

**New Life Episcopal Church
Uniontown, OH**

**A Sermon for the 3rd Sunday after Easter
April 19, 2026**



The Supper at Emmaus, Caravaggio

Preacher: Scott Bridges

Click Here for today's Readings:

[Third Sunday of Easter – The Episcopal Church](#)

- Acts 2:14a,36-41.
- 1 Peter 1:17-23
- Luke 24:13-35
- Psalm 116:1-3, 10-17

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
You who draw near to the weary and walk beside the brokenhearted,
open my lips to speak Your truth with clarity and compassion.
Open our hearts to receive Your Word with hope.
And open the eyes of our faith,
that we may behold Your Son in all His redeeming work.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Opening: Fellow Travelers on the Road

We enter today's Gospel not as spectators, but as fellow travelers on the road.

Thomas Cahill, in his book *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, writes that the **Emmaus** story is “*one of the most tender and revealing portraits of the risen Jesus*”— a Christ who chooses not to dazzle, but to accompany; not to overwhelm, but to walk beside. That is the Jesus we meet today.

Because even in Eastertide — when alleluias ring — many of us still carry the weight of the Passion. We **each** have known what it is to walk with hearts that are heavy, to move forward while grief clings to us, to whisper our own version of the disciples' words: “*We had hoped.*”

And these two disciples—ordinary followers—are walking away from Jerusalem. Away from pain. Away from community. We've each walked that road as well.

Luke tells us that Jesus Himself comes near and walks with them, yet *"their eyes were kept from recognizing Him."* Grief can blind us. Confusion can block us from awareness. Sometimes the risen Christ is right beside us, and we simply cannot see Him.

And this inability to see through grief is not unique to these two disciples.

On Easter, we heard John's Gospel tell us that Mary Magdalene stood outside the empty tomb, weeping, and she did not recognize Jesus standing right in front of her.

Grief can blur the familiar.
Tears can make hope look like a stranger.

Sometimes the risen Christ is closer than we dare imagine — and we only recognize Him when He speaks our name, or breaks the bread, or walks beside us on the road.

And so, the Collect becomes our prayer as much as theirs:
"Open the eyes of our faith."

This is where Emmaus begins—on the road, in the ache, in the not – knowing.

And it is precisely there that Jesus meets us.

I. Christ Meets Us in Our Footsteps

The Emmaus story is a story of footsteps—slow, heavy, grief - laden steps. And into those footsteps Jesus steps.

He doesn't wait for them to be ready.

He doesn't wait for them to understand resurrection.

He simply draws near.

Cahill notes that Jesus appears here as a companion— *“a fellow traveler who enters their sorrow before He reveals their hope.”* That is the Christ who meets them on the road.

He matches His pace to theirs.

He listens before He speaks.

He asks questions that invite them to open their hearts.

“What are you discussing as you walk along?”

A simple question that opens a door inside them.

This is the risen Christ:

not rushing, not correcting from afar,

but entering the rhythm of our walking,

sharing the dust of our road,

letting our story be told before He tells His own.

Most of us have known moments like that—

a friend who called at the right time,

a nurse who spoke gently when fear was loud,

a neighbor who lingered a little longer on the porch,
the gift of a quart of soup when you needed it most.

Looking back, we realize:

Christ met us in our footsteps.

And there have been moments when **you** were the one who fell into step
with someone else—

when **you** listened, or stayed, or asked the right question without knowing
why.

Only later did you realize:

You were Christ's presence for them.

This is the grace of the Gospel:

Jesus meets us where we are—

and sometimes **He** meets others through us.

And all of this — every step, every question, every unnoticed kindness —
prepares the heart for what comes next.

Before the Scriptures are opened,
before the bread is broken,
Christ has already been walking beside us.

II. Christ Opens the Word

After walking with them, listening to them, honoring their grief, Jesus
opens the Scriptures.

“Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them the things about Himself.”

Christ is not merely an instructor handing out answers.
Christ is an interpreter – helping them see what was there all along.

