

**Luke 24:13-35**

How fast can you run seven miles? Perhaps it depends on whether something is chasing you, and what that “something” is. The two men in our text were not being chased, but they ran seven miles rather quickly because of a different motivation. They were running toward something. They were excited. Adrenaline was pumping through their veins. They were running toward Jerusalem to tell the Apostles they had just seen Jesus and that He was alive.

But we’re jumping the gun a little, aren’t we? We need to begin where the story begins. It begins with these same two men, not running, but walking...walking sadly from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were sad because Jesus was dead; at least they believed He was dead. They knew He had been crucified. Earlier that day some women of their group reported seeing Jesus alive, but that report was too far-fetched for them to accept. In their minds and hearts Jesus was still dead. The tomb was empty, this they knew; but Jesus, to them, was dead.

How slow would you walk if you thought Jesus was dead? There would be no point in running...running to work, running to school, running and rushing through life to do this and that—earn a paycheck, pay the bills, clean the house, mow the lawn—there would be no point to it all if Jesus was dead. Without a living Lord...without a risen Savior our existence would be meaningless. Why rush through life simply to fall into the arms of death? Hell would await us for all eternity if Jesus was dead.

And so these two men were walking slowly from Jerusalem to Emmaus. But just then Jesus approached and began to walk with them. They didn’t know who He was. Their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. But it was Jesus, alive as could be, and He walked with them and began to speak with them.

That’s the way it is for those who walk with Jesus. We don’t walk with Him; He walks with us. We don’t approach Him; He approaches us. In your baptism Jesus met you on the road to Emmaus. You did not recognize Him. You were too little even to know what was going on. But Jesus came to walk with you through your life. He had died for you. He had risen for you. Now in Holy Baptism He came to be, for you, your living Savior.

And that’s where the teaching began. As Jesus walked with these two men from Jerusalem to Emmaus, He taught them the Holy Scriptures. He showed them how everything that was written was pointing to Him. Moses and all the prophets, He taught, were speaking of the Christ. And isn’t that also what you were taught? It’s all about Jesus. After you were baptized, the Bible Stories began; and the catechism—the teaching of Christ and the Apostles. You were taught (or are being taught) like these two men, everything that Jesus has done and does for you.

Yet, as they were walking and talking; as Jesus was teaching them, they did not know that it truly was Jesus. And so it is with us. When your mother read to you Bible Stories as you sat on her lap, it was Jesus teaching you through her, even though your eyes did not recognize Him. When your father opened the Scriptures and led your family in devotions, it was Jesus teaching you through him, even though your eyes did not recognize Him. When your Sunday School teacher, VBS teacher, Dayschool teacher taught you the truths

of God's Word, it was Jesus teaching you through them, even though your eyes did not recognize Him. And when your pastor teaches you the Word of God and preaches Christ to you, it is Jesus who is teaching you and preaching to you, even though your eyes do not recognize Him.

But still we are being taught. Those two men were learning the truth of salvation. They were growing in grace not through their eyes, but through their ears. Their eyes didn't know what was going on, but their ears were hearing the beautiful voice of Jesus. Don't be fooled by what your eyes see. What you see here is nothing extraordinary. You see a building built by men. You see a man in a white robe who you know is just as sinful as anyone of you. But what you hear in this place is the beautiful voice of Jesus. He gives you here (not out there, but here) His words of life. He comes to walk with you and teach you not through your eyes, but through your ears. "Faith comes by hearing the word of Christ."

What happens when the formal catechism class comes to an end? For many, it's time to tell Jesus "Good-bye." "It was nice knowing you, but now I need to live my life. I'll still think of you now and then, but I'll be too busy for you. Don't take it personally. It's just that there's too much else now going on in my life."

Not these two men. When they arrived in Emmaus; when they reached the day of their confirmation, their words to Jesus were unmistakably clear: "Abide with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now nearly over." Has that invitation to Jesus been missing in your life? Have you, instead of desiring to continue hearing and reading His Word, been content to leave Him behind? When Christ comes to you here in bread and wine for your salvation, is it your desire to break bread with Him—to let Him be the Host and serve you as His guest? Or does His Holy Meal for you not draw you to come here to be with Him?

Last month was the evening for Mary Katherine Nadler. The day, for her, was nearly over. On Good Friday she heard the words of her Lord and received His body and blood as she had done throughout her life. And last Wednesday morning her day came to an end. But because Jesus abided in her through His Word and Sacrament, she now abides with Him for all eternity.

When will your last evening come? When will the night fall for you? Tonight? Tomorrow? We don't know. Young and old, sick and healthy...for any of us, the evening may already be here.

Do not fear. Jesus has no desire at all to go on without you. His desire and promise is to abide with you. Even if you have left Him standing on the road; even if you have been too busy for Him, He is here right now for you. Don't trust your eyes. Trust His Word of Promise. Your Savior forgives you. Young and old, sick and healthy...He forgives you, each one of you. That's why He died for you—so that He who now lives, can come to you in His Word of Grace and in His Supper, and give you for your very own possession a place in heaven with Him.

That's why those two men, who earlier were walking slowly, now ran those seven miles back to Jerusalem. They had a living Lord! Their sins were forgiven. They would live

forever in heaven. And there were others—friends of theirs—who needed to know this. Not tomorrow...today! Because one never knows when the evening will come.

Is there someone you can run to today? Is there a spouse, a family member, a friend you can bring to the Pastor's Instruction Class? Is there a dear one you can bring to church? The time for walking is over. Jesus lives! He who died for all now lives. The evening is coming. Let's run with the good news. Let's run to those for whom Christ died. He died for you, friend. Your ears have heard the good news. Your heart believes the good news. Now use your feet to run with that good news. Amen.