cross which was, in fact, the death blow to Satan, they see as the death blow to their hope. In the death of Christ their blind eyes do not see the offering of the high priest and the Lamb of God but see the awful killing of their Master who they thought was the Christ. But now they wonder. The Christ isn't supposed to die like this, they think.

This is why Jesus came to the Emmaus Road. He knew what these two distraught followers needed. They needed to be taught the meaning of the cross. They needed to be taught why the Christ died. And so the stranger opens up the scriptures. Where can they go to find understanding of the Messiah in his work. Where can they go to find the meaning of the cross. One place. One place where all of these things were spoken of long before they came to pass, in the word of God. The stranger, the risen Lord now opens the scriptures and as the text goes on to describe, Jesus then expounds the things concerning himself. He shows to them the necessity of the Messiah's suffering in death, explains to them the reason for it, the necessity of the cross and the meaning of the cross.

He begins by addressing the root problem, the source of the trouble for these travelers, and that's verse 25 now, "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." O fools, there's a rebuke there, a needed rebuke. These men knew the scriptures, they were believers, after all, and they ought to understand the things that had happened, the things about which they were speaking. They were written large in the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus rebukes them for their hardness of heart and

unbelief but his rebuke is not a harsh rebuke. It's a gentle rebuke. There is no contempt in his words here. In fact, the word "fool" in our text literally means "one who lacks understanding; uncomprehending." Jesus' rebuke is seasoned with the same pastoral gentleness as so many other rebukes he gave to his disciples when he said to them, "O ye of little faith." That's what we have here, "O ye of little faith. O fools."

And then he gets to their problem, "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." You see, then, that their problem is not, first of all, that they didn't believe the scriptures, they did, they did. Nor is there problem this, that they didn't believe in the Messiah, or that the scriptures taught the coming of the Messiah, they did. The problem comes out in Jesus' words when we pay close attention to them, O fools, and slow of understand or slow of heart to believe all, all that the prophets have spoken." You see, they were slow to grasp and to understand, and to believe certain important parts of God's revelation concerning the Christ and concerning his work. What were they so slow to believe? Jesus' rhetorical question in verse 26 pinpoints, pinpoints it, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" There it is, they didn't believe they didn't grasp that the Messiah, the Christ of God, had to suffer before he entered into his glory, he had to suffer that he might redeem his people. This is Jesus' main point to them, Christ had to suffer and die to redeem his people. The way to glory is suffering. The cross was necessary. And his rhetorical question drives home that point, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?" The thrust is, yes, he had to. It was necessary. It was necessary according to God's eternal decree. God in eternity past ordained that he would save his people from their sins through the suffering and death of the Incarnate Christ. Jesus, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, he is ordained to be this mediator of the covenant who will give his life as a ransom for many. It is necessary because the scriptures have prophesied this suffering and death of the Messiah. It is necessary because it is the only way for the mediator, for the Savior, for the Christ to save his people from their sins because God is a just God who cannot wink at sin or overlook sin, but can only save the sinner in a way that is just, and the way that is just is atonement, satisfaction of justice, and that's what the Christ comes to do.

Jesus' death on the cross does not prove that he is not the Messiah. Jesus' death on the cross is, in fact, the fulfillment of all that the scriptures have said about him. And so these two believers, this is what they do not understand. These two travelers latched on to certain parts of the scriptures' prophecies about the Messiah, they latched onto those parts about his glory, about his power and about his kingdom, but they failed to reckon with the passages of scripture that spoke of his suffering and the connection between his suffering and his glory. Yes, they believed the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head but they forgot the part about the serpent bruising his heel. They looked for a king in David's line but they forgot what Zechariah said about him, that he would be lowly and through his lowliness he would bring salvation to his people. Yes, they looked for a lion of Judah, but they forgot that the lion of Judah would also be the Lamb of God. Perhaps they knew Isaiah 53, verse 12 which prophesied of the Christ, "Therefore, will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." And they said, "Yes, that's the Messiah," But forgot the rest of the verse, "because he hath poured out his soul unto death and he was numbered with the transgressors." Jesus opens

the scriptures and from the scriptures, from the prophets, from the Bible, he shows them the full truth of God concerning the Messiah, that he must suffer and that he must suffer not just in general, but he must suffer precisely these things which had happened. His betrayal, his condemnation before Israel's court and the court of the world, his crucifixion, his resurrection, it all, it all must happen the way it did for the salvation of God's people. This is the way he saves sinners. Christ is a king, a glorious king, but he comes to his throne through suffering and death. Christ humbles himself to the uttermost, and only then is he highly exalted. Suffering first, then glory.

