

Welcome to the church that gathers at Bethel. We gather for one reason and one reason only: the Gospel. Jesus Christ in our place. His holy life counted as ours. His perfect righteousness covers our guilt. His triumphant resurrection securing our hope—now and forever.

To our guests here and online—church, let's welcome them.

Last week, we stood on the mountaintop. We beheld the empty tomb. We lifted our voices—"He is risen indeed!"—and our hearts burned within us.

But now the noise has faded. The crowd has thinned. And if we are honest, there is a quietness—a weariness, even a kind of letdown.

Do not be alarmed. You are not alone. As we will see in the Gospel of Luke, even the earliest followers of Jesus felt the weight of the days after the empty tomb.

*The soul cannot **always live at the summit.***

But hear this: the risen Christ does not depart when the singing ends. He draws near in the ordinary. He walks with us in the quiet. He makes Himself known on the road of everyday faith.

So the question is not how to get back to last week or chase some other spiritual high—but will you walk with the risen Christ... today?

Easter 2026: "What Had Happened Was..." (Luke 24:18–19)

Over **five times** in the final passages of Luke, the Word mentions the happenings of the Gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of the only begotten Son of God. And for the next moments, Luke begins to recall what Jesus did for guilty sinners. This is the Gospel to us.

The Gospel to us (24:13-35) Read 24:13-17. Keep in mind that the following conversation happened on a journey, a **seven-mile walk** to a village called **Emmaus**. Although we are not exactly told *where* the village was located, we know with specifics that the journey began on the very same day (*when*) as Jesus rose again.

The discussion was intense because Luke used a word that suggests strong debate. While they were conversing, Jesus arrived unannounced, and they looked **discouraged**. On the day Christ rose again, walking with the Messiah Himself, these disciples still experienced an "**Easter letdown**."

Take-Home: If you are chasing the next big spiritual moment or always looking back to the “[glory days](#)” of your faith. You will walk with [discouragement](#).

So, Cleopas begins to explain to Christ, “[What had happened was.](#)” **Read 24:18-24.** The irony here is that Cleopas was surprised that his new traveling companion didn’t know about the gospel events. However, Jesus is the only one who is genuinely “*in the know.*”

[What had happened](#) was Jesus was handed over to be sentenced to death and crucified, and on the third day rose again. So here we are on the third day, and now these disciples have [lost hope \(we were hoping\)](#).

Has your [hope ever diminished](#)? Maybe like Cleopas, you were expecting something of the Lord that you didn’t receive. Maybe you have lost hope simply through life, grief, loss, hurt, and pain. Notice this, **Jesus didn’t leave** their side when they expressed their discouragement.

Why? Because it is the [Gospel to us](#) that brings hope for the first time and hope renewed. [Hope can see heaven through the thickest clouds](#) (Thomas Brooks). “[And we need to get those clouds out of the way and fight like crazy to see clearly how precious Christ is](#) (John Piper).”

Take-Home: To all who are hopeless, Jesus is near!

Read 24:25-31. But now the risen Christ turns from the **road** to the **heart**. As he did with those on the Emmaus road, so he does with us: “[Why are you slow of heart to believe?](#)” Not slow of mind—but [slow of heart](#). They had heard the Scriptures. They had heard the good news. And yet they did not entrust themselves to Him.

To be “[slow of heart](#)” is not merely intellectual doubt; it is a misalignment of the soul. It is to hear Christ and yet not yield to Him. It is to know the truth and yet not be shaped by it. Their failure was not lack of information, but [lack of surrender](#).

So Christ speaks still—through His Word, by His Spirit—calling us out of the fog and into the light of Himself. The same Jesus who opened the Scriptures then now opens hearts today.

Take-Home: Is your life truly centered on Jesus Christ—His cross, His resurrection—or are you still slow of heart to believe and follow Him fully?

The Gospel In us (24:36-53). Now the risen Christ stands among them—not as a spirit, but in the fullness of His resurrection glory. And when their eyes are opened, everything changes. This is the gospel not merely proclaimed to us, but alive within us.

You Have Peace (24:36). “Peace to you.” In the ancient world, that was a common greeting—but on the lips of Jesus, it carries the weight of the cross. **Peace is a common synonym in the NT for salvation.** This is not **surface calm**; this is **reconciliation with God**. Through His death, your sin is forgiven. Through His resurrection, your standing is secured. The war is over. You are no longer an enemy but a son, a daughter.

