

**“Jesus is known in Word and bread”**  
**4/15/07, Luke 24:1-13**  
**Brentwood First Presbyterian**  
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**Introduction**

The events surrounding the Road to Emmaus occur evening of the resurrection, and are recounted only in the Good News according to Luke. The story on the road to Emmaus is felt to be one of the most profound accounts of the post resurrection Jesus. For me, no appearance of Jesus after the resurrection is more vivid or beautiful than the one on the road to Emmaus.

**Scene 1 The Emmaus disciples hang their heads in defeat**

The disciples’ retreat slowly and hopelessly from Jerusalem toward Emmaus. Leaving the bitter memories of Jerusalem and walking to the village of Emmaus. To Emmaus to escape their despair. They talk sadly about their shattered hopes. Their hope that Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel. It just did not happen the way they thought it would. Over and over again they discussed Jesus’ betrayal. His suffering. And the empty tomb. On what we now call Good Friday, in Jerusalem behind them, their leader and friend was arrested, tried, and crucified. Why had their movement failed? And then the confusion of the empty tomb. They had not processed that yet. But they are headed in the wrong direction. Frederick Buechner writes, “Emmaus is not so much a place as a state of mind. They could have gone any place as long as it was far enough removed from the despair and disillusionment that paralyzed them from making a positive move.”

We all have suffered defeat. Emmaus is wherever we go to make ourselves forget that the world holds nothing sacred. Buying new clothes, indulging our addictions, surfing the internet. We all have suffered defeat, and we all have our Emmauses to which we retreat.

Psychotherapists tell us we can never be healed by retreating from that which gives us psychic pain. We are only healed by facing it. But we do not have to do this alone.

**Scene 2 Jesus’ words burn in their hearts**

Jesus joins the disciples as a stranger, and opens the scriptures to them, explaining while still *in cognito*, why his suffering and death had to happen.

On New Year’s Day, 1929, Ga Tech played UCLA in the Rose Bowl. This game is forgotten except for the interaction between the coach and one of the players, Roy Riegels. Roy picked up a fumble for UCLA, lost his direction, and ran 65 yards toward the wrong goal line. One of his teammates had to tackle him to keep him from scoring for the wrong team. UCLA punted, and Ga Tech blocked the kick and scored a safety. UCLA was demoralized. The UCLA locker room at half time was quiet. No one said anything. Roy sat in the corner with a blanket over his face. Finally, the coach said, “Men, the same

team that played the first half with play the second half.” It was time to go out on the field, and everyone left but Roy. The coach said to Roy, “Didn’t you hear me? The same men who played the first half will play the second half.” Roy, “Coach, I can’t do it. I’ve ruined you. I’ve ruined the team. I’ve ruined myself. I have embarrassed my family. I can’t face the crowd out there.” The coach put his hands on Roy’s shoulder, and said, “Roy, get up and go on back. The game is only half over.”

I used to coach my sons’ youth baseball teams. What good years those were. Every time our team lost a game, I used to say something special to them. I used to ask them, “Do you know the difference between a winner and a loser? They used to say, “A winner wins, and a loser loses.” By the end of the season, I thought them something new. By the end of the season, they said instead, “When knocked down, a loser stays down, and a winner gets back up.” With God’s help, a winner gets back up. Because in God’s eyes, there are no losers.

This is what scriptures do. Just as people with failing vision need glasses to read even the most beautifully printed books, so we must look through scriptures to read the beauty of God. We can see God in creation, but without clear lenses, our vision is fuzzy and incomplete. Scriptures give us corrective vision.

A businessman moderated a church meeting. As committee minutes came forward, he recited the same thing, “If there are no corrections, the minutes as read will stand.” Then someone read the scriptures. He stood up, and said, “If there are no corrections, the scriptures will stand as read.”

Pulpit in rural Virginia, with plaque that says: “We would hear Jesus.” But the two disciples on the road to Emmaus do not recognize Jesus yet. Because recognition of Jesus requires more than just an intellectual event.

### **Scene 3 The disciples know Jesus when he breaks bread**

The disciples invite the stranger into their house. He took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Surprise! The guest becomes the host. The stranger is really a friend. In sharing their bread with a stranger, they recognize their risen Lord. Their hearts burned when Jesus opened the scriptures to them, but their experience of the risen Jesus came at a different time. It came at the breaking of the bread.

Everyone knows the name of the city where Jesus was born. Who can tell me? Yes. Do you know the English translation of the Jewish word, Bethlehem? House of Bread.

In one of the episodes of MASH, Major Winchester is depressed. All the suffering and death he sees daily has gotten to him. Has cracked the shell he uses to protect himself from the horrors around him, and he is defenseless. A soldier is dying. Wanting to talk to someone standing on the edge of this life and the next, Major Winchester takes time to sit with the dying man. The soldier says, "I can't see anything. Hold my hand." The major replies, "I am." "I'm dying," the soldier moans. Major Winchester asks: "Can you see

anything? Can you feel anything? I have to know." But the dying soldier doesn't answer. Before he dies, as if with a voice from a distant place, the soldier's last words were, "I smell bread."

Jesus is no mere memory. He makes himself present in the here and now by breaking and eating of the bread and the pouring and the drinking the cup, and those who partake of this meal are made one body, one people in him. Jesus is present in the uniting power of the Holy Spirit and is received by faith. Jesus joins us to himself. Jesus' presence is more than figurative, more than just an idea or memory. God's Spirit connects the eating and drinking of the bread and cup with the real presence of Jesus, upbuilding the Christian life. The Lord's Supper is a gift, this gift is Jesus himself, given by the Spirit, to all who receive it. Breaking of the bread restores community with Jesus.

### **Conclusion**

Escaping to the internet and clothing stores. Scripture warming our hearts. The smell of bread.

Easter is not over at sundown on Easter Sunday. It stretches into the rest of our lives. And our lives will never be the same. The Lord is risen but comes back to meet us on the road to Emmaus. Through the study of scripture, we find our hearts strangely warmed. We want answers to our questions, and we find them in scripture.

But we also need an experience, an experience of the risen Jesus. Of our risen Lord.

Well I have good news! I smell bread!