

The road to Emmaus is about seven miles. These two men know it well, for Emmaus is their home. On this day, it being Easter Sunday, sometime in the afternoon, they start off on the road to Emmaus just like always. But on this particular day their journey will dramatically change their lives. And for one simple, yet profound reason. Jesus joins them on the Emmaus road. Yet, wonder of wonders, they have no idea that it is Jesus. Their eyes are kept from recognizing Him.

These men are His disciples. They are not part of the Twelve, but they are part of the larger group of Jesus' disciples. They know Him well. They know the sound of His voice. They have seen His face countless times. And yet, when Jesus begins to walk with them, they believe Him to be a visitor to Jerusalem, a stranger, because for them, Jesus is dead.

And this, they explain, is why they are so sad. They had such high expectations for Him. They had such hope. They had proudly worn their red MIGA hats: Make Israel Great Again. But their hopes were dashed. Jesus was put to death on a Roman cross. Disappointment, frustration, sorrow, hopelessness – these things now are in control of their lives as they walk the road to Emmaus.

Have you ever been on the Emmaus road? I'm not asking if you have ever suffered disappointment, or have dealt with frustration, or been wrapped in sorrow, even great sorrow. But have you ever felt hopeless? And has such hopelessness, along with sadness and disappointment taken control of your life?

Perhaps it seems a little strange for me to ask such questions of Christians, of you who have celebrated Easter and what it means. You are not like these two men who walk in sorrow. For, unlike them, you know and believe that Jesus is truly alive. How is it possible, therefore, for you or me to have disappointment, sadness, and hopelessness take over our lives?

Yet it can and does happen. And maybe it's because, as with these two men, our eyes are kept from recognizing Jesus. He does walk with us on the Emmaus road, just as He walked with these two disciples. Yet because we do not recognize Him, we may wonder if He really does walk with us.

Now, when life is good, we do not wonder about such things. But when great disappointment comes, and great sorrow, we ask the age-old question: Where in the world is God? "Does He even care about me and my struggles? I do believe that Jesus lives. But then, why is He so distant from me? I seem to be walking the Emmaus road all by myself."

That road is only about seven miles long. But there are times in your life and mine when it seems much longer; when it appears as if the road will never end, because we are simply not able to deal with the sorrow and hopelessness that is in control of our lives.

These two men walk the Emmaus road slowly and sadly because Jesus is no longer with them. And yet there He is walking with them, opening the Scriptures to them! Why didn't He reveal Himself to them right then and there? Why wait for them to reach the town of Emmaus? Their

steps would have livened immediately. Their sorrow would have melted away. Their hopelessness replaced with hope.

Isn't the answer in Scripture? "*Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ.*" As they walked along the road, every part of them was sad and without hope except for their ears. Their hearts were heavy. Their feet slowly plodded along. Their eyes saw, not Jesus, but sadly only a stranger. But their ears heard Jesus' words! Through their ears Jesus was bringing them back to faith. Through their ears Jesus was causing their hearts to burn with holy joy.

And so with you, my friend. As you walk the Emmaus road, your eyes will see troubles on all sides of you. Your heart will be heavy at times. Your feet may not always want to move forward. And all that is okay as long as Jesus has your ears.

He is not distant from you. His words are in your ears today. Your eyes do not recognize Him, this is true. But your ears hear the sound of His voice. Using your ears, Jesus leads you through life. With your ears, Jesus assures you that He walks with you. He puts His promises into your ears. By using your ears, Jesus will bring you to Emmaus.

Should we not, therefore, confess to Him how sorry we are for having closed our ears so often? And sadly, how alone we truly are when we close our ears to the words of Jesus.

Be at peace, my friends in Christ. Jesus would not allow these two disciples to walk the Emmaus road alone. And as He came to them, so He comes to you. Your baptism assures you of this very truth. Here on the altar is His body and blood as a sign of His presence with you and for you. And today, right now, He opens your ears to place there His word of pardon. Yes, His word of forgiveness for your sins. This word is in your ears today because you are one who is forgiven.

And this word you will need for as long as you walk the Emmaus road. The end of that road was home for these two disciples. And also for you. Because not until you reach Emmaus will you see Jesus face to face. But you will reach it. Despite all the disappointment and sorrow you meet all the way there. You will reach Emmaus where you will abide with Jesus face to face, because He walks with you on the road, and His words have a place, a home, in your ears. Amen.