

Jesus Brings Understanding

Jarrett Stephens

So What: Why the Resurrection Matters | April 12, 2026 | Philippians 1:6; Colossians 1:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:11-12; Romans 8:28; Proverbs 18:1; Luke 24:13-35; Isaiah 55:8-9

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

All right, good morning. I want to invite you to grab your Bibles and turn to Luke chapter 24.

We started this new series last week, So What? Why the Resurrection Matters, and over the course of the next several weeks, we are looking at many of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Scripture records somewhere, depending on how you count them, 10 to 12 different appearances of Jesus after the resurrection, and all of them teach us something about Him. They teach us something about ourselves.

These accounts are given to us by eyewitnesses, and they are some of the greatest evidence we have that the resurrection is a historical event, that it actually occurred. The resurrection, we're saying, definitely matters.

Miroslav Pelikan was a Christian historian and professor at Yale University. He wrote this: "If Christ is not raised, nothing matters. If Christ is raised, nothing else matters."

Last week, for our Easter message, many of you were here. We talked about the resurrection mattering because it brings hope. Jesus is hope. This appearance we're looking at this week - it's the title of the message today - teaches us that Jesus brings understanding.

I want to begin this morning simply by asking you some questions. Have you ever felt confused at what God was doing in your life or what He was allowing into your life? Have you ever doubted what God was up to? Have you had a hard time figuring out why He is moving like He is, discerning what He is doing? What is He trying to teach you?

Have you ever said, "Why, God?" about something that has happened? Or perhaps, "God, are You even here? Are You present?"

Maybe you're at a place of shock and disbelief. Something's going on that has you discouraged, so much so that you're ready to quit and throw in the towel. Do any of these emotions, any of these questions, jive with you? Have you felt them before, experienced them before, dealt with them before?

Of course you have. We all have.

This past week marked the 12-year anniversary of the passing of one of the top influences in my life. He went to be with the Lord. When I first went to my church in Dallas, where I served right out of college, I was 22 years old, and my supervising minister was a man by the name of Mike Fechner.

If you've been around Champion Forest for any amount of time, you've heard me talk about him. He was 39

when I got to the church and began serving, and he just took me under his wing. I'd never met anybody like Mike. He was charismatic. He was bold in his faith. He was the most generous, tenderhearted man I've ever been around. I mean, I loved Mike.

He taught me how to drive on the tollway. It's kill or be killed. I mean, he went, and I've still got it in my bones to this day.

He took me under his wing. He started an inner-city ministry there in Dallas that continues to this day called BridgeBuilders. He taught me how to pray. He taught me how to fast. He taught me the importance of ministry to the poor, the widow, and the orphan. He just adopted me into his family and took me on family vacations with him. His kids became like brothers and sisters to me. I was an older brother to them, if you will.

At the age of 49, he received a diagnosis of lung cancer - non-smoker's lung cancer. He dealt with that for five years. It metastasized to his brain.

I can remember coming down here to Houston. We were actually staying in a neighborhood not far from Champion Forest, and I would drive him to treatments down at MD Anderson. In the afternoons, he'd want to work out and just try to get his mind off what he was going through. I remember us looking for a rec center somewhere near where we were, and it led us all the way here to Champion Forest. We'd come work out here.

He was just an incredible man. But after five years of wrestling with that disease, at the age of 53, he went to be with the Lord.

I remember his death, and I was just reliving it this week, April the 9th being 12 years. I never asked God why, but I was for sure sad. Disappointed. It was really one of the first real moments of expectations I had of God not lining up with reality.

I mean, we had prayed for his healing. We had asked God for his healing and fasted for his healing. He was someone I could go to, receive counsel from, and pray with. I was just so discouraged because his kids at the time were in high school and college. I just remember being so depressed.

We've all been at a point in life like this. If you haven't, you will be one day.

This is certainly where the disciples found themselves after Jesus had been put to death. The two disciples we're going to meet today were more than down. They were disillusioned. They certainly had some questions. They couldn't wrap their minds around everything that was going on.

Then they have an encounter with the risen Christ that changes everything. In a moment of confusion, He brings clarity. In a moment of not understanding what was happening at all, Jesus brings understanding.

The Road to Emmaus

Let's look at the text together. Luke chapter 24, starting in verse 13:

"That very day" - this is the day of the resurrection. Jesus had gotten out of the grave Sunday morning.

"That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

"While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

"And he said to them, 'What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?'"

What's this back and forth you're doing as you walk?

"And they stood still, looking sad."

Look at what the Scripture says. This is not a small detail here. Depending upon the translation of the Bible you're reading from, some Bibles translate this as their faces being downcast. Some translations say they were discouraged. The ESV simply says they were looking sad.

"And 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?'"

Again, Jesus didn't die in secret. It was right in public. This was front-page-newspaper type of stuff.

"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, and how the chief priests and the rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.'"

Right here you get a little bit of insight into the root of what was depressing them, discouraging them, and causing some disillusionment. They thought Jesus was going to lead a Moses-like liberation. They were under the heavy hand of Rome, and they thought Jesus was going to lead Israel to its greatest days and get out from underneath the Roman Empire.

Instead, they watched Him die a brutal death at the hands of the Roman Empire. Their hopes of the redemption of Israel were shattered. In their minds, they were in the grave.

"'Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body'" - we talked about this last week - "they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. 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.'"