Take-Home: This is the peace Christ purchased—a peace the world cannot give and cannot take away. Only Jesus can do this in you!

You expect the miraculous (24:41). They stood there “**amazed and in disbelief because of their joy**.” A Luke favorite to describe someone’s reaction to a **miraculous** event at the **feet of Jesus**. Overwhelmed. Stunned. It was too good to be true—and yet it was true. The risen Christ will always *shatter small expectations*.

And this becomes the posture of the Christian life: not cynical, not closed off, but wide-eyed before the power of God. If Jesus is alive, then nothing is beyond His reach—hearts can be changed, chains can be broken, dead things can live again.

Take-Home: Christ is alive and at work within you—so do not live small. Expect the miraculous. Only Jesus can do this in you!

You have an open mind to understand the word (24:45). In Christ, the same God who inspired the Scriptures now illumines them. Jesus “**opened their minds to understand the Scriptures**.” This is not mere intellectual clarity—it is spiritual sight. Apart from Christ, the Word can feel closed, distant, even confusing. But in saving faith, the veil is lifted.

Take-Home: Spiritual understanding is not **achieved**; it is **given**. The risen Christ, by His Spirit, teaches His people to read His Word rightly.

You have forgiveness of sins (24:48). This is the heart of the gospel: “**repentance for the forgiveness of sins**.” Repentance is not mere agreement—it is a **turning**. A turning from sin, from self-reliance, from false views of God, and a turning to Christ alone. And when you turn, you are **forgiven**. Fully. Finally. The barrier of sin is removed, the debt is canceled, and reconciliation with God is secured.

Take-Home: In Christ, you are no longer defined by your **sin**, but by His **mercy**. Only Jesus can do this!

You have the Promised Spirit (24:49). The risen Christ does not leave His people to themselves. He sends “**the promise of the Father**”—the Holy Spirit. And when God gives, He gives abundantly. As Sam Storms has said, **the Spirit is not merely given to us, but into us**. This is not an external aid but an internal presence.

Take-Home: The Spirit of God dwells within you—to awaken your heart, strengthen your obedience, and assure you that you belong to Christ.

So What?

This message—repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus—is not bound by geography, culture, or ethnicity. Why, because the Gospel will be **proclaimed to all nations**. It is not a private word for a select people; it is a global summons for all people. What **began in Jerusalem** now stretches to the ends of the earth.

The resurrection (Easter Story) is not the end of the story—it is the beginning of our mission.

The gospel has come **to us**—Christ has opened our eyes, forgiven our sins, and given us peace with God. But the gospel does not stop with us. It now lives **in us**.

So we are not merely **recipients** of grace—we are **witnesses** of it.

And what lives in us must go through us.

The risen Christ sends His people into the world, carrying the very message that saved them. The same gospel that met you in your sin must now move through you to others still in theirs.

So today we are going to respond to the Word of Christ by singing like it matters, we are going to pray like it matters, and we are going to give like it matters.

Exegetical Notes

Luke 24:13 Now that same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ Together they were discussing everything that had taken place. ¹⁵ And while they were discussing and arguing, Jesus himself came near and began to walk along with them. ¹⁶ But they were prevented from recognizing him. ¹⁷ Then he asked them, “What is this dispute that you’re having with each other as you are walking?” And they stopped walking, looking discouraged.

Emmaus

Most of them fix the distance from Jerusalem to Emmaus at sixty stadia, about eleven kilometers² A minority—but by no means minor manuscripts, since they include the Codex Sinaiticus (N = 01) —raise the number to 160 stadia, or thirty kilometers." Since the plot anticipates a return to Jerusalem that night, the longer distance is unlikely (Bovon, 370).

About seven miles from Jerusalem. "Seven miles" is literally sixty stadias from Jerusalem. A stadion is about 607 feet; therefore, the distance is approximately 6.8 miles. Some manuscripts, however, read 160 stadias or 18.4 miles. The latter was probably an attempt by later scribes to correct Luke's sixty stadias, identifying Emmaus with the village of Amwas, about twenty miles from Jerusalem (NAC, 610).

