

# THE SERMON

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Third Sunday of Easter

Sunday, April 19, 2026

Stories That Matter

*Astounded Us*

Luke 24:13-35

Beloved Church, I began last Sunday's sermon saying, *"My friends, today, we begin a new sermon series called **'Stories that Matter.'** This is a six-week sermon series rooted in the conviction that the resurrection of Jesus is not the end of the story. It is the beginning of a new way of seeing everything. We know that! We know how the story continues."*

But I also mentioned why these stories matter, and one of the first comments was: *"These stories matter because they are stories of real people, like you and me, who experienced Christ firsthand."*

We normally read the gospel, all the stories of Jesus, the disciples, and the people, but we don't usually go into the minutiae of the text; we try to keep it holy and

sacred all the time. Please don't misunderstand: I am not speaking against the sacred part of them, but we need to go a little further and find the humanity in each character who experienced Christ firsthand.

When that happens, when we see ourselves in the other, we find that they were people like you and me. People who believe in Jesus. People who suffered with His death, but also people who were astounded as they heard the news of His resurrection.

And because we are people of the resurrection, we can deeply relate to these stories. Therefore, this is the invitation for all of us this morning: **to feel, sense, smell, taste, touch, and see** what these people experienced immediately after Jesus' resurrection.

Our gospel text this morning invites us to a very well-known story. Songs and hymns have been written and composed based on it. Even beautiful paintings, such as the one that I have here with me. This was a gift from our brother in Christ, Don Hacker. A beloved Christian man, who left us in September 2024 to be in the presence of His Lord.

Now, this painting is no longer in Don's former home; it was donated to our church. Now, it is part of the decoration of our parlor.

Every Tuesday, when we have our Bible study, I see it and wonder: ***What was so meaningful to Don about this painting that he had it in his home?***

Most of us keep special decorations in our homes because they hold meaning. We display pictures of family members because they remind us of our love and care. We keep certain decorations because they were given to us by someone important. Sometimes, even your own children ask, '**Why are you still keeping that stuff?**' But for us, the age doesn't matter—what matters are the meaning, feelings, people, and memories attached to it.

Why do we do that? – A simple answer is that in the things we treasure, there are stories. Stories that matter, stories that we keep and share. But there are also people, people who have been part of those stories.

Today, we see these **two men walking towards the village of Emmaus**—a place located seven miles from Jerusalem. Walking 7 miles typically takes between **2 and 2 hours 20 minutes** for most people, assuming a moderate pace of 3.0 to 3.5 miles per hour. Therefore, this suggests they had enough time for conversation and fellowship during the walk.

We don't have the information on when Jesus joined them on their walk. What we do know is that during the time that Jesus walked next to them, he gave these two men the opportunity to express their innermost feelings of their hearts, their mourning, and their sadness for what happened to Jesus of Nazareth.

I always wonder who these two men were. We know that one of them was named **Cleopas**; we don't have information about the second one. But if we stick with **Cleopas**, it is interesting because his name was not a common Jewish name; it is of Greek origin, which means "*Glory to the Father.*" Now, we have another layer to this, because some Bible commentaries said that he was probably the same person mentioned in **John 19:25**, which says: "***Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.***"

Perhaps this is why Cleopas, or Clopas, knew the other disciples of Jesus so well. And not only that, he and the other walker knew details that in no way could they have known if they were not really connected with Jesus and his disciples.

**These two men's stories matter.** Because they were related to Jesus in such a way that they knew about the

chronological order of the events, including the women who didn't find the body at the tomb, the vision of the angels, and even they said **"some of those who were with us, went to the tomb...they did not see him"** (v.24) This verse shows us a sense of proximity to the core group of disciples. They were not just people who heard about Jesus; they were close disciples, unnamed, almost anonymous, disciples of the resurrected Christ.

You are probably asking yourself why I am including so many details about these two men. The reason is the purpose of this sermon series. To know that their stories matter.

As I said last Sunday:

*"These stories matter because they highlight testimonies, many of which are personal experiences, that have a significant impact on our lives, beliefs, and communities even today, at this very moment.*

*Their stories matter because they inspire us, challenge us, and help us grow, not only in our spiritual life, but also in our daily life, as people of the resurrection. They are not just entertaining or informative; they are transformative."*

Let me repeat it: *These stories matter because they are **transformative**. And we, as disciples of the Resurrected Christ, are called to experience transformation.*

**How do you see transformation in the lives of these two men?**

The walk and the talk took them, with the company of this unknown character, to their destination: the village of Emmaus. It was there, in their mourning and sadness, that Jesus refreshed their minds. Perhaps to see if they still remembered the promise of resurrection.

***“Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?...”*** (v.25-26)

Let me ask you this morning. ***How does this part of the story speak to you?***

How many times in our lives does Jesus have to speak to us with tough words? – We know His promises, but we are so constrained, so worried about the busyness of our lives, and about what is happening, that we forget what He has said. The same happened to these two disciples.

When did they let this sadness and worry go?

It was not until they recognized Jesus with the breaking and sharing of the bread that ***“their eyes were opened.”*** The word “recognized” is important to us today.

Recognized means that they had experienced this breaking of the bread before.

Recognized means that they were part of this intimate group of disciples, who were more than followers, who participated in meals when Jesus did the same.

### **How do you recognize Jesus today?**

You can recognize Jesus just by remembering and trusting His promises, without any other visual action or words, which **is not** what happened with these two disciples. Or...

Do you need a visual proof of the promises Jesus has for you? Think about it, and reflect on your own **“walk to Emmaus.”**

Perhaps, if you feel that your walk to Emmaus is more than 7 miles, or 2 hours and 20 minutes, as these two disciples did...

Perhaps if you feel that this walk has been tiring, and you are still looking to recognize Jesus in your walk...

Perhaps if you feel that the walk is so long and you will never reach the destination...

Let me remind you that you don't need to look around, because Jesus is walking next to you. Jesus walks with you and next to you.

Sometimes, Jesus even carries you in those challenging moments, when your spiritual feet are tired, exhausted, full of the dust of the walk. **But never, never forget the promises He has made to you.**

Walk and be accompanied by Jesus, but recognize Him in your walk. Share your innermost feelings in the breaking and sharing, but always remember that your destination is to announce that He is risen, and live among you. **Amen.**