

Traveling Companion

April 19, 2026

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, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 18 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?" 19 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, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 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. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 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. 24 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." 25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" 27 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. 29 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. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. 32 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?" 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their

companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

There is a movie that you can watch for free on Youtube entitled "The Way." It stars Martin Sheen and it is about the famous "Camino de Santiago" or the "Way of St. James." It is a 500 mile trek that goes across northern Spain. It ends at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela where St. James is believed to be buried. Steve Shive, who is our Interim Executive Presbyter, and who is going to be preaching for me in a couple of weeks when we go to YPM has made this trek or better known as pilgrimage.

This is a picture of his scallop shell that the pilgrims get when they are making this journey. The shell is a symbol of the many paths that lead to the same destination. In the early days it was practical to be able to use it for drinking water and as a food utensil. Now it is a symbol of the pilgrimage and honors a safe passage through the region. There are also symbols of the shell painted on posts to mark their way.

If you are from the region these symbols hold an important significance. It reminds people of the journey, the sacrifice and the commitment to "finding your own way." This trip draws a distinction between being a tourist and a pilgrim. "Basically a tourist travels from one place and hopes to be entertained in a new place. While a pilgrim is seeking a

realignment of life and maybe a new calling or pursuit," according to a sermon that Steve Shive has preached before.

The symbols and the journey fit in well with our passage from Luke's gospel known as the Emmaus Road. The journey begins with a follower of Jesus named Cleopas and a companion. This is the only mention of this person in scripture. But they are traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus. It is about 7 miles. They are walking after the crazy events of that special Sunday morning. The women had gone to the tomb and it was empty. They came back and told the others. Peter ran off to see what was going on and then returned dumbfounded. Now the women said that they had seen the risen Lord, but why would a group of men listen to women right?

They begin the journey home, not sure what to make of it all. Along the way they meet another traveler who asks them "what's up?" Dumbfounded by the whole experience they tell the stranger about Jesus of Nazareth, worthy in deeds and teachings they say. They assign blame for his death amongst both the religious officials of the day and the occupying government. Then they tell the crazy story of resurrection.

Before we get too far with this we need to understand that even though we are removed from this story it really is quite bizarre. Dead people do not come back to life. They surely do not show up and say tadah! Look at me! If the person you are following and putting all your eggs into that basket gets killed it is much safer to head for the hills or at least Emmaus.

However, this time along the way the stranger begins to have a discussion with them about Jesus. He tells them that all of this happened to fulfill prophecy. Then going all the way back from the time of Moses to the present the fulfillment of God's plan is being revealed. Jesus was the culmination of this plan.

Now we have to pause for a moment. The fulfillment of the plan does not come in the death of their beloved Jesus. The fulfillment comes in the resurrection of Jesus. Sometimes in our world today we want to get stuck in the negatives. See he was killed. See we are paying too much for gas and groceries. We are fighting a war. All those things are bad. All of those things do not promote what Jesus came to do and that was to usher in the kingdom, the reign of God. The fulfillment, the completion comes in the resurrection. Making all things new. This is the beginning of the pilgrimage for those walking that day and for us. Are we willing to see life different from the rest of the world, or do we get stuck in death and become just tourists.

They get to the home and invite the stranger to stay with them. To share a meal. Again, the rules of today are upended. They are willing to attend to the needs of a stranger, another pilgrim just because. They do not ask if he has any money. They do not ask for proper creds, they see a pilgrim and ask if they can offer hospitality.

At first he says no, but they convince him to stay. Not only do they offer their own place but they beg him to stay. He says yes and they sit

down to have a meal. He takes the bread and blesses it. Then he breaks the bread. Two very distinct acts that remind us of the story in which he shared a meal with his disciples. Immediately their eyes were opened and they recognized the man as Jesus. What did it take for their eyes to be opened. The meal being presented in that way. The symbols of Christ being shared. Just as the scallop shell is a symbol for the Camino, the breaking of the bread in this way reminded them and us of Christ offered for us in the breaking of the bread.

It is amazing how symbols can trigger certain images and memories for all of us. They can be both positive and negative. They can stand for violence or for peace. They can stand for freedom or oppression. Based upon each person's experience, symbols can mean different things to different people.

The breaking of the bread opened their eyes and they said did not our hearts burn while we were listening to him. Hearts burning is an important metaphor in this passage. It means that their understanding was deepened on the road. In the process of walking the path with Jesus their understanding grew and opened them to see the risen Christ.

When I watched the movie "The Way" this week there is a line that keeps sticking out for me. Sheen meets a priest along the route. The priest asks if he is walking the Camino for a specific reason. Sheen says, "I am not very religious." The priest says, "Religion has nothing to do with this—nothing

at all.” It reminds me that when we get all bound up in religion for religion’s sake we miss the breaking of the bread. We miss having our eyes opened up to the fulfillment in the resurrection.

Following any institution blindly is a recipe for disaster. It does not matter if it is politics or religion. The pilgrimage is about seeking the truth. It is not in believing what others want us to believe. It is knowing to whom we belong to. We are God’s creation, meant to serve one another as Jesus serves us in the breaking of the bread.

One final piece to this story. When their eyes are opened they go back to Jerusalem, another 7 miles, and they tell the others that they have seen the risen Lord. It’s a story that is so good you can’t keep from sharing it with your best friends. What Cleopas and companion have seen is confirmed by Peter as seeing the risen Lord as well. Peter the one who walked away and denied Jesus was also redeemed in his seeing of the resurrection through Christ.

May our travels become a pilgrimage. May our walks of life reveal the resurrected Christ. May the symbols point us to the breaking of bread, Christ shared among us. And may religion never get in the way of a personal encounter with the one who loved us first. Amen.