

Michael J. Mathey
Easter III
April 19, 2026
Text: Luke 24:13 – 35
Title: Remember...The Best Is Yet To Come

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. With all of the events that are happening that first Easter morning, Luke uses his Gospel account to focus our attention upon one simple thing: remembering. That first Easter was a swirl of activity and emotion. There is a body to be prepared and the smell of spices is strong. The tomb has been opened, but the body is gone. There are angels at the tomb who are dressed like lightning. These angels know what the women are doing: “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” They know what has happened: “He is not here; he has risen!” They even know what has been done and said to them before: “Remember how he told you...‘the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again’” (v. 5-6). When Luke puts it all together, he calls our attention to one simple thing: “They remembered his words” (v. 8). That’s what Luke wants us to know as we continue to celebrate Easter. In the middle of the wonder, the fear, and the worship, His disciples simply and faithfully did one single thing: “They remembered his words.”

You might be thinking to yourself that the words I have just spoken sound familiar. You might think that you remember them from a previous sermon, and you’re right. They are the same words that I opened my sermon with on Easter Sunday about remembering. Because on that first Easter morning God sent angels to the tomb to help His people remember by repeating what Jesus had said, and today, through His Word, God helps us to remember as well. It’s one of the main reasons that He has given us His Word in the first place. Think about how hard it can be just to remember what you need at the store. So what do you do to help you remember?

You write down your list. Now think about how muddled a story can get in your mind when it isn't written down.

So what has God done to help us remember? He has inspired His Word to be written down over several years by several different authors so we can repeat it and remember. The Holy Spirit made sure that the prophecies of the Messiah would be written down, and He made sure that the record of Christ's Passion would be written down and preserved also. He made sure that the events of Easter morning would be recorded, and He made sure that the early history of the Christian Church with its beginning on Pentecost Day would be known through the Book of Acts. The Holy Spirit made sure that it would be written down so that Christians from those first days all the way up to today would remember. Remember the great and incredible things that God has done for His Creation and for His people. He calls us to commit His Word to our memory so that it is always with us, even if we don't have the written pages in front of us.

Look at this morning's Gospel reading from Luke 24:13 – 35. Two men were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the afternoon of that first Easter Day. As disciples of Jesus, they were naturally discussing everything that had happened over the past three days, and especially the report of the women who had discovered the empty tomb that same morning. They are so engrossed in their conversation that they probably didn't even notice the stranger approaching them until He was right next to them. They have no idea who He is. It's like they've forgotten, and they are even more surprised by the ignorance of the question that the stranger asks them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?"

This is a question that stops them dead in their tracks. They can't believe that someone who was in Jerusalem doesn't know what happened there over the past couple of days. Luke tells us that these two disciples just stood still looking sad. You can almost guess their thoughts,

“Is this guy for real? How could he not know? Do we really have to go over this again?” When a memory hurts, you don’t always want to talk about it, especially with a stranger who won’t really understand, but Luke tells us that Cleopas decides to answer this ignorant stranger. “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” The stranger replies, “What things?” And they tell the story. “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people...” This much they remember because they were there.

It’s an amazing account that Luke tells us here. Jesus is standing before these two men listening to them talk about everything that had happened to Him over the past few days. They are disciples of the very man they are talking with and talking about. They have seen Him before and even followed Him, but they don’t know Him now. The fact is that these men can’t see Jesus for who He is until He tells them the rest of the story and chooses to let them see. Jesus needs to help them remember. They don’t know it, but the best is yet to come.

But first Jesus calls them out, “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?” Jesus then conducts the greatest Bible Study ever taught as He tells them everything that His own Word has to say about Himself. But this is still not enough for these two, and they still don’t realize this stranger’s true identity. They still don’t remember.

It stays that way until they sit down to eat the evening meal, and that’s when Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, and breaks it, and then He gives it to them. That finally did it. The Lord uses their memory to bring them into the present and suddenly they realize who is with them. And as soon as they remember and recognize Him, He disappears. They are given a brief glimpse of their Lord in His glory. For just an instant they see that the best is yet to come.

It's hard not to ask ourselves how they could have missed it. Was their faith really that weak? Was their memory that bad? Maybe they were just so overcome with their grief that they convinced themselves that this was anyone other than Jesus. We have the luxury of knowing what's going on as we read this account, and it's easy for us to question how these two could have missed it. But the truth of the matter is that we miss Him just as easily in our own lives.

We have the privilege of being able to read His Word each and every day of our lives to help us remember, but we let just about any excuse keep us from doing it. The same thing goes for prayer. How easy is it to let random thoughts interfere with your prayer time? If you want an answer to that, just try to pray the Lord's Prayer all the way through at a slow and even pace as you concentrate solely on those words and nothing else. Martin Luther suggests using that simple test to challenge a Christian who believes that they have conquered sin in this life.

Finally, we miss Him when He really comes to us in His Sacrament. No matter what we've been taught, our senses and reason still want to tell us that what we receive in Holy Communion is only bread and wine. Even though we have a more complete picture of the Scriptures, we are typically just as blind as these two disciples were on that first Easter almost 2000 years ago.

Thankfully, the Lord doesn't leave us in this blind state. He has sent the Holy Spirit to open our eyes, and to show us that there is more going on here than we can really see. It's the Holy Spirit who gives us brief glimpses of what is to come. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, God has revealed to us the same things that Jesus taught those two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He's continuing to teach us the same things today no matter how old a person might be. What the Spirit is teaching us is easily summarized in a hymn refrain, "Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!"

The first statement was already clear to all of them, Christ had died. They just didn't know that He died for their sins like we know now. The second statement they knew but didn't understand, Christ is risen! It took meeting Jesus face to face and having the Holy Spirit sent to them to really get the full meaning of these two truths. And the final statement, "Christ will come again!" That is a promise that we are all still waiting to have fulfilled with His Second Coming. The best truly is yet to come.

Until that day arrives, we meet Jesus face to face in the same way that these two men did in Emmaus, through the breaking of the bread. The Savior chose to use that means to reveal Himself to the disciples that day, and He uses the same method to come to each of us when we get to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion. He'll do it again when we get to meet again. In His Sacrament is where heaven meets earth, and we are given a brief glimpse of His glory and a foretaste of the great feast that is to come. Holy Communion is a direct encounter with God when we come to His table, and it is always new for us again just as His blessings are new to us every single day.

But there is one more part to this morning's Gospel account. The two men had a response to what they had seen and heard. "...they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem...Then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread." We are called to respond to this Good News in the same way, to remember what He has taught us, and then to go out and tell others what has happened. Tell them the Good News of His Gospel that Christ has died, and Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, and He will come again! Alleluia! Amen.