

September 21, 2025

Group Study: The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–49)

1. Why do you think Jesus isn't immediately recognized by these disciples who knew him well? What "disguises" might Jesus wear as he walks alongside us in our own times of grief or disappointment?
2. How does Jesus help the disciples re-interpret their story through scripture? When has reflecting on God's word helped you make sense of your own story in a new way?
3. What role does hospitality play in revealing the risen Christ?
4. What do we learn about resurrection through broken bread?
5. How does "re-membering" help the disciples move from despair to mission?
6. What does it mean for us to be witnesses of these things today?
7. When have you experienced God walking beside you in your own grief or confusion?
8. The disciples finally recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread. How has participating in communion impacted your awareness of Jesus' presence and power? What makes this sacrament so spiritually significant?
9. After their encounter with Jesus, the Emmaus disciples rush to share the good news with others, even late at night! When you have experienced Jesus in a profound way, who is the first person you want to tell?
10. How does the message of "re-membering" – that even in a broken world, Jesus shows up in the ordinary stuff of life to put us back together again – speak to you this week? Where do you need to experience that work of God?

Good Faith Bible Study

Kathy and Nathan Maxwell

September 21, 2025

"The Road to Emmaus"

Focal Texts: Luke 24:13-49

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In this last podcast of our study on “Exile and the Kingdom of God,” it’s fitting that we find Jesus at a table.

It’s not an ordinary dinner, of course. Weary, grief-stricken travelers with dusty feet arrive at home in Emmaus, after what was probably a three-hour walk from Jerusalem.

Have you ever arrived home, late in the evening, after a long, hard day? And not just a hard day, but the hardest of days. After a betrayal that you never imagined could happen. After the pink slip. After a diagnosis. Or a death. It’s a bit surreal at that point, isn’t it, that your home looks exactly the same as when you left it. You stand at the front door, keys dangling from your hands, trying to remember what comes next. And then perhaps you found yourself standing in the glow of the refrigerator door, not hungry at all, but knowing that on a “regular day,” dinner would come next.

Somehow, the Emmaus disciples get dinner on the table. It sounds like it’s pretty simple fare, but still, I wonder if it’s a stretch for them to have company. They’ve invited their fellow traveler to stay the night—the beauty of first-century Mediterranean hospitality—but it’s been a long day.

And then the guest sits down at the table, and as we point out in this week’s lesson, he begins to take on the role of host. It’s the guest who gives thanks and breaks the bread—and it’s in that moment that the disciples from Emmaus recognize that Jesus has come to dinner.

In the ancient world—and in our world today—important things happen around tables. Think about the last meal that you ate with a bunch of people around the table. Did you notice how much a table reveals about power? Who sits at the head of the table? Who serves the food? Who speaks the most? Tables are never neutral. They tell us something about who belongs and who matters. They also can tell us about who is left out.

In the Gospel of Luke, meals are more than background details. They’re more than just the setting for stories about Jesus. Tables and meals are places where Jesus reveals what the kingdom of God is like. Today, as we come to the table spread at the disciples’ house in Emmaus, let’s

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explore how meals in Luke confront human power dynamics and how they invite us—exiles in our own way—to come to a table where true belonging is found.

First, Luke shows us again and again that meals can become battlegrounds for power.

For example, look at Luke 7, when Jesus dines in the home of Simon the Pharisee. It should have been a setting of honor, but somehow Simon withholds hospitality. It's a woman, who's labeled sinful. She enters, weeping at Jesus' feet. And Simon is scandalized. But Jesus flips the power script: The true host at this table is not the Pharisee with all the influence, but the woman whose love and faith embody God's welcome as she washes Jesus' feet.

Later, in Luke 14, Jesus notices guests jockeying for the best seats at a banquet. He warns them: Don't scramble for honor, because in God's kingdom, the exalted will be humbled and the humble will be exalted. And then Jesus goes even further: When you throw a party, don't invite people who can repay you. Instead, invite the poor, the lame, the blind. In other words, build tables where repayment and status no longer drive the guest list.

