

## December 14-18

December 14 M — Reading 249 — Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13-32

### Mark 16

<sup>12</sup> *After these things*

*he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country.*

### Luke 24

<sup>13</sup> *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles<sup>[fn]</sup> from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. <sup>16</sup> But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.*

<sup>17</sup> *And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, <sup>23</sup> and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." <sup>25</sup> And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

<sup>28</sup> *So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, <sup>29</sup> but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup> When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"*

### ESV Footnote

(24:13) Greek *sixty stadia*; a *stadium* was about 607 feet or 185 meters

**The Emmaus Message** — I love this story; it is filled with drama, mystery, emotion, insight, wonder, hope, and surprise. I love the fact that these two disciples, after walking seven miles (11 km) from Jerusalem and arriving at Emmaus “*toward evening*” (v. 29), were willing to hurry back (probably two hours) to tell the other disciples that they had seen Jesus. I also love the leading questions Jesus asked them on the road that drew information out of them: “*What is this conversation...?*” (v. 17) and “*What things?*” (v. 19). He wanted them to express what they knew and how they felt. I love that they exposed to Jesus, and to us, their dashed political hopes: “*But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel*” (v. 21). God had not done what they expected Him to do. Sound familiar? I would have loved to hear what Jesus told them in this Emmaus sermon, when “*beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*” (v. 27). No

wonder they concluded, “*Did not our hearts burn within us...?*” (v. 32). I also love the way that Jesus vanished after He blessed, broke, and gave them the bread (v. 30). It was at that point that God opened their clouded eyes. Perhaps that coincided with seeing the scars in his hands as He gave them the bread. Wow! Poof!

**Meditation:** These two disciples said that the women at the tomb had “*seen a vision of angels*” (v. 23). That seems to suggest that they are not completely convinced that what the women had seen was real. Yet, one of the angels rolled back the heavy stone, a physical event that had to be more than an immaterial vision. Also, visions are personal; two or more people don’t see the same vision. Up to five women had seen the angels and heard the same message at the tomb. We will see what happened in our next reading when these two disciples reported to the Eleven and to others about their encounter with Jesus. I wonder if some of these other disciples reacted by also thinking, “They saw a *vision* of Jesus.” But it wasn’t a vision because two people saw the same thing. It was also real because after Jesus vanished, they probably looked down at their hands, holding those real pieces of bread that Jesus had broken and given to them. Then, they probably said, “This is real; we have to tell someone about it!” That is true for us as well. We have discovered that Jesus is really alive and that He has proven it by changing our lives; let’s tell someone about it!

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Mark 16

<sup>13</sup> *And they went back*

*and told the rest,*

*but they did not believe them.*

<sup>14</sup> *Afterward*

*he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at table,*

*and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen.*

Luke 24

<sup>33</sup> *And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.*

*And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, <sup>34</sup> saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

<sup>36</sup> *As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them,*

*and said to them, "Peace to you!"*

<sup>37</sup> *But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.*

<sup>38</sup> *And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"*

John 20

<sup>19</sup> *On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews,<sup>[fn]</sup>*

*Jesus came and stood among them*

*and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

**ESV Footnote**

(20:19) Greek *loudaioi* probably refers here to Jewish religious leaders, and others under their influence, in that time

Luke 24 (cont.)

<sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet,

*that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."* <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

<sup>41</sup> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish,<sup>[fn]</sup> <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate before them.

**ESV Footnote**

(24:42) Some manuscripts add *and some honeycomb*

John 20 (cont.)

<sup>20</sup> *When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.*

*Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

<sup>21</sup> *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."* <sup>22</sup> *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."*

**Flesh and Bones** — When Jesus met with the Emmaus disciples, He appeared to them naturally, meeting them on the road as they walked. After breaking bread with them, however, He departed supernaturally and instantly. Then, when Jesus appeared to the larger group of His disciples, it was also miraculously and instantaneously. The doors were locked, and all of a sudden, "*He ... stood among them*" (John 20:19). Flesh and bones cannot do that, at least according to the prior experiences of these disciples. Understandably, "*they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit*" (Luke 24:37). They thought that a *spirit* might be able to appear instantaneously but not *flesh and blood*. So, Jesus proved to them that He was real and material. He showed them the scars of his hands, feet, and side. He was the real Jesus they had known. He then ate a piece of fish in front of them to show that He was material. It was a real body but also a glorified body. The resurrected body could appear and disappear instantly. John wrote later that "*when he appears we shall be like him...*" (1 John 3:2), so our resurrected body in heaven will be like Jesus' resurrected body. And some people think that heaven will be boring!

**Meditation:** I was confused when reading the statement, "*The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!*" (Luke 24:34). Who said that? If it were the two Emmaus disciples who said it, how would they know that Jesus had appeared to Simon? And Simon Peter was one of the Eleven, so he was present at this gathering. When it is understood that "*the eleven and those who were with them*" (v. 33) were the ones who made that statement, it makes much better sense. Jesus had appeared to Peter privately (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5) and he apparently had been telling this group about it when the travelers from Emmaus returned. Several other translations make it clear that it was the larger group that made the statement to the Emmaus disciples:

- *There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."* (NIV).
- *They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, who said, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"* (CSB).

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<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin,<sup>[fn]</sup> was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

<sup>26</sup> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

#### ESV Footnote

(20:24) Greek *Didymus*

**Blessed Believers** — Thomas deserved the lasting label of "Doubting Thomas." He had ample evidence from his close friends that they had seen the real, alive Jesus, but that was not enough for him. He wanted more than what faith required; he insisted on facts, facts he could touch. Jesus accommodated him with a special appearance but He also rebuked him. Then, He praised us! "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" We heard the testimonies of John and others and accepted it by faith. Faith is enough. It changes lives. Unfortunately, we are surrounded by doubters, the unbelieving world and our unbelieving friends. They are not likely to get more evidence. God has provided all the evidence necessary to believe. They just need our testimony that we believed in Christ and our lives were drastically and supernaturally changed. See me! Watch me! That should be enough evidence—examples of His love, grace, and power.

