

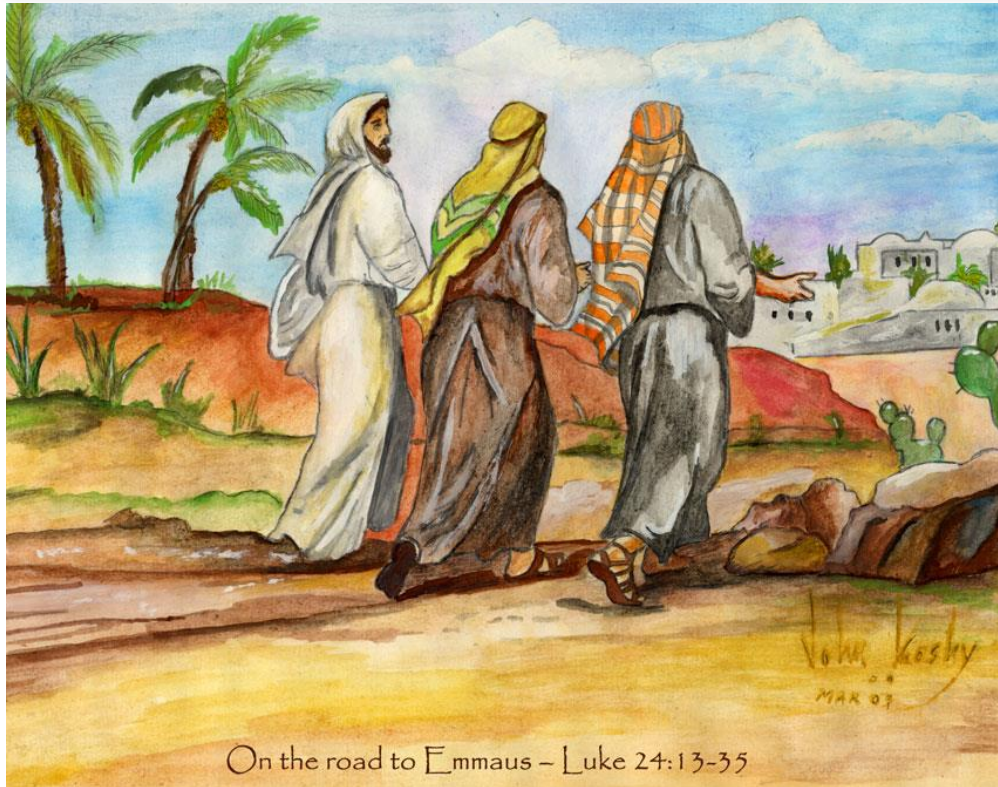
**SERMON FOR MAY 4, 2013 EASTER 3**

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i  
United Church of Christ

Scripture: Acts 2:14a, 36-41; **Luke 24:13-35**

Message: **"GOD is Always Along with Us on Our  
Life's Journey!"**

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On the road to Emmaus - Luke 24:13-35



## **GATHERING IN THE WORD OF GOD**

Easter, sometimes called Eastertide, is celebrated for 50 days in the Church to Pentecost Sunday—which is June 8, 2014!

The Bible teaches and reminds us of the *new life* we live in Jesus. Our readings this morning line out this *new life* we are to live as Christians. Our Bible constitutes and represents ancient testimony. Practicing Easter today is risky because it contradicts what our society and the world does—greed, anxiety, and violence. The practice of Easter life is to be one of joy as Jesus commands that we are to “love one another.”

## HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

### First Lesson: Acts 2:14a; 36-41 (The VOICE Bible)

*This miraculous sign of God's kingdom is astounding. The followers of Jesus are not known as people who drink too much wine with breakfast, so this fantastic episode requires some other kind of explanation. Unfortunately it is impossible to comprehend or explain what transpires on Pentecost. But this is not a novelty performance; rather, it is the foundation of the kingdom of God in that it establishes the church as the place where God moves on the earth through his Spirit. They expect a political kingdom, but God moves in people's hearts to transform individuals and communities.*

<sup>14a</sup>As the twelve stood together, Peter shouted to the crowd—

<sup>36</sup> Everyone in Israel should now realize with certainty *what God has done*: God has made Jesus both Lord and Anointed King—this same Jesus whom you crucified. <sup>37</sup> When the people heard this, their hearts were pierced; and they said to Peter and his fellow apostles,

**Pilgrims:** Our brothers, what should we do?

**Peter:** <sup>38</sup> Reconsider your lives; change your direction. Participate in the ceremonial washing of baptism in the name of Jesus God's Anointed, *the Liberating King*. Then your sins will be forgiven, and the gift of the Holy Spirit will be yours. <sup>39</sup> For the promise of *the Spirit* is for you, for your children, for all people—even those considered outsiders and outcasts—the Lord our God invites everyone to come to Him.

*Just as God raised Jesus from a decaying body, Peter holds out hope for God to liberate those who follow him from their decaying culture.*

<sup>40</sup> Peter was pleading and offering many logical reasons to believe. <sup>41</sup> Whoever made a place for his message in their hearts received the baptism; in fact, that day alone, about 3,000 people joined the disciples.

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Our Bible readings including Peter and company make it clear to us that the disciples watched Jesus die from a distance. The very ones who had promised that they would never leave Jesus' side ended up leaving Jesus' side so fast that the dust flew up from their sandals as they ran away. Over there, some distance away, was the Son of GOD, GOD-in-skin, the Messiah—writhing and struggling on a cross to save the world.

But hasn't it always been like that ever since—that humanity has turned its back on GOD and tried to do it in our own?

Jesus, the Son of GOD, came to solve the problem. Jesus journeyed directly into our far-country-of-sin—coming down personally and in person—to do what all of us who lived afar off could not do: bring about reunion and reunification of Creator and creature—all of us!

So Peter preaches a sermon. "This Jesus whom **you** crucified . . ." Peter said. Of course no one that day and in that crowd of people had actually done anything to Jesus. Still . . . Jesus was crucified precisely because we are all far off from Jesus and; left to our own devices—we would still keep our distance even to this day. Lots of people do—after all.

So what's the solution? According to Peter the way to draw near is baptism. We become united to Christ Jesus

in the very thing that initially caused even the disciples to back away—Christ’s death. We repent. We own up to the fact that what happened to Jesus was our fault, our doing. Those were our sins laid on Jesus. We own up to that ugly fact and so in baptism we die with Jesus. We drown. But—if it’s Jesus we to drown with—it’s also Jesus we rise up with!

### **Can I hear an ALLELUIA!**

- ✓ So because of Easter we have reunion with GOD!
- ✓ Thanks be to GOD for Jesus of Nazareth whom GOD made both Lord and Christ!
- ✓ Thanks be to GOD that all of us who have been afar off have now been brought back from hat far country to live with our GOD forever.

### **Can I hear another ALLELUIA!**

#### **Focus Lesson: Luke 24:13-35 (The VOICE Bible)**

<sup>13</sup> *Picture this:* That same day, two other disciples (*not of the eleven*) are traveling the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. <sup>14</sup> As they walk along, they talk back and forth about all that has transpired during recent days. <sup>15</sup> While they’re talking, discussing, and conversing, Jesus catches up to them and begins walking with them, <sup>16</sup> but for some reason they don’t recognize Him.

**Jesus:** <sup>17</sup> *You two seem deeply engrossed in conversation.* What are you talking about as you walk along this road? They stop walking and just stand there, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> One of them—Cleopas is his name—speaks up.

**Cleopas:** You must be the only visitor in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about what’s been going on over the last few days.

