

## Bible Study Guide: Week of 4-20-2020

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Dear Good Shepherd members and friends,

I mentioned in our notes last week that this passage is one of my favorite New Testament passages. It is especially bittersweet to hear about the joy of the disciples in breaking bread together since we are not able to gather in person to break bread together. What a joyful day it will be when we can again share the Lord's Supper together! In the meantime, may our hearts burn within us as we open the Scriptures together and may God remind us of all the ways God is providing and caring for us and the whole world at this time.

God bless you now and always!

Pastor Andrew

## Luke 24:13-35

13 Now on that same day two of them 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.

28 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.

**13 Now on that same day two of them 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.**

“That same day” is Easter Sunday—the day of resurrection. This encounter with Jesus takes place the afternoon and evening after the women visited the empty tomb. Emmaus is unknown to us except through this story. Several suggestions have been made by scholars, but nobody can definitively say for sure where Emmaus was. This uncertainty allows us to read ourselves and our own situation into the story—“Emmaus” is wherever we gather with our fellow disciples to encounter and worship the risen Christ.

Wherever Emmaus was, here two of Jesus’ disciples were traveling there for some unstated reason. “These things” will be defined as the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the conversation between the two disciples and their mysterious fellow traveler.

**<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.**

This “vanishing traveling companion” motif was somewhat common in ancient literature and legend. The passive voice used here—“Their eyes were kept”—might imply that God kept them from recognizing Jesus in their midst. Or it could be that their grief and fears kept them 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.**

Only Cleopas is named here; the other disciple is not named. Some interpreters have suggested that perhaps Cleopas’ fellow traveler was his wife, but we don’t know who the other disciple was. The fact that Cleopas comes up only here in the gospels (Cleopas is not among “the 12”) suggests that Jesus’ disciples consisted of a larger group than merely “the 12.”

Their words “we had hoped” resonate with me when I am feeling disappointed or disillusioned. Ironically, of course, the disciples here do not realize that their hopes are indeed correct. Jesus will make this clear to them in time. When we are feeling hopeless or discouraged, we can take heart that God has our situation well in hand and will indeed redeem Israel and the whole world.

**<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.’**

The disciples here continue to (ironically) explain Jesus’ resurrection to Jesus. They clearly do not understand. They get “the facts” right—they know what the women saw and said. They know the tomb is empty. But they don’t know how to interpret it yet.

**<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.**

We would be so fortunate to have Jesus himself interpret the scriptures for us. Almost comically, the disciples still don't recognize Jesus in the moment—even though he speaks to them in words about his own suffering and death being necessary; words they had heard him speak before—they still don't know who he is. Even having the scriptures interpreted for them doesn't allow them to recognize Jesus in their midst.

**28 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.**

The disciples extend hospitality to Jesus—such an expression of welcome and care was vital to the mission of the early church. It is still vital to the church and world today. Their urging, “Stay with us, for it is evening and the day is almost over,” is a part of our Vespers or Evening Prayer services in our hymnals.

**<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?'**

The language here is undoubtedly Eucharistic—in fact, v. 30 sounds almost word-for-word like our words of institution during communion, “He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples, saying...” It is with these words—words they heard from Jesus' mouth on their last night together—that their eyes were opened and they know who Jesus is. At this instant, he vanished from their sight. Then they recognize that his words on the road were another sign of Jesus' presence with them.

**<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.**

This is my favorite part of the story—even though it is dark, Cleopas and his companion got up and went the 7 miles back to Jerusalem to proclaim to the other disciples that Jesus appeared to them. Can you imagine having to walk the same 7 miles back in the dark? Yet this was world-altering news! And, an even greater surprise for them, the find out that Jesus has appeared to Simon Peter. Jesus is clearly no longer bound by death, nor by time and space. The breaking of bread would become one of the critical elements of Christian worship. It is, in part, as we break bread together that we recognize Jesus in our midst. We are working on a safe way to share communion together at our drive-in services on May 17 and 31. Pray for me and our staff as we seek to find a way to do this without making anyone sick, as well as to do this with as much theological integrity as possible. These are trying times and I am open to the Spirit working among us as we long to break bread together.

### **Reflection/Discussion Questions:**

1. When or where have you experienced a place or time like Emmaus? That is, when have you been aware (either in the moment or afterwards) of Jesus' presence with you and others?
2. Who or what do you think kept the disciples from recognizing who Jesus was?
3. Other than the breaking of the bread in our Communion meal, where do we see Jesus present and at work in our midst?