While they were discussing

"And it happened" (kai ÈYÉVETO) marks the beginning of an action that will be decisive (Bovon, 372).

The discussion seems to have been intense, since the word used (syzetein) suggests strong debate (cf. its use in Luke 22:23; Acts 6:9; 9:29).

Prevented/"Eyes were kept from recognizing."

The eye represents intelligence here. The disciples see and thus should understand (Bovon, 372).

The lack of recognition is more due to a spiritual blindness by the disciples than to something unusual about the appearance of Jesus (for the latter see Mk. 16:12). Its purpose is to enable the disciples to be prepared for the revelation of the risen Jesus by a fresh understanding of the prophecies of his resurrection; it may also be meant to show that one can know the presence of the risen Jesus without being able to see him, and thus to give help to Christians living in the era after the cessation of the resurrection appearances. It would, however, be difficult for later people to believe that their experience was related to the unseen, risen Jesus, if there were not evidence, such as this story provides, that Jesus really rose from the dead (NIGTC, 893).

Then he asked them, "What is this dispute that you're having with each other as you are walking?"

Here, according to Luke, are the first words the Risen One speaks. Yet, since the speaker has not yet revealed himself, his words do not bring joy of reunion but rather a sad surprise (Bovon, 373).

Discouraged

Luke adds that they remain standing "looking somber" (κδρτο; the adjective, rare, is emphasized by its position at the end of the sentence). The meaning of this adjective, which refers to one's facial expression, vacillates among sadness, severity, sulking, weariness, a bad mood, perplexity, and anxiety (Bovon, 373).

All discouragement and depression is related to the obscuring of our hope, and we need to get those clouds out of the way and fight like crazy to see clearly how precious Christ is (John Piper).

Hope can see heaven through the thickest clouds (Thomas Brooks).

Christ's love towards us, and not our love towards Christ, is the true ground of expectation and the true foundation of hope. J.C. Ryle

Luke 24:18 The one named Cleopas answered him, “Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that happened there in these days?”

Cleopas falls victim to a subtle irony in Luke's narration: He and his companion do not know the identity of this fellow traveler, yet they are astonished that he does not know of recent events;²¹ in fact, Jesus is the only one who is genuinely "in the know." NICNT, 845.

Luke 24:19 “What things?” he asked them.

Three times we have encountered reference to "(these) things" (vv 13, 18, 19). Only now are they specified in a brief précis of Jesus' career, with particular attention drawn to the apparent incongruity between his prophetic ministry and his death at the hand of the Jerusalem leadership, and to the puzzle of the empty tomb (NICNT, 845).

So they said to him, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and all the people,²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.²¹ But we were hoping that he was the one who was about to redeem Israel. Besides all this, it’s the third day since these things happened.²²

Hoping

The two share their personal view of Jesus: they are downcast because they had hoped he would redeem Israel. The imperfect (elpizomen, we were hoping) expresses the ongoing character of this hope. The idea is like Jer. 14:8, where Yahweh is called the hope of Israel (Fitzmyer 1985: 1564). They hoped that through Jesus, God would work for the nation and deliver it into a new era of freedom (BECNT, 1913).

With great skill, the evangelist recounts the devastating effect of a story deprived of its kerygmatic dimension. The hope is expressed in the imperfect (n)rijouev, "we were hoping"). It was legitimate, even if it was ambiguous.

What kind of Israel's deliverance is meant? Deliverance from the Romans and political oppression or from sin and the inevitable death? Whatever it was, the hope was in the dim past: It is the third day already (Bovon, 373).

We had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel. Compare Acts 1:6. The two disciples expressed their disappointment in the course of events. Undoubtedly, they possessed a more political than religious understanding of how Christ would redeem

Israel. For them, the redemption of Israel meant Israel's liberation from their enemies, i.e., the Romans. For Luke, however, Jesus did in fact redeem Israel and brought the kingdom of God. Yet it was by his death that Jesus accomplished this redemption and sealed this new covenant (Luke 22:20).

And what is more. In addition to not understanding that the redemption of Israel had in fact taken place, there was an additional "thing" that caused their sadness (24:17). NAC, 611.

Third Day

The reader notes the irony this chronology evokes: Was not the third day the duration predicted by the Lukan Jesus in some of the announcements of his passion (9:22; 18:33)?