"And so beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded the things concerning himself." As they walked, the two travelers forgot their troubles as they clung to every word of Jesus and the miles went by as Jesus, beginning at Genesis and going all the way through the prophets to conclude with Malachi, points to all of these passages that speak about Jesus and prophesy his sufferings and set before God's people the reality of his death and how his death as atonement for sin is what accomplishes the salvation of elect Israel. Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, all the scripture, Jesus expounded the things concerning himself, pointing to those sacrifices, the blood of Abel's lamb, that substitutionary lamb given to Abraham on Mount Moriah in place of Isaac, his son, all of the sacrifices of the temple, the great Day of atonement. All that the prophets prophesied pointing to a suffering Savior who by his suffering and by his death redeems and saves. Imagine how amazing it was to hear the Lord himself expound the scriptures. The two troubled travelers, for them, new understanding dawns and they begin to see what the cross means.

Before we go on in the history, let's make a couple of applications. First, behold the glory of Christ. Is not suffering Savior so much more glorious than a Savior who never suffered? That's what man wants. That's what we want naturally. That's what the disciples wanted. That's what everyone wanted. A mighty Messiah who would come and who would conquer and who would bring in a great kingdom of peace and prosperity, earthly wealth and all of the rest. That sounds great to the flesh. How much more glorious is the Christ of God who saves by suffering? The Christ who, though he is God, the Son, the second person of the Trinity, to whom all glory and worship is due, though he is God who dwells in unapproachable light, he came down from heaven, he made himself of no reputation, he took upon himself the form of a servant, he took to himself your human nature and mine with all of its infirmities except sin, so that in our weak human nature, he may might suffer for us. Suffer what? Suffer the just wrath of God. You see, he took your human nature, your flesh on him, so that as man he might assume to himself our guilt. The massive mountain of all of the guilt of all of the sins of all of God's elect people from all ages heaped upon the Christ and he bore that burden of your guilt and mine to the cross of Calvary, where in his human nature he sustained the holy fury of a just God and made atonement for our sin and obtained for us righteousness and life everlasting in a place in his kingdom of peace and joy forevermore. That's our king. That's the Christ of the scriptures. That's the Messiah. How glorious. The suffering savior. The Savior who suffers first and then enters his glory. Do we not adore him. Do we not bend the knee and worship him? Do not our hearts enflame with love and gratitude to him?

But now in the second place, we have need that the truth which Jesus impressed upon these two troubled travelers, we have need that it be impressed upon us also, that suffering is the way to glory. We understand why Jesus had to die for us to pay for our sins and redeem us but there's something that we often struggle to understand and that's our suffering. We want glory without suffering, don't we? I do. That's natural. Glory without suffering. We can have the same problem as these two troubled travelers in that we don't believe, we don't always believe all that the scriptures say. We can latch onto certain passages of scripture that we like while ignoring or putting off from our minds others. So many beautiful passages about what we have in Christ and the glory that awaits, but there are also many passages to talk about the suffering of this present life. When that suffering comes it must cast us on the Sea of Doubt. "Why is this happening? How can this happen? How can God let this happen? How can this possibly be good?" No, we don't understand and sometimes we can't wrap our little human minds around God's way with us. His way is not our way, his way is higher than our way, but we ought not be surprised. Will our way be any different than Christ's way? The way our head took? Yes, of course Jesus' sufferings are entirely unique. We will never suffer like Jesus did. Jesus suffered as our substitute, as our mediator, as our Savior, but the scriptures say this in Philippians 1:29, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." The Christian life involves much suffering. It is through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. We follow Christ, and that means we must take up our crosses and follow him. Our life has a cruciform shape. Belonging to Jesus doesn't exempt us from suffering but belonging to Jesus does mean all of our suffering is made subservient to the salvation he has accomplished for us, and the full realization of that salvation on the day of his coming. And so like the apostles, even in the midst of very hard suffering that draws tears from our eyes, let us also rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' sake, and that God uses our sufferings for our good to accomplish his purpose. Suffering first and then glory, but our sufferings, they only work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

