

## How Then Shall We Live? Following Christ in a Broken World

### Session 8—Share

*When we follow Christ we are never alone.*

**Principal Texts:** Luke 24:13-35

**Supportive Texts:** John 19:25; Isaiah 52:13-53:12

#### **We will consider:**

- What it means to be *In Mission for Others*.
- How we experience the living Christ in our everyday.
- What makes our hearts to burn and eyes to open.

**Hymn:** (*Found in Evangelical Lutheran Worship*) “As We Gather at Your Table,” #522.

#### **Prayer** (*Spoken by the leader*)

God Immanuel, we praise you for offering us life in all its fullness; the hope, joy, peace and everlasting life that is ours in your grace. Thank you for journeying with us and enlightening us through the scriptures. As we join your ever expanding reign, empower us to witness for you through our very being and our transformed lives. As we partake at the open table of the feast that you have graciously prepared for us, help us to remember the glory of your resurrection, and the covenant relationship you call us to have with you and with one another. May your words open our eyes and warm our hearts with the love of you, the knowledge of you and with the reverence for you. In the name of the reigning Lord Jesus, Amen.

#### **Introduction**

Several Bible stories provide models for the church’s understanding and practice of mission. The Lutheran World Federation has published a document on mission called “Mission in Context: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment,” (Available at [www.lutheranworld.org](http://www.lutheranworld.org)) which lifts up the Emmaus story found in Luke’s Gospel as the mission model for the 21st century.

Luke’s gospel is characterized by its universality and inclusiveness of Gentiles, women and those on the fringes of society of that time: tax collectors, sinners and prostitutes. It is also framed by the motif of journey; in the narrative of Jesus’ birth and childhood, three journeys are recorded, and again in the last chapter of Luke we find the journey to Emmaus with the two disciples and later in Jerusalem. It emphasizes that we are a pilgrim people of God and we make our journey light by sharing in one another’s sorrows. It is important to remember that the Emmaus story is not about the apostles. The two disciples mentioned are not the apostles. Jesus’ appearance to the women first, then to these two disciples and later to his apostles emphasizes that every one has a role to play in mission: not only the educated, the elite, the ordained and the experts, but also the ordinary; the lay people.

The Emmaus model highlights that mission begins where we are (not only in distant lands). It is made manifest in recognizing the empowering presence of the risen Christ in the scriptures and at the table, where hospitality is extended to strangers through the breaking of bread.

#### **Read Luke 24:13-35**

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Only one of the two disciples in this story is named; Cleopas, but both, we are told, were despondent. Jesus joins the two on their journey and invites them to share their sorrow by asking a leading question. “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” Jesus establishes himself amongst them by developing an environment of trust. Like Jesus, we need to meet people where they are; at their level of pain and experience, and walk at their pace, matching our steps to theirs.

While Jesus listens, it is the disciples who talk. They tell a story of the power of the political and religious leaders who were able to put Jesus on the cross and how the disciples had hoped Jesus was the one who would redeem Israel. The disciples expected their Messiah to be powerful, authoritative and indestructible. They could not comprehend or accept a Messiah who did not conform to their expectations; dying a cruel and shameful death.

We too are tempted to want to fit God into the image we create. The disciples had lost hope because their image of redemption was limited: an immediate, political or military coup, liberating them from Roman occupation. So, when the women came and told them that the body of Jesus was not to be found, (corroborating what Jesus had told them before) they had no reference point with which to comprehend the implications.

After giving them time to express their pain, Jesus admonishes them, ““Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures..”(Luke 24:25-27)

The disciples could not see the Messiah as a suffering Christ, nor could the Jewish scholars, but it was there in the Bible—for example, in Isaiah 52:13–53:12, which prophesies about the suffering servant. Jesus did not lead the disciples through a crash course in the law and the prophets, but what the law and the prophets said about him.

Jesus’ exposition of himself in the scriptures warmed the disciples’ hearts, but it failed to open their eyes to see the stranger among them as Jesus the Christ. They first had to see him revealed in the scriptures. The eyes of the disciples were opened only after they invited the stranger to come to their home to have supper—an act of hospitality. When Jesus came in, he assumed the role of the host. When he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them, they finally recognized the connection between the sacrificial lamb and the crucified Christ. The text does not talk about how the bread is transformed into Jesus’ body and blood, but how the disciples were transformed in the breaking of the bread. “Then their eyes were opened and they recognize him.” Their knowledge of Christ in the scriptures coincided with their experience of him in person and it is in that place that transformation happened.

As soon as they recognized him, Jesus disappeared from their sight. But, unlike after the crucifixion, this time they were unafraid. They did not want to postpone sharing the good news. Scripture says “That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.” (Luke 24:33) No one needed to prod them; witnessing became the most natural thing to do.

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The same is true for us. When we are touched by the empowering and transforming presence of Jesus, we are filled with energy and enthusiasm, excited to share our encounter.

### Discussion

1. What are the Old Testament texts that foretold Jesus birth?
2. What are the texts that foretold his death and resurrection?
3. When, in our own lives, are we most likely to “miss the signs” of the risen Christ?
4. Share stories of your own encounters with Christ. Were they in places or times when you expected them? What does this tell us about God? About us?
5. What are the implications of the Emmaus story for us as we try to be a Church *In Mission for Others*?

### Closing Activity

Read together the ELCIC “Five Areas of Focus” document found on the ELCIC website ([www.elcic.ca](http://www.elcic.ca)), paying particular attention to “Spirited Discipleship” and “Diverse Faces.” Consider ways in which the Emmaus story might inform how your group works together in the coming months to address these two areas in your community.

**Closing Prayer** (*An extemporary prayer may be offered by any member of the group.*)

**Memory verse:** Ephesians 1:17-19

“I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power...”