

FIRST READING: ACTS 2:14a, 36-41

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel, therefore, know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

EPISTLE: 1 PETER 1:17-25

¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

²² Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³ since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for

“All flesh is like grass
and all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
and the flower falls,

²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever.”

And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

HOLY GOSPEL: LUKE 24:13-35

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had

happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Sermon 16 – Third Sunday of Easter

"Burning Hearts, Blown Minds"

Luke 24:13-35

Dear friends in Christ,

We have, in our Gospel lesson, the other significant appearance of Jesus to the disciples. This starts two disciples, one named Cleopas, another who has no name. These folks were part of that crowd that often goes unlauded and nameless among Christianity today, that is, the many people who were not the twelve apostles but yet followed Jesus. These two are part of that group. Like the apostles, they put their hopes in Jesus, and had those hopes come to dust

when He was crucified. Luke is the only Gospel writer who records this event.

“That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing them.” Their eyes were kept from recognizing him. What does that mean? Well, there are two possibilities, both of them jive with the Scriptures, and it could mean one or both. It could mean that these folks couldn't recognize Jesus because of their sin. Sinners don't recognize Jesus for what He is on their own. That's one of the worst consequences of this disease that we all have, it not only kills us, it blinds us so that we don't even realize how bad off we are, we don't see the truth even when the truth is literally walking alongside us. So this could be that. It also could be that Jesus used some of His divine power to prevent them from recognizing Him for what He was. He kept the lightbulb from going off in their brains. They saw His face, but their brain chemistry wouldn't cooperate, because He was in control of it. This is not unprecedented. Jesus is not without a sense of dramatic timing to make His point, and throughout the Gospels the writers make it pretty clear that the disciples didn't really get Jesus and what He was doing until He Himself makes it clear. Either of these two explanations is acceptable, and regardless of the cause, these two gentlemen didn't know who it was that was walking alongside them.

“And he said to them, 'what is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?' And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas answered him, 'are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?' And he said to them, 'what things?' And they said to him, '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 this was the one to redeem Israel.”

Are you seeing this? They don't get it. These guys are down, they're confused, and they betray their confusion in speaking to Jesus. They call Jesus a prophet. Jesus was so much more, He said clearly to them that He was so much more, but they don't understand. They're still thinking, as they had so often, of Jesus as another prophet, another man who God had sent to the people of Israel. Jesus came to put an end to prophets for a while, to speak to mankind through His words and His actions, directly. Jesus was God Himself, cutting out the middleman for a little bit, showing mankind how far they had fallen, and how far He was willing to go to bring them back to Him. They get close with that final statement, they hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel. They're still thinking of redemption in the terms that were popular at the time. They thought that Jesus would kick out the Romans and give them their freedom and independence back.

Don't think for a minute I'm making fun of these guys or insulting them. In the Emmaus disciples we have a picture of ourselves. Lost, helpless, like sheep led astray. That's us. The next time you start getting tempted to listen to the ego-boosting, I-can-do-anything-I-put-my-mind-to, I'm a self-made man nonsense our society shoves down our throats, take a good look at Emmaus and see yourself in here. These guys are trying and failing to understand Jesus. They can't do it. They need help, they need rescue from their sin, just like we all do. And if someone tells you that you can choose to believe in Jesus, commit your hearts to Jesus, just remember this. The Jesus you choose is the Jesus you make for yourself, not the Jesus that reveals Himself

in God's Word. These guys are flailing around, they're missing it, they don't get it. You'll see this all throughout the resurrection narratives. It's right in front of the disciples, and but the dots aren't connecting. I'll say it right now: We, human beings, are overrated and oversold. Human brains, human reason, don't mean a darn thing when it comes to God. Cleopas keeps talking.

“Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. 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.” Mary and Mary have already delivered their report, with Peter and John's testimony too. The tomb is empty, the guards are like dead men, some angels appeared. Cleopas clearly doesn't know what to think. Sin, folks. The truth is slapping you on both cheeks and this guy doesn't know what to think. Once again, human thinking is overrated.

Jesus reacts with understandable frustration: **“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”** What does that mean? Jesus is talking about the Old Testament, the Bible to these guys. Jesus says, guys, it was all over the Bible! He laments their sin, that it blinds them to what's right in front of them. The Scriptures are screaming the truth about Jesus, and somehow they just missed it. Sin.

“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.” Love it. Dear friends, tell me you haven't thought this before. I know I have. The devil likes to whisper into our ear and say, “well, of course the disciples believed in Jesus! They got to see Jesus do all those miracles and talk to Jesus

themselves! How easy it was for them!” Put the devil away with a passage like this. How does Jesus connect the dots for these guys? Does He bring someone back from the dead, cure a disease, cause them to speak in tongues? Not on your life. He takes the Bible, the Old Testament, and interprets it. He preaches to them. That word “interpret” is a preaching word. He takes the Scriptures and gives them a sermon. That's how Jesus works, folks. He preaches. He preaches. He preaches through the Bible when it is read and preached by men, He preaches through His actions, when He saves damned sinners at the Baptismal font, He preaches to us viscerally and personally when we take the Lord's Supper. This little book has all the power and might of the Holy Spirit in its words, and when its words travel, they do what they do. God's Word is a quiet little thing, but it can break and remake our evil hearts. So whenever you find yourself wishing for a miracle, read a passage like this and God will remind you of the truth: Forget miracles. The Bible, His Word, that is the only miracle we'll ever need to be given Jesus, eternal life, forgiveness from sin.

“So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, 'stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.” So Jesus does a houdini. He miraculously disappears at the breaking of the bread. Pretty impressive, right? But look what these guys say. **“They said to each other, 'did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’”** Not a word about the disappearing act. These guys get it now. They're not focused on the whole “gotcha” vanishing thing, they're

remembering Jesus' preaching. The translation misses something here. I've been using the analogy of connecting the dots in the brain, it's a good analogy, because the word "heart" doesn't mean the same thing to a 1st century Greekified Hebrew as it does to us. When we talk about the heart, we think of the emotions. These guys weren't overcome with feeling, they're not talking about their emotional state at all. They're talking about their brains. They're saying to each other, He just set our brains on fire. Best way I can put in today's language is that Jesus just blew their minds. That's what that means. Not that they're having some sort of emotional experience, like they really really think Jesus is cool now, Jesus just blew their minds.

Two men, lost, damned, confused. They had all the knowledge we human beings could ask for, they were with Jesus, but they still needed to be rescued. It wasn't enough to know what there was to know. Their sin had them turned into knots. Jesus had to cut through that, not with His miracles, not with His magical powers, but with His Word. He had to break into the disciples minds and re-order them. Then, the disciples got it.

That's the lesson of Emmaus. Jesus has to break through our hearts, our minds, our ignorance, our arrogance, that dumb little know-it-all-stubbornness that's deep into our hearts. He has to rip through that with His Word, because that's where His power is. That's where He works. That's where He takes His enemies, you and me, and makes us His children. He washes clean our sins and clears our minds so that we see Him. Not your achievements, not your sins, not anything to do with you at all. You see Him, hanging on the cross, risen from the dead, making you something else, something perfect, something precious and pleasing to God.

Here's to Jesus blowing our minds with His Word.

Amen.