Take a moment now to think about a time when you noticed unspoken rules at a table. Who was in charge, who was silent, who felt out of place? And how did that experience shape the meal?

In Luke 14, Jesus drives the point about power dynamics home with the Parable of the Great Banquet. Those with the first invitations make their excuses. They're good excuses, I think, but the invited guests have something more important to do. So the host orders the servants to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame—those who never would have expected a seat at such a feast.

This is kingdom imagery. The reign of God isn't about maintaining our human hierarchies. It's about breaking them apart. The table of God centers the very people who have been pushed to the margins.

Now, as you're studying, or later when you gather with your Bible study group, imagine what God's banquet table would look like in your own community. Who would be seated in the places of honor? Who do we often overlook, and how might this parable that Jesus tells re-seat people around this table?

Luke's stories of Jesus at the table definitely connect to this quarter's Bible study theme of "Exile and the Kingdom of God."

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Exile is about dislocation, as we've already studied. It's about being away from home, away from belonging. Maybe you know that experience. Maybe it's literal or figurative, but maybe you've felt out of place before—shut out of spaces where decisions are made. Or maybe you've felt overlooked at society's tables.

The kingdom of God meets us in that exile. The kingdom of God says: You have a place here at this table. Not because of status or wealth or power, but because God has chosen to invite the exiled and the overlooked. In Luke's meal scenes, the kingdom of God is a table where the outcast finally sits down ... and is welcomed.

We can't really talk about Jesus and tables and meals without talking about the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, the table that Jesus shares with his disciples in Luke 22. Think about how radically different this table is from every other. No one is jockeying for the best seat, because at this table, it's the host who kneels to serve. No one is excluded, not even the one who will betray Jesus. At this table, the bread and the cup are given freely. They're not earned or exchanged.

The Eucharist dismantles human power dynamics that focus on status. This table is about grace and presence and communion. At Christ's table, exile ends. We're no longer outsiders. We belong there.

And sometimes, the Eucharist has to shock us awake to its meaning. Kelly Johnson, in her book *The Fear of Beggars*, tells a story about a pastor, who, as is her habit, has invited the congregation to the communion table one Sunday morning. As usual, the table has been set, and the invitation is open to all who would come. The pastor looks up, just as a visitor comes forward. The visitor walks right past the people serving communion and steps up to the table. He takes that symbolically broken bread that's still resting on the platter, and he eats it—he eats all of it! The pastor notices, just a heartbeat later, that the visitor's feet are bare and his clothing is tattered. This man hasn't come to the table for symbolism. He didn't come for a meaningful ritual. He came because he was hungry.

This story illuminates what communion really is—what it really means to gather at the table with Jesus. This isn't an exclusive ritual for the well-prepared people. It's bread for the hungry.

And so lastly we come to Emmaus, the passage that we study more deeply this week. Two weary disciples walk home in confusion and despair. They are disoriented. They don't know where they belong now that Jesus is gone.

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But at a simple table, in the breaking of bread, their eyes are opened. What Rome could never give—what power and status could never guarantee—they find in fellowship with the risen Christ.

Every table that we sit at is a chance to practice Jesus' kind of hospitality. To notice who's missing and to challenge the unspoken hierarchies around us. To embody that Eucharistic welcome.

So here's a challenge for this week:

At some point during the week, practice one "Eucharistic act" at a meal. Maybe leave the best seat for someone else. Maybe leave the last cookie for someone else. Maybe invite someone who often gets left out. Or simply pay attention to someone who might be hungry in spirit ... or maybe someone who might be physically hungry.

The kingdom of God is revealed in bread that is broken and shared. It's not found in the tables of power, but in the tables of welcome and hospitality. Every time we eat together in Jesus' name, we proclaim that the exiles have a home and that the hungry are fed—and as we do, Jesus joins us at the table.