

The Third Sunday of Easter

April 19, 2026

Text: Luke 24:13-35

*“Where is Jesus?”*

*“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe”* (John 20:25). We think that we need to see and feel God to believe in Him, don't we? Early in my life as a Christian, I studied the Bible at a Pentecostal Bible College. There, I actually learned to be a lot like Thomas: I wanted to see God do miracles in answer to my prayers, and I wanted to feel His presence with me. Most of the time I was frustrated and fearful. I didn't always feel like He was with me (Truthfully though, I didn't really even know what that would feel like). I didn't see the answers to many of the prayers I prayed. I worried: what did I need to do to get the Lord's attention? Like poor Thomas after Jesus' death, I felt sad and alone, wanting to live with Jesus, but not sure where to find Him.

The two men who set out from Jerusalem for their home in Emmaus seem to have felt the same. The Passover festival just ended had been overshadowed by the dark gloom of the cross. Jesus was dead, gone, and with Him so went the hopes that they had cherished. Mournfully, they walked home, rehearsing together the tragedy they had experienced.

But they weren't alone. A stranger came up from behind them and matched their pace. Curious, he asked them what they were talking about.

His question stopped them in their tracks. “You don’t know? How can that be?” they wondered.

Misfortune and grief can do that to us. They strike us with such painful force, and we respond with such shock and confusion, that it seems like the whole world is changed. Ours certainly is, but not so for everyone. “What happened?” the curious stranger asked them.

They told him about Jesus, the prophet from God whose words and acts were so great that they had been sure that He was the long-awaited Saviour of their nation. Then antagonistic religious leaders rose up against Him and had Him arrested and crucified. Jesus was dead, gone, and without Him, so was their hope. That morning some women had surprised them with the report that Jesus’ tomb was empty and that some angels had said that He was alive, but to them that seemed too good to be true.

The stranger’s response to their story sounded hauntingly familiar. *“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?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning [the Christ].”*

How did this man know the Scriptures so well? Was he telling them that the death of their Lord was all part of God’s plan? Where had they heard that before? As they approached their home, they saw that the

stranger intended to go past them and continue on his journey. So they prevailed upon him to stop at their house and rest for the night with them.

As the men prepared the table for the evening meal, they urged their guest make himself comfortable. They set out bread, and perhaps some wine and dried fish, as well. As the hosts sat down with their guest, he took it upon himself to break the bread and give thanks to God for the meal.

All we know about these two residents of Emmaus is that they were followers of Jesus, not among the Twelve, but disciples, still. They probably were not present at the Passover meal, Jesus' last with the Twelve. But Jesus ate many meals with His followers. The evangelists describe two miraculous meals at which Jesus multiplied a small meal into a feast to feed thousands. In both those instances, Jesus began by taking the bread and giving thanks to God for His provision.

In that moment, everything fell into place: this was Jesus, walking and talking with them all the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus! The instant that they believed and saw Him, Jesus vanished from their sight. They no longer needed to see Jesus though, for they believed that He was truly risen from the dead. Jesus' words along the road had reminded them how He had taught them before His death that He must be killed and rise again on the third day. With haste, they returned to Jerusalem that night to share their faith with the other disciples.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia! We do not need to see Him or feel Him to believe this, but He has given us His Word in the faithful testimony of the evangelists - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus said that He must go to Jerusalem to die, and that He would be raised from the dead on the third day, and then He did it! He promised that He died for our sins, and that He was raised to justify or declare righteous all those born in sin and alienated from God. Peace be with you: Jesus has robbed sin of its terrible power to cut you off from God's presence! God forgives you for every sin you have or will ever commit because His Son died for them all. Nothing can separate us from God's love in Him!

Our Living Lord is always with us. He promises this to all who believe in Him. But we shouldn't try to draw near to Him in ways that seems good to us. Jesus never promised that we would feel His presence. Feelings or no feelings, Christ did promise that His regenerating Spirit came to dwell in our hearts through baptism: *'For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!''* (Romans 8:15).

Jesus has promised that He is with us in His Word: *"my sheep hear my voice"* (John 10). When the two Emmaus disciples recognized Jesus, they also recalled what Jesus had told them in the past, and then they returned to the fellowship of the disciples to tell them the good news. Jesus promised, *"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst"* (Matthew 18). It is good and right for us to come together

regularly to hear the Word of God read, preached and taught to help us to live as children of God corrected, comforted and guided by His Word.

Because of Jesus' promise, we also recognize our Risen Lord with us in His holy meal that we eat and drink together at this altar. "Take, eat, this is my body given for you. Take and drink: this is my blood shed for you, the blood of my covenant, for the forgiveness of your sins." Through this meal, Jesus dwells with us and in us, and we in Him. As He promised, He is with us always to the end of this age. *"He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since he always lives make intercession for [us]."* (Hebrews 7:25).

"Christ with us": that is eternal life in a nutshell. Now we find Him with us through His Word and Sacraments, and after this life, the same, but in glorious perfection. John's vision gives us the promise: *'Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away"'* (Revelation 21:1-4).

So rejoice and live within the blessing of our Crucified and Risen Lord: *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"* (John 20:31). Your Lord is with you; He never leaves you. He calls you to live in the faith that He saves you from all sin, and gives you a place in God's eternal family. Listen to His Word to hear His faithful voice. Confess its truth, answer Him with bold prayers, and give yourself to love others fearlessly. Meditate upon God's precious promises, trust them as your life, and praise Him who fulfils them all for us. Feast on God's saving grace as you eat at this altar and look forward to greater feast to come. Go out from each divine service confidently saying, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.