**Jesus:** <sup>19</sup> What are you talking about?



**Two Disciples:** It's all about the man named Jesus of Nazareth. He was a mighty prophet who did amazing miracles and preached powerful messages in the sight of God and everyone around. <sup>20</sup> Our chief priests and authorities handed him over to be executed—crucified, in fact. <sup>21</sup> We had been hoping that he was the One—you know, the One who would liberate all Israel *and bring God's promises*. Anyway, on top of all this, just this morning—the third day after the execution—<sup>22</sup> some women in our group really shocked us. They went to the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup> but they didn't see his body anywhere. Then they came back and told us they did see something—a vision of heavenly messengers—and these messengers said that Jesus was alive. <sup>24</sup> Some people in our group went to the tomb to check it out, and just as the women had said, it was empty. But they didn't see Jesus.

**Jesus:** <sup>25</sup>Come on, men! Why are you being so foolish? Why are your hearts so sluggish when it comes to believing what the prophets have been saying all along? <sup>26</sup> Didn't it have to be this way? Didn't the Anointed One have to experience these sufferings in order to come into his glory?

*Luke has told his story. It ends with joy and praise. The crucified Jesus has been resurrected and has ascended to heaven to take his place at God's right hand just as the ancient prophets predicted. For the band of disciples, Easter joy has eclipsed Good Friday's sorrow. This ending point becomes the starting point for Luke's sequel, known as the Acts of the Apostles. The story isn't really over; it's just begun. The life and ministry of Jesus that Luke has just recounted is the mustard-seed stage of the kingdom of God that continues to grow and grow and grow. Now it's time for this Kingdom to fill the world. If Luke's Gospel is about what Jesus began to do and teach, then Luke's sequel is about what the risen Jesus continues to do and teach through his followers for millennia. Luke writes in hope that future believers will be taken up into this beautiful story that will never, ever end.*

<sup>27</sup> Then he begins with Moses and continues, prophet by prophet, explaining the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures, showing how they were talking about the very things that had happened to Jesus. <sup>28</sup> About this time, they are nearing their

destination. Jesus keeps walking ahead as if he has no plans to stop there,<sup>29</sup> but they convince him to join them.

**Two Disciples:** Please, be our guest. It's getting late, and soon it will be too dark to walk.

So he accompanies them to their home.<sup>30</sup> When they sit down at the table for dinner, he takes the bread in his hands, he gives thanks for it, and then he breaks it and hands it to them.<sup>31</sup> At that instant, *two things happen simultaneously*: their eyes are suddenly opened so they recognize him, and he instantly vanishes—just disappears before their eyes.

**Two Disciples (to each other):**<sup>32</sup> *Amazing! Weren't our hearts on fire within us while he was talking to us on the road? Didn't you feel it all coming clear as he explained the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures?*

<sup>33</sup> So they get up immediately and rush back to Jerusalem—*all seven miles*—where they find the eleven gathered together—the eleven plus a number of others.<sup>34</sup> *Before Cleopas and his companion can tell their story*, the others have their own story to tell.

**Other Disciples:** The Lord has risen indeed! It's true! He appeared to Simon!

<sup>35</sup> Then the two men report their own experience—their conversation along the road, their moment of realization and recognition as he broke the bread.

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The two travelers in Luke 24 seem to think that by getting out of Jerusalem they too could walk away from their grief—and leave the bad memories of the crucifixion and Good Friday behind them. Jerusalem had become like an *empty house*; the city was haunted with memories of what took place. Jerusalem was the place where their dreams had died. It was time to hit the road and see if they could leave their troubles behind them.

So the two followers of Jesus thought Emmaus maybe would be the place to go but as they walked their conversation kept circling back to the death of Jesus whom they loved and had hoped. **Had** hoped! (*what a wretched pluperfect this is!*). They were talking and talking about all that—failing to forget their troubles and why they had left Jerusalem in the first place!

Then Jesus appears on the road and joins them. “Shalom! What’s up, friends?” The question catches them up short. After all doesn’t everybody know the latest and what happened in Jerusalem! “Where have you been, my friend” they ask. You must be the only one in the whole country who hasn’t heard about this Jesus being crucified!” It’s probably a sign of the enormity of their grief that they reacted like that.

Well, this stranger on the road must have been one such clueless tourist—because he didn’t seem to know a blessed thing about any of it. So they explain to the stranger—more or less admitting in the end that the one on whom they had pinned their hopes did not pan out. They had made, it appeared, a rather big mistake.

