

Third Sunday of Easter – 2026

Acts 2:14, 36-41

1 Peter 1:17-25

Luke 24:13-35

The glory of God makes the heart of man burn with delight. We, the church, are walking in the Way. Jesus said: “I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Do you believe Him? Jesus is Immanuel – God with us (Isaiah 7:14). Do you believe it? Is the Lord Christ with us? Would the eternal Son of God take upon Himself our flesh, die a wretched death on a cross – bearing all sin and paying for our redemption with His holy and precious blood – and then leave us? Do you take Him at His Word? The Savior, the Christ, the Messianic King – do you trust Him? Does Jesus accompany us in the Way? Is it a delight to you, a comfort, a source of strength knowing that Christ is with us? Would you gladly receive from His hand *whatever* He willed to give you?

It was Easter. It was the day of the Resurrection, and two ole boys are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus – a seven-mile journey. In Luke’s gospel account, no one has yet seen the risen Lord. Cleopas and his unnamed companion are men of faith but they’re not in a good place. They’re confused, distraught, defeated. And the Lord of glory walks alongside them. St. Luke tells us, “But their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (Luke 24:16). That phrase is called a theological passive or a divine passive. God is passively identified as the agent behind the men not recognizing Jesus. There’s a reason for Him holding their eyes for a time. Jesus prods them to give voice to their frame of mind. “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” (Luke 24:17). They’re incapable of hiding their pain. Sadness lurches out of Cleopas as he barks about their newfound companion not knowing the events of late (Luke 24:18). He recounts the bitterness of crucifixion before he adds a phrase shrouded in unbelief. “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21). Why is that a bleak, defeated phrase? We *had* hoped – past tense – it’s a tacit admission that they no longer carry this hope. He’s dead, defeated. He’s obviously *not* the one to redeem Israel. Even after recounting the women’s resurrection testimony, they’re just plain defeated, two defeated men.

Why are they defeated? What would *you* do with them? The Lord doesn’t use kid gloves. It isn’t a therapy session, or locker room pep talk. They’re admonished and set straight. It is love. It’s merciful. It is teaching of the highest order. It is divine strength being conveyed to two disciples as they journey in the Way. Their understanding of Christ is deficient – that’s why they’re defeated – and that’s what Jesus corrects. What they believed about the Messiah was antithetical to what the Messiah truly is, and that’s what Jesus corrects. The cross was the stumbling block. It’s understandable but not enabled. Jesus knew what had to be fixed in these defeated men and He gets straight to fixing it. “And he said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’” (Luke 24:25-26). Have you ever needed to be straightened out? Have you ever operated according to faulty principles? Do you believe that it is merciful to be chastised by the living Lord for bad ideas about Him? I do.

I once had a professor at the seminary yell at me in front of my classmates. He turned pink, then red, then a weird purple color. He likened me to one of Martin Luther’s arch theological

opponents. I deserved it. I had bad ideas. I asked my dear professor: “What’s the difference between an ordinary Christian and a disciple?” The question implied a works-righteous hierarchy in Christ’s church where none exists. He ripped me. It was merciful. He taught me. I learned. I learned eagerly. At the end of the quarter, I sneaked a peak at his gradebook. I was the only student who got an “A” in that class. We need correcting. “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). Their hearts burned with the glory of God. The risen Christ taught them as they journeyed in the Way. How many of you desire to be taught, to be elevated above the world’s humanistic slop, elevated above the world’s vain philosophy? I do. How many of you want insight into the deep things of God, into sacrifice and love and to be enlarged by eternal truth? How many will answer, “nah, I’m good, thanks anyway?”

Their minds were reoriented. The cross is what God had intended all along. The cross was not Jesus’ defeat. The cross was not *their* defeat. Power and wisdom and honor and glory – it flows from a *crucified* King. Mercy and forgiveness and grace unending flow from a *pierced* Messiah. Jesus’ opponents hadn’t outflanked Him. The Lord achieved exactly what He was sent to achieve. By Jesus’ teaching, hope gained newfound traction in those men, and they begged the One who had catechized them in the Way to stay with them. Jesus, still unrecognized, goes into *their* home and *He* acts as host. This is odd. But that’s the point. What the risen Christ taught them in the Word led to a table. The road to Emmaus was a church service (just like this one). Word and meal, with Christ as host, the home in Emmaus becomes a church. The words are unmistakable. Jesus takes bread, blessed it, broke it and began to give it to them (Luke 24:30). That’s when their eyes were opened (Luke 24:31). Cleopas and his unnamed companion are the first people to see the resurrected Messiah in Luke’s gospel, and it happened at a table as the Lord took bread, blessed it, broke it and began to give it to them. One must be intentionally blind to *not see* the meal that took place immediately before this.

The meal immediately before... what was that? On the night before He was crucified, Jesus instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion. Luke tells us: “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me’” (Luke 22:19). I am with you always (Matthew 28:20). Do you believe it? Why is He with us? “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). Do you believe Him? He is with us to serve us, to bestow upon us the bounty of His death and resurrection. How does He do it? How does He convey to us temporal, fleshly creatures the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation? Where are we to find Him? We find Him where He has promised to be. This is my body, given for you. This is my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do you believe Him? God locates Himself in bread and wine to bring to bear on you the wonder of His death and resurrection.

They recognized the risen Messiah in the breaking of the bread... “And he vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:31). Why? The Lord will be present but unseen at the table in the Eucharistic Feast. I am with you always. I am among you as one who serves. The Emmaus episode is the ongoing structure of the Divine Service. Word and Sacrament – we preach Christ crucified and we celebrate the Communion meal exactly as He instituted it and what do we know? We know that the Lord is with us to share His life, to lead us in the Way, to enliven our hope, enliven our

love, enliven our trust. You need this Divine Service. Benjamin Matthew needs this Divine Service. The Lord Himself teaches us, reveals Himself to us, delivers the forgiveness purchased on the cross to us through Word and Sacrament. The world, the devil, and your own sinful flesh will lie to you, will prompt you to dismiss Christ's words – and that is a dark, defeated road.

Joy is here. The light of Christ shines in this place. Sitting at Christ's feet and trusting His work is our joy. Baptizing Benjamin Matthew is our joy. We baptized the young lad because God's word tells us, "the promise is for you and your children" (Acts 2:38). We baptized Benjamin Matthew because the Lord commanded us to make disciples of *all nations* (Matthew 28:19). Why would we exclude children? We baptized Ben because our Lord said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). It's our joy to believe Him. It's our joy to act on what He has said. He is with us – crucified, risen, triumphant and reigning. He is known to us in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24:35).