Moreover, some women from our group astounded us. They arrived early at the tomb,²³ and when they didn't find his body, they came and reported that they had seen a vision of angels who said 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 they didn't see him."

The story is told so that the reader shares the irony. The travelers' report of recent events ends with a note of pathos, though the reader knows the emotions are uncalled for, since Jesus is already with them (24:15-16). These travelers are aware that unusual events have occurred, but unfortunately, decisive evidence was lacking. They are about to find out what Luke's readers already know (BECNT, 1915).

Luke 24:25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!²⁶ Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?"²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.

How

The interjection c (o, O!) usually indicates great emotion (BAGD 895 §1; BAA 1785 §1; BDR §146.1.2; Luke 9:41; Acts 1:1; 13:10; Rom. 2:1, 3; 9:20; Gal. 3:1; 1 Tim. 6:20; James 2:20). The rebuke expresses great disappointment and recalls Luke 24:5-7, where the angel gave the women at the tomb a similar reaction (BECNT, 1915).

Slow to believe/ “slow of heart.”

The two persons challenged are "senseless" (ἀνόητος, literally "without intelligence") because they did not believe (ΤΟΟ ΤΛΟΤΕΒΕΛ) with a reasonable and not an absurd faith, because they were slow in heart (faith is not only intellectual; it is also emotional, personal, existential, holistic). See Bovon, 375.

Slow of heart" calls attention to their failure to orient themselves fully around Jesus' teaching, not to their need merely for remedial education. "Heart" refers here, as in the LXX, to the inner commitments, the dispositions and attitudes, of a person that determine his or her life. Failure of insight comes from failure to embrace the ways of God (NICNT, 849).

For Luke's readers, this is a call to believe and not slip into the fog that these two disciples are currently in. They must believe all that the prophets have spoken, a brief way of referring to the messianic promises of the ancient Scriptures-what Christians call the Old Testament and Jews call the Tanach (NIV, 612).

Wasn't it necessary?

Using a rhetorical question that expects a positive reply (note οὐχι, οὐχι, not), Jesus states what the travelers should have known from the prophets: that the Christ needed to suffer and come into his glory. Jesus has pushed the prophetic description of his travelers (24:19) into messianic categories (BECNT, 1916).

Luke 24:28 They came near the village where they were going, and he gave the impression that he was going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him, “Stay with us, because it’s almost evening, and now the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

Luke 24:30 It was as he reclined at the table with them that he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Weren’t our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?” ³³ That very hour, they got up and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, ³⁴ who said, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they began to

describe what had happened on the road and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Luke 24:36 As they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst. He said to them, “Peace to you!”

Jesus' final appearance is linked to the previous event by a temporal genitive absolute. Luke 24:1, 13, 33 suggests a link to resurrection day. Events are coming fast and furious. Jesus stands in the midst of the disciples (cf. John 20:19? He appears as quickly as he disappeared in Luke 24:31 (BECNT, 1931).

Jesus' greeting, "peace," is expected in a Semitic context (cf. 10:5), and communicates the wish for communal well-being, shalom. Within the Third Gospel, "peace" is metonymic for "salvation," so that, in this context, Jesus' greeting takes on an enlarged meaning. The Emmaus travelers imagined that his rejection and crucifixion had rendered Jesus incapable of serving as Israel's redeemer; here, following his death, though, he communicates or transmits continued salvation to those gathered (NICNT, 854).

³⁷ **But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost.** ³⁸ **“Why are you troubled?” he asked them. “And why do doubts arise in your hearts?”**

Terrified

Their fear is understandable since the group does not initially recognize Jesus, and they are not expecting another appearance. The disciples are not operating with expectations of the miraculous (BECNT, 1932).

Troubled?

Why are you troubled? By these words, they are exhorted to lay aside terror and regain the possession of their minds, that, having returned to the rigor of their senses, they may judge of a matter which is fully ascertained; for so long as men are seized with perturbation, they are blind amidst the clearest light. In order, therefore, that the disciples may obtain undoubted information, they are enjoined to weigh the matter with calmness and composure (John Calvin).

³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you can see I have.” ⁴⁰ Having said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ But while they still were amazed and in disbelief because of their joy, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² So they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.