But then, suddenly, the stranger walking with them, who had appeared clueless—changes. He has the audacity and nerve first of all to call these disciples foolish, and before they can object to this, the stranger launches into quite a serious and thorough Bible study. And after that, the rest of the trek to Emmaus just flew by! With breathtaking sweep and exegetical precision and explanation—this anonymous fellow traveler re-tells Scripture’s Story. It is Israel’s story—all right—but the



stranger tells it in quite a new way. The last time they heard anyone talk about the Bible in such an invigorating fashion was . . . well, never mind!

Before they knew it—they were standing at their destination. So Cleopas invites the stranger to stay with them at least for the night. The stranger agrees. After having washed the dust of the journey off faces, hands, and feet—the three find a place to eat. Before they knew what’s happening, the stranger reaches for the flat bread, lifting it up in a striking familiar way. He then gives thanks, breaks it just so, and hands it to Cleopas and his friend.

**They instantly know who this stranger is; but as they are ready to cry out, “Jesus!” Jesus disappears and is gone!**

“I knew it!” Cleopas cried out! Didn’t you wonder about this too! The way he taught us, the way he applied Scripture—wasn’t it eerily familiar all along!” Then they stuffed the bread in their pockets and sprinted and hurried back to Jerusalem—covering the seven miles in record time. A little of their thunder is stolen, however, in that before they can spill the beans of their news, the others say, “The Lord appeared to Simon Peter!” The two then share their Emmaus encounter—making note of the fact that Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread!

## **DOING THE WORD OF GOD**

So what is the Word of God for us on this Third Sunday of Easter?

### **1. ONE: Easter reminds us that we are to practice what Jesus teaches:**

- ✓ Practice what Jesus taught about healing, hospitality and justice seeking!
- ✓ Jesus calls us to compassion and aloha of self and others reminding us of Resurrection and the resiliency of life in the faith of death!
- ✓ Jesus awakens in us to see our grief and disappointment in the larger panorama of divine grace and hospitality!

### **2. TWO: We are to receive and share hospitality with all—including strangers—people we don't know:**

- ✓ If Cleopas and his buddy had not welcomed the stranger—they would not have experienced resurrection at their dinner table!
- ✓ When Jesus vanishes with the breaking of bread—they received warm hearts and good news to share with Jesus' other followers!
- ✓ Our walk with the Risen Christ is an ongoing process of having our anxieties transformed in faith; and our despair, misery, anguish, gloom, loss of hope, loss of heart—transformed in hope!

### **3. THREE: We are a EUCHARISTIC community!**

- ✓ Life as Christians is Eucharistic! All are welcomed to Christ's Table!
- ✓ Jesus comes to us in formal and informal celebration of communion!
- ✓ Jesus comes to us whenever and wherever we share meals with open hearts!
- ✓ Christ comes to us in the hungry stomachs of the poor and houseless-homeless around us and our neighborhoods!
- ✓ We will discover Christ in and by walking with those who hunger for grace and healing!
- ✓ We will find our own wholeness as we invite Christ to be our companion on our daily journeys of our life!
- ✓ We are to live an **"awed"** life for indeed we have one another—the sisters and brothers of TFCCCH! For we are will always be led, fed, kept, and protected by "The Shepherd and guardian of our souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

## **SENDING IN THE WORD OF GOD**

The Emmaus experience reminds us:

1. The two travelers are met on the road.
2. The scriptures are opened for them to understand.
3. They share in a meal that reveals the identity and presence of Jesus Christ.
4. And then are sent to share and live the Good News!

**We are people of the Resurrection! Christ walks with us in our daily lives—the good, the bad, and the ugly!**

When ever and where ever we are on the road and at every mealtime—Jesus comes to us—filled with energy and possibilities—and the joy of Resurrection. We can have a new life and we can be born again—right now, any time at any place! So let's keep moving and chart new adventures because Jesus walks besides us on the road!