A third application, Jesus, teaches us much about scripture in this passage, doesn't he? And the first important lesson he teaches us about scripture is that Jesus himself is the center of the Bible. He is the heart of the scripture. He is its purpose. He is its power. And this is true even of the Old Testament, after all, the Old Testament was the Bible that Jesus had; those are the scriptures that Jesus opened up to the two troubled travelers on the road. The Old Testament, Jesus shows us, is all about Christ. In fact, you can't understand the Old Testament unless you find Christ in it. He is the key to the Old Testament. He is the key to the whole Bible. He is the purpose. He is the heart. He is the power. Christ is everything. And the scriptures, their great purpose and function is to set Christ before us. That's what Jesus did, he opened the scriptures and he expounded the things concerning himself and that's what lifted the hearts of these two troubled travelers, that's what gave them peace and gave them joy, the gospel of Jesus Christ expounded from the scriptures. That's why you're here listening to this. That's why we have expository preaching. It's not popular today. It's much more entertaining, it's much more relaxing to the flesh to have a service that's crafted to entertain us, to have something else going on in front rather than listening to a lengthy sermon. But Jesus points us in the right



direction here. This is why preaching is at the center of our worship, because preaching the exposition of the scriptures is what edifies and feeds our souls because the preaching sets forth Christ and in the preaching of the scriptures, Jesus Christ himself as the Good Shepherd, feeds us with his word. Still today, Jesus opens up the scriptures. The manner is different, he uses an earthen vessel, a mouthpiece, and yet Jesus himself opens the scriptures to his church in the preaching of the gospel.

Time flew by as Cleopas and his companion listened to Jesus expound the scriptures, and before they knew it, they were near their destination. Emmaus was close by. But Cleopas and his companion weren't ready to part ways with this stranger who had opened up the scriptures to them, and so as they come to the entrance or near to Emmaus, Jesus makes as though he is going to continue on, not to deceive them, but in order to elicit from them the invitation that they now give. Cleopas says, verse 29, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening and the day is far spent." And Jesus, as he meant to, went home with these two men and now the time has come for Jesus to reveal himself and open the eyes of these two traveling disciples, open their eyes now that he's kindled their hearts.

After hours on the dusty road, Cleopas and his companion reclined for an evening meal with the stranger. They show hospitality. They lay food on the table but really, these two men are more hungry for continued fellowship with this stranger who is so wise in the scriptures, eager to hear more from the scriptures about Jesus. They had been warmed by the dawning of new understanding, they were beginning to grasp, "Yes, the cross was not defeat. Our hope is not in vain." They didn't understand fully, but they were beginning to understand what the cross meant and they wanted more, they were hungry for the bread of life far more than for earthly bread.

As they recline at the table, verse 30 says that Jesus "took bread and blessed it and break and gave it to them." And striking, isn't it, that Jesus naturally, assumes the role of host; even though he's at the house of Cleopas or his companion, he's technically a guest, yet nonetheless, Jesus assumes the role of host. And evidently this didn't bother Cleopas or his companion. It was natural, for they had already come to respect to this man as a great teacher in the scriptures as their teacher. They'd never talked with anyone like him except their Master Jesus. Fitting that Jesus is the host here because as he breaks bread he's picturing what he had just done for them. That's what he did on the road to Emmaus, he broke the bread of life for them. He fed them with himself in the scriptures. He fed them with the Gospel of Christ.

