

Sunday, April 19, 2026 Third Sunday of Easter Sermon

“Not Realizing It Was Jesus” Pastor Takaaki Inoue Luke 24:13–35

① [How Jesus Read the Bible]

On the day Jesus rose from the dead, two disciples were traveling from Jerusalem toward a village called Emmaus. Their names are said to have been Cleopas and Luke. Jesus approached them in the guise of a traveler and began walking with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. When Jesus asked, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” (verse 17), the two stopped, their faces downcast, and told him about how Jesus had been killed, how they had gone to the tomb on the third day and found his body missing, and how an angel had appeared and said, “Jesus is alive.” They spoke of all this in the past tense, saying, “This man was... a powerful prophet” (19) and “We had placed our hope in him” (21). They were saying that no one speaks of him now, that there is no hope now. Then Jesus, posing as a traveler, said to the disciples, “Oh, how slow you are to understand, and how dull of heart to disbelieve all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And he “explained to them what was written about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets” (verses 25–27). “Moses and all the prophets” refers to the Old Testament. Since only the Old Testament existed in Jesus’s time, he drew upon passages from it that spoke of himself and explained them. This was Jesus’s teaching. As they listened, their hearts burned within them, and hope arose. Later, looking back on that moment, they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us on the road and opening the Scriptures to us?” (24:32).

● Since the Bible was written by divine inspiration, it is most effective when read in a church filled with the Spirit of Christ. The Bible bears witness to Christ. The Lord Himself said, “The Scriptures testify about me” (John 5:39). Christ is like the thread that binds the entire Bible together, from the first line to the last. Alexander Schmemmann said, “A Christian is one who can find Christ wherever he looks and be filled with joy.” It was Christ who created Adam; it was Christ who walked in Eden; it was Christ who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. When you read the Psalms, Christ is written about everywhere. When you read everything with the understanding that it is all about Christ, the meaning changes.

② [Christ is present and reveals Himself in the sermon and the Lord's Supper]

Eventually, they arrived at the village they were heading for, but the Bible tells us that “Jesus seemed intent on going on” (Luke 24:28). This means that Jesus’ destination was different from theirs. Since “sin” means “to miss the mark,” we can see that their journey was a misguided one. However, the two men said, “Please stay with us. “It is nearly evening, and the day is almost over” (verse 29), and made

an effort to stay with Him. We, too, must make an effort to remain with Christ. I hear the words, “Behold, those who are far from You will perish; You cut off those who stray from Your presence” (Psalm 73:27), with fear. The devil is at work trying to separate us from Christ. People easily drift away from Christ.

Now, regarding the time of supper: “When they were at the table, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; but he vanished from their sight” (verses 30–31). “Taking bread, giving thanks, breaking it, and giving it”—these four actions are the same as those in the Lord’s Supper. Through the Lord’s Supper, their eyes are opened. A sermon alone does not open their eyes, but when they come to the Lord’s Supper, their eyes are opened. That is why a sermon alone is not enough. The Lord’s Supper is the most important. No matter how much they were persecuted, the church continued to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

This story begins with the disciples who lost their faith and left the church. They cannot see Christ, who is walking with them. Even though He is walking with them, they cannot see Him. However, their eyes are opened through Jesus’ teaching of Scripture and His breaking of bread (the Lord’s Supper). By repeatedly experiencing the sermon and the Lord’s Supper, Christ becomes visible to them. And so they return to the church. Christ is present in the sermon and the Lord’s Supper, and He reveals Himself there. Through the sermon and the Lord’s Supper, we come to see that Jesus is with us.

③ **【The joy of returning with a changed heart】**

They immediately returned to Jerusalem. This signifies that they had embarked once again on a journey of faith. Sermons and the Lord’s Supper have the power to transform lives. They have the power to lift us up to heaven as we fall toward the earth. When they returned to Jerusalem, the eleven apostles and a crowd of followers were waiting for them. This is the prototype of the church. They had returned to the church.

● U.S. President Trump posted an AI-generated image depicting himself as Christ. After the Pope condemned the war in Iran, stating, “God rejects the prayers of leaders with blood on their hands. God does not bless any conflict,” President Trump commented on the Pope—who is American—saying, “He is soft on crime and terrible at diplomacy. Leo should be grateful. As everyone knows, his election was a surprise. He wasn’t on any list of papal candidates; he was chosen simply because he is American. It was thought to be the best way to get along with President Trump. If I weren’t in the White House, Leo wouldn’t be in the Vatican either.”

● Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, in a speech commemorating the Holocaust, criticized European nations that condemn war, stating, “Europe has fallen into a

serious moral weakness.” Has Europe forgotten that it persecuted and carried out the Holocaust? They claim they are the victims and therefore in the right. And they label Iran as “absolute evil,” claiming that the war they are waging is just.

What is their defining characteristic? It is arrogance. They believe that they are right and everyone else is wrong. They believe that they are good and everyone else is evil. This is exactly the same as a cult. The Unification Church uses the term “dual nature” to divide everything into two categories: male and female, male and female, stamen and pistil, positive and negative, the physical world and the spirit world, and people on God’s side versus people on the devil’s side. And they claimed that the Unification Church was on God’s side, while anyone who criticized them was on the devil’s side. God does not accept those who consider themselves righteous.

In the Book of Lamentations in the Old Testament, the author depicts the terrible devastation of the city of Jerusalem. The city was burned and destroyed by Babylon. Within the city, public hangings took place, women were raped, and young people and children were forced into hard labor. It is truly hell. Yet, even while grieving in this way, the author turns his heart to God in prayer: “How terrible it is! We have sinned... O Lord, bring us back to You. We will return. Renew our days as of old.” (Lamentations 5:16, 21) He says that the reason he suffered such hardship was because he had sinned. It is not the people around him or the surrounding nations who are at fault; the problem lies within himself. He says it is because he has sinned against God. This is the true posture of a believer. Christians must be the same. Today’s Israel lacks this repentance. That is why they do not seek to return to God. God is a God of those who repent. Forgiveness is not granted to those who do not repent.

●Pastor Yasuro Enomoto writes: “A person of faith is one who always has a place to return to. This is the grace granted to those who have faith. ...The greatness of the people of Israel lay in the fact that they had a God to whom they could return. Time and again, they strayed from God and rebelled against Him. They incurred His wrath and suffered bitterly. Yet each time, they repented and returned to God. God forgave them and restored them to prosperity.”

Let us also examine our own hearts and repent. Like Jeremiah, we want to pray, “We have sinned... O Lord, bring us back to you; we will return.”