

The stranger appears on the road “but their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (v 16). The stranger, our Risen Lord Jesus, hides Himself. Why does He do that? It may seem surprising, even odd, but the prophet Isaiah tells us how God delights to do just that: “Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior” (Is 45:15). Yes, Jesus, God’s Son, hides Himself. He won’t let Himself become visible. But it is exactly in His hiding Himself that Jesus shows Himself to be our Savior. That’s the big, Good News, takeaway point from today’s Gospel text. Let’s dig into it!

Now, it’s not that these travelers on the road to Emmaus were struck with a case of mistaken identity. No, it says, their eyes were *kept* from recognizing Him. It was not that the Lord Jesus was absent from them, either. He was right there with them on the road! But they were prevented from recognizing Him. It’s very curious. They could not see Him for who He is. Jesus remains to them a stranger. So as the conversation goes on, they tell Him of their disappointment and now dead hope.

Then the Lord interrupts Cleopas and his friend: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (vv 25–27). They urge Jesus to stay with them, and He does for a while. Curiously also, although He is their guest, Jesus takes for Himself the place of host: He blesses and breaks the bread and then gives it to them. And then it *happens!*

“Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him” (v 31). *Now* they get it! Now they recognize that this stranger with them is none other than their Lord Jesus! The same one who was crucified, the very one on whom they had pinned their hopes is now alive right there with them! No phantom. No ghost. It’s Jesus! But when their eyes are opened to see who it is who is with them, He disappears!

With the Lord’s body, He can do with it however He wants; however He desires. Jesus’ body is not confined by geography or time because, after all, it is the *Lord’s* body. With His body, locked doors are no barrier. With

His body, He does not have to stay put one place at a time. But where Jesus does put Himself, He puts Himself for **you**. God does not invite you to search for Him where He cannot be found: in the cosmic reaches of space or in the depths of your own soul. When life has beaten you down, with one setback- one disappointment- after another, you may cry out, “Where in the world is God?” When your loved one, whom you prayed for ever so earnestly does **not** recover, you may very well be tempted to ask, “Where in the world is God?” When we hear of violence running amok in so many places in our country and the innocent, even law enforcement officers, are hurt and killed on a weekly basis, we may wonder, “Where in the world is God?” But the same risen Lord Jesus who comforted those two disciples with His words and presence, comforts us too, with His same words and presence today. Raised from the dead, He is s free to be wherever He puts Himself for you. And you need never doubt where that is.

Jesus hides Himself from those men on the road to Emmaus at first so that He might reveal Himself to them, to show Himself where and when it pleases Him. And this is how Jesus chooses to be known by you: in His Word. It is the Scriptures that testify of Him—and His opening up of those Scriptures, so that He is preached as the very Son of God, who had to be handed over to evil men, crucified, and raised for us. The redemption that these Emmaus disciples had hoped for really had taken place, but it was far greater than what they could imagine. Redemption took place not in some act of political liberation or mighty military conquest. It happened in the death of God’s own Son, who “purchased and won (us) from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.” (Explanation to the Second Article Art. II of the Apostles Creed in Luther’s Small Catechism) **That** is what was necessary! “It was necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory” (v 26). It was necessary for you and your salvation. It has been done. The work is completed for you. It is finished. Christ was put to death for your trespasses and raised again for your justification.

Yet even after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus hides His glory. He doesn’t overwhelm the road-weary sojourners on the road to Emmaus

with a blinding flash of dazzling radiance. He comes to them as a stranger whose identity is concealed from their eyes. This stranger reveals Himself in His words that interpret the Scriptures concerning Himself and in the breaking of bread.

What the Lord did for the Emmaus disciples, He does for you. Your eyes are kept from seeing Him, but there will come a day when you will see Him. On that Last Day, the Lord Jesus Christ will no longer be concealed from our view. Then all eyes will be upon Him, either to their everlasting joy or their eternal shame. Then we will behold Him and not another. Then in our flesh we will see our Redeemer as Job confidently confessed in the Old Testament. But not yet. For now, to recognize Jesus means that He vanishes from our sight. He hides Himself so that we may learn to hear Him, to trust in Him, because faith comes not by sight but by hearing. Now we are not given to *see* Him; we are given to *hear* Him. We hear Him as He speaks to us in the preaching of His Scriptures, His words that are spirit and life. You hear Him in His word of absolution that declares, "Your sins are forgiven." You hear Him not at that ordinary supper table at that road stop near Emmaus, but at His Holy Supper, where He gives you His body to eat and His blood to drink for the forgiveness of your sins.

So, when you feel the crushing weight of life's setbacks and disappointments, you have Jesus' sure and certain words: "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). When you are devastated at the death of a loved one, know that Jesus' words to Lazarus' grieving sister Martha in John 11 apply just as much to you in your grief, "Your brother, your loved one, will rise again." When God seems so very far away from this violent and increasingly confusing world, remember Jesus' words, "Behold, I am making all things new" (Rev. 21:5), and "I go and prepare a place for you" (John 14:2), are your personal assurances from the Lord Jesus, too.

"And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their *sight*" (v 31), but not from their *hearing*: Because "faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17). And remember, it is in His hiding Himself in His Word, that Jesus shows Himself to be Your Savior! "Blessed are those who have not seen and

yet have believed!” Amen!