Now Jesus makes himself known, verses 30 and 31. These verses indicate that it was in the very act of breaking and giving the bread to Cleopas and his companion that Jesus opens their eyes. He "took bread and blessed it and break and gave to them and their eyes were opened," and the sense of the text is in that very action as they're reaching and perhaps receiving the bread from Jesus, they're looking at his face and understanding dawns, "It's Jesus. It's Jesus." They recognize him, not a stranger, but the Master alive, risen just as the women had said. Their eyes widen with amazement, "It's him."

Now there's been much speculation about what triggered their recognition. Some suggest that the breaking of bread reminded them of the Lord's Supper, that can't be because these two travelers weren't there when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, just the 12. That also means that this isn't the Lord's Supper that Jesus celebrates with them, others have said that. No, it was just that ordinary breaking of bread, a meal. Others have suggested that perhaps there is a phrase in Jesus' blessing or some gesture that he did that made them recognize Jesus. But the best answer is the simple one: Jesus simply withdrew that power that had held their eyes so that they didn't recognize him. Jesus' concealing of his identity had achieved its purpose, and now he reveals himself to them. And that confirms all the words that he had spoken. As he expounded the Scriptures concerning himself and the meaning of the cross, and that the Christ must suffer and must die and that he would rise again, and now he presents himself before them as the risen Lord. And you see why he waited till this point. The thing they struggled with most was the cross. They needed to understand the cross before Jesus presented himself to them alive. The one in whom they had trusted had fulfilled their hope. He had redeemed and redemption was accomplished.

But now, surprisingly, we might say, just as Cleopas and his companion recognize Jesus., their eyes widen, their mouths open probably to exclaim a word of joy, verse 31 says, "And he vanished out of their sight." Or you can render it this way, "He became unseen to them, he became non appearing and departed from them." They must have reacted much the way Mary Magdalene did when she recognized Jesus and cried, "Rabboni!" And as they cry, perhaps "Rabboni!" Gone. Why? Why? Jesus' mission was accomplished, that's why. He came seeking these confused, sorrowing disciples of his in order to comfort them with the gospel, in order to explain to them the cross, in order to confirm to them that redemption was accomplished and now with that mission finished, he moves on. Cleopas and his companion had to learn the same lesson that all the disciples would have to learn, that Jesus' resurrection doesn't mean he's going back to be with them the way he was before, that he's going to return to his old life. No, Jesus' resurrection means he has exited the state of humiliation having accomplished all that the Father gave him to do, and he has now entered into the state of exultation. He has risen with new life, a glorified body. He is no longer one who belongs here below. He must soon ascend. Yes, he will ever be with his disciples but in a different and better way. And so these two, like the others, would have to learn that. We're not going back to the way things were. We're going on to something better. As he had said in John 16:7 in his Upper Room discourse before he was betrayed, "Nevertheless, I tell you, the truth is, it is expedient for you that I go away for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The rest of the New Testament lies ahead, and Jesus must be about his Father's business now in the state of exultation. Jesus vanishes but he does not leave these two travelers troubled as he found them. He leaves them with joy, the joy and peace of believing. He leaves them with opened eyes, not just these physical eyes but the opened eyes of understanding, eyes open to understand the scriptures. He leaves them with hearts aflame with rekindled faith and hope and love.

Verse 32 now reveals the reaction of Cleopas and his companion to the vanishing of Christ, a reaction not of terror but rejoicing, "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us?" Our heart. They were one in this. "Our heart burned within us

while he talked with us, by the way and while he opened the scriptures." They look at each other amazed at what had just happened and now it makes sense. They recall how they're sad, sorrowful, heavy hearts were lifted and warmed and kindled with new fire, the new fire of faith as that stranger unfolded and unpacked the scriptures for them in the way and now it makes sense. That stranger was none other than Jesus Christ himself, our Lord, our Savior.

