

Rev. Janet R. Doyle  
Elmer Presbyterian Church  
3rd Sunday of Easter  
Sunday, April 19, 2026  
Scripture: Luke 24: 13-35  
Sermon: The Stranger

Have you ever had the experience when you can't see something and it's right in front of you? I think that usually happens when I look in the refrigerator trying to find something. Usually what I am looking for is right in front of me.

Luke 24:13-16 (NIV) "Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him."

The last time they saw Jesus he was dead. He was gone. They thought he was never coming back. They'd made it through the last couple days but are sad and depressed. But now they've heard word from several women who followed Jesus that his body wasn't in the tomb and that angels had appeared to them telling them Jesus is alive. They don't believe and just feel more confused. They'd come to Jerusalem for the Passover feast and now it's time for them to go home.

These two friends are walking home from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. It's about 7 miles from Jerusalem. As they're talking about the crucifixion and empty tomb Jesus himself comes up to them and begins to walk alongside them. This is actually the first time in Luke 24 where we see Jesus alive after the resurrection. The angels announced it in the first 12 verses, but this is the first time Luke shows the living-breathing Jesus to his readers, and he does it in the most unassuming way. Jesus just starts walking alongside them.

The Greek literally says, “their eyes were kept from recognizing him”. He holds them back. Why would God do that? Because God wants them, and us, to see Jesus, but not yet with our eyes. He wants us to first see Jesus in a different way.

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened these past days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.”

They call Jesus a prophet. They no longer say Jesus was the “Messiah” or “Christ.” They’ve lost faith. They’re finding it too hard to believe. They are overwhelmed with grief, and they don’t understand what has happened to Jesus. Jesus is dead and he must have just been a prophet like the prophets of old who died. He can’t possibly be the Messiah chosen by God. The Messiah is supposed to come and liberate his people, and Jesus is dead. When things get dark in our life, when we lose our jobs or a loved one dies, a war, famine, or tragedy, and our hearts don’t sense Christ, it’s easy to say, “Maybe he’s not God, maybe Jesus is not as powerful as I thought, maybe he is dead.” But they were wrong. They couldn’t see hope in that moment, but hope was just around the corner. Hope is here for us as well.

Luke 24:22-24 “In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

Cleopas and his traveling companion don't know about the testimony of the women. They have trouble believing the women, citing the other disciples who didn't see Jesus.

When we're struggling, maybe fatigued or frustrated, and can't see Jesus and can only think of everything wrong with our lives, we should pause and check our memories and ask, "Am I being selective in what I am remembering?" How has Jesus done good things for me and shown himself to me in ways in the past. If he's been good for years and years why would I assume he would stop now? May we not have selective memories but memories full of the goodness of Christ.

But now it's time for Jesus to answer them. And he actually begins to open their eyes to him, but not yet in the visible way they would prefer. Instead he points to himself in the Old Testament.

Luke 22:25-26 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

Jesus scolds them for not having hope and not realizing what has really happened. They thought the Messiah was going to be a political liberator, but Jesus shows them this isn't what the Messiah was going to do. He didn't come to be victorious like a military leader, but to achieve victory another kind of way, through his own suffering. Now this is a confusing concept to them and all Jews because it doesn't clearly say in the Old Testament that the Messiah is going to suffer. But if we were to look at two passages, Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, they tell us about one who is chosen by God and will suffer, especially the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. So although the suffering Messiah isn't clearly stated, it is implied throughout the Scriptures.

Jesus goes through a bird's eye view of the Old Testament to say that it's all pointing towards him. It's not that every word is about Jesus but that they tell us about our sins and so our need for Jesus and a coming savior. Many passages even prefigure Christ and tell us about him without telling us exactly.

Think about all the ways the scriptures point to Jesus. He is the fulfillment of it all. We need to remember, when you can't see Jesus, look to the scriptures. When you can't see what Jesus is doing in your life or

can't hear him speaking to you, look to the scriptures. Go to your Bible. See him there. Hear him there.

As the two travelers listen to Jesus talking they begin to realize they've missed something. Jesus had come to liberate his people, but not as a mighty warrior but as a sacrificial lamb. But still they don't recognize the one standing in front of them is Jesus. But now they've seen him in the Scriptures and so they're ready.

Luke 24:28-31 says, "As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight."

Jesus pretends to keep going but like good hosts they invite Jesus in to stay with them the night. And when he breaks the bread, much like he did at the feeding of the 5,000 and the Last Supper (Luke 9:16; 22:19), then finally he stops restraining their eyes and they recognize him for who he is as he hands them the bread. Then he's gone. And what do they immediately marvel at—the scriptures!

Luke 24:32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

But we don't yet get to see Jesus like they did. Luke knows that his contemporary audience won't be able to see Jesus, so he wants us to go to the Scriptures to see him. The more we understand God's word the more our hearts will burn for God. Do you want to sense God's presence? Do you want to know Jesus is alive? Dive into God's word! When you can't see Jesus, look to the Scriptures.

Luke 24:33-35 says "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread."

Once we understand how all of the scriptures point to the Messiah needing to suffer and die and rise again it changes everything. We can believe it! Jesus is the one and final sacrificial lamb that takes away the sins of the world. Of course the resurrection happened because that was the plan all along. When you can't see Jesus, look to the Scriptures and to his resurrection.

When your eyes are opened you will see Jesus and the one you thought was a stranger will become your Savior and you will know his peace.

May our eyes be opened, so that we can recognize Jesus in our midst. May our hearts burn with joy as we see our story wrapped up in his. May we always be eager to share the joy of his resurrection and presence among us.