**Meditation:** Why did John write his book? "... *these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" He said that the *purpose* is to stimulate faith. The *subject* is the deity of Jesus. The *result* is eternal life.

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<sup>1</sup> After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. <sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. <sup>7</sup> That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. <sup>8</sup> The other disciples

came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards<sup>[fn]</sup> off.

<sup>9</sup> When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup> Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught." <sup>11</sup> So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup> Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup> Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. <sup>14</sup> This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

#### ESV Footnote

(21:8) Greek *two hundred cubits*; a *cubit* was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

**God Supplies** — Nothing is impossible with God. When these seven disciples got to the shore, they saw that Jesus had a charcoal fire going with fish on it and bread (v. 9). Where did it come from? God supplied it, probably miraculously. This breakfast was a gift from Jesus. When we pray before meals, we acknowledge that the food we are about to eat is a gift from God: "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...*" (James 1:17). Yet, in spite of the fact that Jesus had supplied bread and cooked fish for them, He asked them to bring some of the fish they had caught (v. 10). Why didn't He supply enough for them in the first place? It seems to me that He wanted them to participate in the provision as well. Yes, the catch was also miraculous, but they had to work to haul the net to the shore. Sometimes God gives us outright gifts and sometimes we have to work for them. It all comes from Him but it is a cooperative effort. He gives; we give. That is the way God supplies—through miracle and through effort. Be reminded of this as you pray before your next few meals; God has supplied it through multiple means.

**Meditation:** It is interesting to see the leadership of Peter in this story. He said to the other six, "*I am going fishing.*" (v. 3). It wasn't, "Let's go fishing," urging them to accompany him, but he assumed they would follow him, and they did: "*We will go with you.*" I have heard some people criticize Peter for "backsliding" into his old profession here but Jesus had not yet given them instruction to preach the gospel because they first needed to be equipped with the Holy Spirit. Jesus' only command for them was "*to go to Galilee, and there they will see me*" (Matt. 28:10). They were just doing what was natural for them to do while waiting for Jesus to show up. And Peter was doing what was natural for him—leading. Peter's second act of leadership here was to make Jesus his priority. When John told him that it was Jesus who was on the shore, Peter jumped into the sea to swim ashore. He didn't say, "I am going ashore"; he just did it. The others followed the slow, dry way. Jesus had already met privately with Peter after the resurrection (Luke 24:34). He knew he was forgiven for denying Jesus and he wanted to be with Him as soon as possible. This should be our motivation for putting the reading of God's Word as an absolute priority for us: We want to meet with Jesus. He is our Savior, our Lord, and our supplier of every good thing.

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December 18 F — Reading 253 — John 21:15-24

<sup>15</sup> When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

<sup>16</sup> He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." <sup>17</sup> He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love

me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." <sup>18</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." <sup>19</sup> (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, "Follow me."

<sup>20</sup> Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" <sup>21</sup> When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" <sup>23</sup> So the saying spread abroad among the brothers<sup>[fn]</sup> that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?"

<sup>24</sup> This is the disciple who is bearing witness about these things, and who has written these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

<sup>25</sup> Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

#### ESV Footnote

(21:23) Or *brothers and sisters*

**Feed and Follow** — Jesus gave Peter two commands in this famous lakeshore encounter about his love. The first was His command to shepherd: "*Feed my lambs*" (v. 15). Jesus recognized Peter as the leader of the Eleven and He was reaffirming his future leadership, not only of them but more widely of others. Notice that this is *servant* leadership. He did not say to "lead" my lambs but to "*feed*" them. That involves provision and care—a leadership focused on service. Whether we have the gift of leadership or not, all of us are capable of lovingly caring for others—feeding and caring for them spiritually and materially. Jesus' second command to Peter was, "*Follow me!*" (v. 19). The context was that of suffering ("*...by what kind of death he was to glorify God*"). Peter would follow Jesus through being crucified by those who opposed his message. Obviously, being one who *serves* is a lot easier than being one who *suffers*. We may not have to suffer a violent death because of our faith but we are called to follow Christ with a strong commitment that is willing to stand firm even when facing the threat of death. Look for some way that you can "*feed*" someone today; in doing so, you will also "*follow*" Christ.

**Meditation:** When Jesus asked Peter, "*do you love me more than these?*" (v. 15), what did He mean by "*these*"? It was a question of comparison and we must look in the context of that statement to try to discover what Jesus meant. Some say that "*these*" refer to the net full of fish by the shore. In other words, "Do you love me more than your fishing occupation?" Peter could have stayed in Galilee, making his living as a fisherman and telling others about Jesus when he had the opportunity, but he didn't. He gave his life, vocationally and literally, to spreading the message of salvation. He chose ministry over occupation. Another option to Jesus' question is that "*these*" referred to the other five disciples that had just eaten breakfast with them. If so, even that could be taken in two different ways. Perhaps He meant, "Do you love Me more than you love these other disciples?" That would focus on relationships. Jesus had challenged people earlier about this: "*Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me*" (Matt. 10:37). The other interpretation is that Jesus meant, "Do you love Me more than these other disciples love Me?" That is a question about the quality of love: "How much do you love Me?" How would we rate our love for Jesus compared to our occupation or our family? If we loved Jesus as much as we should, many people might think we love Him too much.