Their hearts burned, caught fire again. It's reference to faith there. Think of the words of the Belgic Confession which speaks of the Holy Spirit's work of kindling an upright faith in God's people. That's what Jesus did by means of the scriptures. These two men, their faith was bought a smoking flax, was like a little wick with a dot of orange on the top and it was smoking, seeming as though it was about to go out and Jesus with the scriptures rekindles it so that their hearts burn, burn with true faith and love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you feel that when you hear the gospel, Christ? Does your heart burn? Is it aflame when the scriptures are opened and you hear in the scriptures what God in Christ has done for you. and what the meaning of the cross is and how the cross transforms all of life, and how everything everything because of the cross is subservient to your eternal well-being and salvation? Does your heart burn? Yes, it does. The heart of every believer burns as the spirit kindles and strengthens the flame of faith by means of his word. Nothing, nothing can ever put that flame out. No cold sorrow of this life. Nothing can extinguish the flame. Yes, sometimes we in the midst of afflictions, in the midst of storms, in the midst of temptations, are like these two travelers, our faith is like a smoking flax, but the Savior, the merciful Savior never breaks the bruised reed, he never quenches the smoking flax. He comes in mercy, comes with his word so that our hearts burn again.

With such burning hearts, Cleopas and his companion could not sit still. Verse 33, "And they rose up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem and found the 11 gathered together and them that were with them." Note, the same hour. Verse 29, Cleopas and his companion said, "Abide with us for it is toward evening and the day is far spent." They had just spent 2 to 2 1/2 hours on the road traveling to Emmaus. It was evening, and yet their burning hearts would not let them sit still. Cleopas and his companion get up that very same hour and trek all the way back to Jerusalem, probably making even better time, racing because they had to tell, they had to tell the disciples, the others, what they had seen, what they had heard.

And they knew where to find the 11, they had been with them that morning, the morning of resurrection Sunday. As we learn from John 20, all of the disciples, as well as many others, were huddled together in a house with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. Before long, Cleopas and his companion are knocking on that door, and as they enter into the room, what an extraordinary thing it is, for there are some there who are exclaiming, "The Lord has risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!" Apparently, after Jesus left Cleopas and his companion, Jesus then made his fourth Resurrection Day appearance to Simon Peter alone. And so Cleopas and his companion come to the gathered disciples in the house, and they find them discussing all of the events of that day. Many are unbelieving yet, many do not understand, but there's others like Peter saying, "I saw

him," and the women saying, "We saw him," and now Cleopas and his companion add their testimony to the others, "He's risen." And they tell all how he had shown himself in the breaking of bread, how he had opened the scriptures to them in the way, and how their hearts burned. The two travelers, troubled travelers become two joyful witnesses of the resurrection.

There's the final instruction for us, with our burning hearts, what do we do with this good news? Live it. Tell it. Live life in light of it. Tell it to others who do not know it. Comfort one another with these words. Tell the good news of the gospel. Apply the good news of the gospel to your fellow brothers and sisters in the congregation who may be troubled and hurting. Tell the gospel. Rest in the gospel. Live in light of the gospel.

There's so much we can talk about. In this day and age, most of what we can talk about is negative, dark world, all of the problems, wars and rumors of wars, economic troubles, the list can go on and on, and those are just really the smallest of our concerns. There's the the afflictions that we bear, the wounds that we have, the hurts the sufferings. Talk about this, this: Jesus, his cross, what it means, salvation, redemption accomplished, his resurrection, new life in him, the promise of glory, all of the rest. Open up the scriptures. There's no end point in searching them out. Their depths are unfathomable, their riches are uncountable, you can never get to the end of the scriptures and the word of comfort in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Hear this gospel. Take this gospel. Carry it in your heart, let it inflame your heart. And talk, tell this gospel Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Faithful God and heavenly Father, we thank thee for this comforting history, the road to Emmaus. May it comfort and strengthen us in our life's pathway knowing that thou dost ever walk with us by thy Spirit, as a Good Shepherd tending to us in all of our needs in all of our cares and all of our struggle. Grant that this word of the gospel may be a power to lift us up and to move us forward with eyes fixed upon thee. Grant us the forgiveness of our sins and hear us now in Jesus' name. Amen.*