

13Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 18Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" 19He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21But 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 took place. 22Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." 25Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" 27Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. 28As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. 30When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" 33That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 35Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The sky was gray that day. Their sky was gray. The sun might have been shining, the birds might have been singing, but gray was all that they could see that day.

"We had hoped that he was the one to set Israel free."

We had hoped.....

For one of you the hope was for a job that would last, that did not.

Another remembers wedding vows defaced by bickering, bitterness, betrayal.

Or golden years that turn into a nightmare of pain, of sickness, of grief.

Some remember a hope carried in them when they were but a child, a hope for peace and love in their home, but only drunkenness and shouting were there.

Still others had hopes and dreams for their child, but no amount of parental sacrificing can make him into what he could be.

We had hoped..... had hoped.....but no more.

They were doing their grief work that day, talking with one another - then with this new stranger who walked with them.

They told him of Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and before all the people, and how the chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned and crucified. "And we had hoped that he was the one to free Israel," they said.

They were a poor people, and Jesus looked like the one to make them rich.

They had no power, foreigners said, "Jump!" and they either jumped or died.

Worst of all, their God was dishonored. Roman gods, who were no gods were greater than the Lord, the God of Israel, for the Roman people ruled over the Israelites.

But we had hoped that Jesus was the one to free Israel.

O, there was still a glimmer of hope, the report of some women that the tomb was empty, and that angels said Jesus was alive. Even at the funeral sometimes we pretend – imagine - wish, but no longer hope.

But then the stranger opened the scriptures to them, explained about Jesus and God's promises.

They came to Emmaus. They asked the stranger to stay with them. He did.

And he took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to them, just as he had done that night of his betrayal, and their eyes were opened and they knew it was Jesus and he vanished from their sight.

One was named Cleopas, the other no name that we are told. Give him your name. For his path is the road God provides for you to walk when hope is lost.

Begin with opening the scriptures, the word about Jesus is there. What Jesus did that day is what you have called me here to do, to interpret all that points to Jesus in the scriptures.

Each Sunday morning you bring every dashed hope, and sorrow, every injury and loss of another week, and I say, "In Jesus Christ there is new hope for you, and joy, and healing, and a new beginning in this new week." And you hear and believe and ask Jesus to remain with you.

You come to his table, he gives himself in bread and cup, and your eyes are opened again and again. You know he is alive, and you are alive with him - in him, and he in you.

And you hope once more.

Most of the time that is where we end all of this - I feel better, I can go on, I can begin again.

But for Cleopas and his friend whose name we do not know, Jesus alive could not be kept to themselves. They returned to Jerusalem to tell what had happened on the road and how Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Again, read your name in that telling. Tell people of Jesus whom you encounter here, who is alive in you. For all around you are people walking under gray skies. Tell them of Jesus. Bring them here with you. Bring them to live in the new hope that is Jesus. Amen.