The Scriptures are not a puzzle.
They are a living Word waiting to be opened.

Not just a re-reading of the verses, but a changing of the lens – through which these disciples see the Messiah, not as a political victor, but as the suffering servant who redeems through love.

And as He speaks, their hearts begin to burn—not with fear or confusion, but with recognition. Hope flickers again. Their story begins to make sense.

This is what happens whenever Christ opens the Word—**Hearts** are opened, hope rekindles, and people begin to see their story differently.

The living Word awakens, heals, and transforms.

And Christ still opens the Word today—
through preaching, through study, through bedside reading,
through the quiet conversation where one person’s insight becomes another’s hope.

When we listen deeply to one another, when we honor each other’s gifts, when we help each other see God’s presence in our stories, the living Word becomes visible among us.

The Scriptures open the heart.
And the table opens the eyes.

III. Christ Revealed in the Breaking of Bread: Transformative Hospitality

At Emmaus, hospitality becomes the doorway to revelation.

The disciples urge the stranger, “Stay with us.”

A simple invitation.

A small act of welcome.

And in that moment, everything turns.

Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them—the same pattern as the Last Supper, the same pattern we enact at this altar.

And in the breaking of the bread, their eyes are opened.

Not by argument.

Not by proof.

But by shared table.

By welcome offered.

By community formed around a meal.

This is transformative hospitality — the kind of welcome that doesn’t simply offer comfort, but opens eyes, forms community, and reveals Christ Himself.

Christ is made known in the breaking of the bread—
and in the people gathered around it.

Communion is not merely bread and wine.
Communion is the formation of a people—
a people who welcome the stranger,
who listen deeply,
who make room at the table,
who embody the hospitality of Christ.

The Psalm gives us its quiet refrain:

“I will lift up the cup of salvation...”

A heart awakened.

A life turning back toward God.

Just as the disciples rise from the table — hearts burning, eyes opened — because they have recognized Christ in the breaking of the bread, and they cannot keep that news to themselves. They go back to Jerusalem to share what they have seen.

IV. Closing: Hearts Burning, Eyes Opened, Lives Ready — An Invitation to Emmaus Practices

When Christ is recognized in the breaking of the bread, something awakens – in those disciples – and in each of us.

My eyes are opened.

Your hearts are burning.

Our lives are suddenly pointed in a new direction.

Cahill says Emmaus shows us a Messiah who chooses to be recognized in relationship – in companionship, in conversation, in shared bread.

And witness often looks like the very things Jesus did on the road:

Breaking bread with those who need community.

Listening to those who need to be heard.

Walking with someone who needs companionship.

It echoes that familiar poem about the footprints in the sand—how, in the hardest moments, there is only one set of footprints because God was carrying us. Emmaus is the Gospel’s own version of that truth:

**Christ walks with us when we cannot walk alone,
and sometimes He carries us through the kindness of another person.**

These are **Emmaus practices** — habits of hospitality, companionship, and shared Scripture that make Christ’s presence visible in ordinary life.

And these practices are not new to our parish. New Life already walks this road; Christ’s transformative hospitality is already part of the heartbeat of this community.

You welcome the stranger.

You listen deeply.

You make room at the table.

You open the Word with one another.

This is who you are.

So, I invite each of you to take one Emmaus practice with you into the world this week. Just one – and be Christ’s presence on someone’s road.

- **Walk with someone who is hurting.**
- **Open the Word with someone who needs hope.**
- **Share a meal with someone who feels alone.**
- **Offer the kind of welcome that says, “Stay with us.”**

Choose one.

Live it with intention.

And trust that Christ will meet you in it.

These practices are not programs.

They are a way of being a resurrection people.

And so, as you and I each come to this table today, I invite you to pray the Collect once more:

that the eyes of **your** faith may be opened,
that **you** may behold Christ in all His redeeming work,
and that **your** walking, **your** listening, **your** hospitality—
and all of our Emmaus practices—
may reveal Him to others.

Amen.