Amazed and in Disbelief

The other option is to regard the remark as a rhetorical expression of amazement: they were incredulous in the sense that it was hard to believe this was really happening (Schweizer 1984: 376-77). In other words, this does not express doubt but an overwhelming and paralyzing realization (the servant's response to Peter in Acts 12:14 shows a similar paralysis of natural action resulting from joy; cf. Livy 39.49). Luke uses *Pavuáčw* (thau-mazo, to marvel) to express reaction to miraculous events or to teaching (cf. Luke 1:63; 2:18; 4:22; 7:9; 8:25; 9:43; 11:14; 20:26). The combination of joy and amazement suggests the second option (BECNT, 1934).

Luke attributes their disbelief to joy.¹² This may seem surprising insofar as "joy" is typically a positive response to divine activity in the Gospel, but an affective response of this nature is crucial for indicating the absence of a more sinister motivation for their disbelief. What they were experiencing was simply too good to be true. Later, "disbelief resulting from joy" will be replaced by "great joy" in association with praise and obedience (vv 50-53). See NICNT, 855.

We are also reminded how earnestly we ought to struggle against everything that retards faith, since the joy which sprang up in the minds of the apostles from the presence of Christ was the cause of their unbelief (John Calvin).

Luke 24:44 He told them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He also said to them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. As for you, stay in the city until you are empowered from on high.”

Opened their minds

This new understanding contrasts with their earlier lack of understanding (9:45; 18:34). The disciples' new understanding of the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection was not achieved through their own study of the Scriptures. What was involved was not a new hermeneutic or method of interpretation. Rather, this understanding was given to them by Jesus. Paul was later commissioned to open people's eyes (Acts 26:17-18) through preaching and interpreting the Scriptures (17:2-3). Benoit notes: "The missionary's two instruments are witness and Scripture" (NAC, 621).

Name

The first element is that this message goes out in Jesus' name, which will be a major theme in Acts (Acts 2:38; 3:6, 16; 4:7, 10, 12, 17-18, 30; 5:28, 40; 8:12, 16; 9:14-16, 21, 27-28; 10:43, 48; 15:14, 26; 16:18; 19:5, 13, 17; 21:13; 22:16; 26:9; Bietenhard, TDNT 5:278). In the OT, the phrase indicates Yahweh's authority, which has now been transferred to Jesus, the mediator of God's promise. Baptism and other blessings come through his name (Acts 2:17-21, 38-39; 4:10). See BECNT, 1939.

Repentance + Forgiveness

Because repentance is rooted in the OT, it involves "turning," not just "agree-ing" (which is what *ustavow* and *ustávora* can mean). For Luke, repentance is the summary term for the response to the apostolic message (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 13:24; 17:30; 19:4; 20:21; 26:20). Change in thinking (i.e., a reorientation) is basic to human response to God's message. People must change their minds about God and the way to him, especially their thinking about sin, their inability to overcome sin on their own, Christ's essential role in forgiveness, and the importance of depending on him for spiritual direction (BECNT, 1941).

Forgiveness of sins enables one to come into a relationship with God because the barriers caused by sin are removed. As a result, one can experience God's enabling and transforming power, especially through the work of his Spirit. In short, forgiveness of sins brings the opportunity to leave the darkness and come into God's light (Luke 1:79; Acts 26:18; on other blessings such as righteousness, salvation, life, and the Spirit, see Bultmann, TDNT 6:216 n. 315).

All Nations

The message of hope is to go to all nations (Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47). This is a universal message open to anyone from any nation. As Acts 10:36 puts it, Jesus is Lord

of all humanity, Jew and Greek (also Rom. 10:12-13). This is the message of the prophets to all who believe (Acts 10:42-43; 26:22-23). The gospel message in Jesus' name knows no national or racial barriers. This message is no longer a Jewish message of hope; it is intended for all. It starts from Jerusalem (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8), but is designed to go to the ends of the earth.

The contrast between this universal tone and the disciples' initial response is so striking, and the controversy that this universalism brought to the church was so great that many do not regard this remark as authentic (Luce 1933: 364). See BECNT, 1940.

Luke 24:50 Then he led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ And while he was blessing them, he left them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² After worshiping him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they were continually in the temple praising God.

Illustrations