

**RECOGNIZING JESUS IN THANKSGIVING****Luke 24:13-35**

**Intro:** At the end of the service this morning we are going to celebrate the Eucharist. Some of you might know what that word means, but I'm sure some of you do not or at least find it very unfamiliar. The Eucharist is also known as Holy Communion in many of the more liturgical churches and certainly the Catholic Church. We most often call it Communion in the Brethren in Christ tradition but sometimes it is referred to as the Lord's Supper because Jesus first instituted it at the Last Supper on the night before he was crucified. This is when Luke records, *And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And he took bread, and when he had given thanks (εὐχαριστήσας), he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* Luke 22:14-19

Now back to the word Eucharist. It comes from the Greek noun εὐχαριστία meaning "thanksgiving" and it is found in the New Testament passages that refer to the Last Supper – like the passage I just read to you from Luke. Paul also was talking about Communion, specifically how it had been defiled by the Corinthians, when he told them, *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks (εὐχαριστήσας), he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* 1 Corinthians 11:23-24.

So, Eucharistia means Thanksgiving. In case you haven't noticed with all the Christmas decorations going up, this week is Thanksgiving week, so what a good week to celebrate our thankfulness to God for the sacrificial death AND resurrection of his son Jesus Christ.

Specifically I want us all to recognize Jesus today as we gather at the table and break the bread and drink the cup, and then this week as we gather at the table on Thanksgiving Day and realize more than ever the blessings we have in him.

I want to do that by looking at an Easter passage. Yep, Easter. I want to talk about Jesus and his meeting with two disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

Let me read passage that to you **(Read Luke 24:13-35)**

Now, on to our Thanksgiving message: These disciples were thankful beyond imagination. They had been in such despair that they had clearly given up. They, like we 21<sup>st</sup> century Christ Followers, are too prone to allow the bad to block out the good. We need to make sure we . . .

**Don't discount the Good News because of the outside noise of the bad news**

- Let me explain: As I just said the disciples on the 7 mile trip to Emmaus had essentially given up. They . . . *had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.* (v. 21). So it was a very sad walk as they trudged toward home with hopes and dreams smashed. He had died on the cross on Friday, and now three days later, his body was gone!
- It's interesting they included the information about three days. These disciples remembered Jesus saying something about three days, so they gave it that much time as they waited around in Jerusalem, actually taking some risks in so doing because there was a good chance the associates of this crucified one might be next to be hunted down and executed. But some women had been to the tomb that very morning and found it empty. The disciples recited what they knew, *They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.*" Luke 24:23-24. They discounted the fact that the women said they had seen angels and the angels said Jesus was risen. That was just woman talk! That was too good to be true. They ignored the women and believed the men. Jesus was gone and the tomb was empty. The good times were gone. The hope of a Messiah who would redeem Israel was gone too.
- There was no use staying around – it was time to go home. So they did. They were as low and flat as the dusty road they were walking on. G. Campbell Morgan writes, *"This is where the whole Christian*

*movement would have ended, had there been no resurrection.”* But it didn’t end there. The resurrected Jesus himself joined them on the journey proving that . . .

### **When we give up, Jesus shows up**

- I love this part of the story. The text says . . . *their eyes were kept from recognizing him.* (v. 16). Now the title of this message is Recognizing Jesus in Thanksgiving, and that what I’m determined to help us do this morning, but on that Sunday afternoon, that first Easter Day, when Jesus joined them, they did not know he was their own beloved rabbi.
- I can visualize Jesus overtaking the two walkers as they slogged along and sadly discussed the events of the past days and of that morning. And when the time was right he feigned ignorance and asked “What are you discussing?” And the language of our text brings a clear picture of the response of the disciples. These two travelers were simply astonished that Jesus didn't know what had been going on over the previous days. The word picture we have is of them simply stopping in the road, and looking at Jesus with incredulity, that he could not know what had happened to Jesus of Nazareth! Now I know God had kept them from knowing who this stranger was, but it still brings a question to my mind. In fact let’s ask it of our selves: Are we so caught up in current events and issues that we miss Jesus right in front of us? I pray that this day, and Thanksgiving Day, and certainly all year round, we never miss that Jesus is right here with us and for us.
- Part of the issue is, and Jesus set about to correct it, was these disciples, and often we too, forget that . . .

### **Jesus is so much more than a great prophet and a nice guy**

- Let’s look at this roadway discussion some more. They are astonished this man does not know what has happened. The exact words are *“Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”* (18b) and Jesus, playing along, asks “What things?” to which they respond, their words dripping with despair, *Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.* Luke 24:19-21.
- But he WAS the one who would redeem Israel . . . AND anyone else who believes on him. Joel Greene writes, *“What is lacking in their interpretation of Jesus’s significance, however, is the understanding that, as God’s prophet, Jesus must fulfill the destiny of the prophets: rejection, suffering, and death. They thus misunderstood the prophetic pattern in the scriptures that Jesus fulfills. What is more, even though they regard Jesus as a prophet, they have failed to take with appropriate seriousness his prophecies regarding his own suffering, death, and resurrection. They juxtaposed “the people” over against chief priests and leaders...but they fail to see beyond his crucifixion to the possibility of his continuing to serve as Israel’s redeemer.”* (End Quote)
- That’s where Jesus, still a stranger, takes over the discussion, and explains all that his fellow travelers were overlooking. He replies to their despair with, *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 himself. Luke 24:26-27
- They didn’t realize it yet, but that is when their case of heartburn began – even before they arrived at their destination in Emmaus – the words this stranger used were beginning a slow burn in their soul. That’s why they didn’t want him to go on. Oh yes, night travel on that road was dangerous, but in truth, they wanted more time with this guy. So they invited him in for a good meal and overnight lodging. But they didn’t get past the beginning of the meal – when he took the bread and he broke it – and they KNEW! THEY KNEW THIS WAS THEIR RISEN LORD!
- We only know the name of one of the travelers – his name was Cleopas, and I like to think the other person was his wife, Mary, who had been with Mary the Mother of Jesus at the cross on the day of the crucifixion (John 19:25). The spelling of that Mary’s husband’s name is slightly different and we REALLY don’t know, but I’d like to think this was a husband and wife who had invited Jesus into their home. And it’s already obvious that, while they were not of the original twelve, they were very much faithful disciples. So they had likely been there when Jesus broke the bread and divided the fish when the 5,000 were fed

with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish. And maybe when Jesus had, at another time fed 4,000 in the same way. In any case, they'd seen it before, how he took bread, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them and now, finally! They KNEW it was him. Their eyes were opened! They recognized Jesus!

- And he was gone. Just like that, the heartburn flared and they said, DID YOU SEE THAT?!!!!. Actually no, they said something infinitely more profound and moving, "*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?*" (v 32a). And it was Thanksgiving Day!

**Conclusion:** They busted it back to Jerusalem! You bet they did! They did that seven miles in record time. They found the eleven remaining, and probably still cowering disciples and told them "*The Lord has risen indeed!*" (v 34a). They told them about how the Risen Lord had explained everything to them on the road and how they recognized him *in the breaking of the bread.* (v.35b).

That is my prayer for us this Thanksgiving week. As we gather at the Thanksgiving table on Thursday may we forget the grief of the world around us and recognize the One who overcomes the grief of the world. And let's start today, as we gather at this table of Communion – known by so many as Eucharist – Thanksgiving. And that we recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup. Amen.