You can get the sense of bewilderment, the sense of wonder. They're trying to figure out everything they've experienced and everything they've heard.

Verse 25:

"And he said to them, '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.

"So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 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.

"When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

"And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight."

Say, "Awesome." All right.

"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?'

"And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!'

"Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."

The main point of this text, and what we're going to spend the majority of our time on today, is how Jesus brings understanding to our lives when something is going on that we don't understand and can't quite wrap our minds around.

But first, I want to give you some don'ts. All right? I want to give you three don'ts.

Three Don'ts in Times of Confusion

When you're in a time of not understanding what God's doing, when there's been a curveball thrown at you and it's kind of buckled you, I don't know what it may be for you.

It may be the untimely death of a loved one. It may be a career transition that you weren't expecting. The company merged and you lost your job, or maybe you were skipped over for a promotion. Maybe there are some unmet expectations in your life that you thought were going to work out, and they haven't.

You find yourself here today deeply discouraged, like these disciples, and a little bit disillusioned. You don't know what to do.

I want to give you three don'ts when you're in times like this, all right? Then we'll get into the main text of the message.

Don't Isolate Yourself

Number one is don't isolate yourself.

That's what these two disciples were doing. Unlike the other disciples who were hanging out in and around Jerusalem, these disciples, the Bible says, left that very day. That's what verse 13 says. You get a sense of the immediacy of their movement.

The Bible says they were headed down to Emmaus, which is seven miles away from Jerusalem. Now, seven miles on foot was about a day-long journey.

Don't miss their movement, because while they're going to a place called Emmaus, notice what they are moving away from. They are moving away from the city of Jerusalem. They're moving away from the temple. They're moving away from where all of the other disciples are gathered and huddled together. They are getting out of Dodge, so to speak.

This is often what happens, isn't it? When times of confusion enter into our lives, when we've been hurt or we've been disappointed, isn't this what we want to do? We want to avoid people. We want to get out of town. We want to be by ourselves.

I want to warn you against this.

The Scripture tells us in Proverbs chapter 18, verse 1, "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment."

Did you know that researchers have found that when we isolate ourselves - and listen, I know I'm speaking to a lot of different people. We come in all shapes and sizes, with all different personality traits. There are some of us in here who are more extroverted, and some who are more introverted.

I'm not talking about someone who likes to process things internally and be by themselves. There's time for all of that. I'm talking about an unhealthy isolation. I'm talking about an isolation that won't let any other voices in except the internal dialogue going on in your mind. I'm talking about an isolation that is unhealthy at its root.

Did you know researchers have done brain scans on people who suffer from loneliness? They found in those brain scans that they don't look much different from the brain scan of someone who has a bone that is physically broken. That's what the mind does in someone who is isolated, alone, and lonely. It's the same brain scan as a physical bone break.

It's not a healthy place to be.

The other disciples were all back in Jerusalem hurting, but they were at least hurting together. I just don't know that it was all that healthy for these two disciples - could have been three, scholars tell us - as they walked along the road, to leave Jerusalem and process all they were feeling and experiencing by themselves.

I want to encourage you: when you're going through a time of disillusionment and discouragement, don't isolate yourself.

Don't Give In to Discouragement

Secondly, don't give in to discouragement.

This is one of the reasons isolation is so dangerous, because it feeds discouragement. Scripture says these two are walking and talking about what they've experienced in Jerusalem and what they've seen. Verse 17 notes that they were looking sad. Their faces were downcast.

There's no other way to put it. They were discouraged. Who can blame them?

The One they were following as the Messiah - they believed He was the Anointed One of God - they saw Him handed over, beaten, and put to death. As previously noted, they were counting on Him for the hope of the redemption of Israel. In their minds, all of that was over.

Discouragement was real.

We know this on the journey of faith. Are you kidding me? We go through valleys in life. We go through what St. John of the Cross called the dark night of the soul. Discouragement is real.

However, I want to tell you, believers, we can't give in to discouragement. One of the reasons the resurrection is so beautiful and the truth of the resurrection is so profound is because the truth of the resurrection shows us there is always hope, no matter what you're facing.

Look, what is the biggest enemy, the most terrifying subject matter, you're ever going to face? Is it not death? Your death? The death of a loved one? That's the greatest enemy we're ever going to face.

The resurrection says Jesus is bigger than that. If there's hope in death, there's hope in whatever you're facing right now that is causing discouragement.

Don't Quit on Jesus

Don't isolate yourself. Don't give in to discouragement. If you're facing uncertain times, depression, you're down, you're sad about something, and you can't figure out what God is doing, I want to encourage you, third and finally: don't quit on Jesus.

You see this process, right? Isolation. This is what the enemy wants to do.

Have you seen those National Geographic shows? When those lions go after that one prey, what do they want to do? They want to isolate him. Get him alone.

Isolation leads to discouragement, and oftentimes, if you stay in discouragement too long, you'll be tempted to quit on your faith. To quit on your faith is to quit on Jesus.

All of us know people, right? We've seen this. Some of them sat in our life groups, or they sat in our life groups at one time, and they're no longer there. Or maybe they sat in the same row. You came with them to church for years, and something happened - something they didn't understand, something perhaps tragic that they just didn't get over.

All of a sudden, they're not here anymore. What has happened is they have forsaken their faith. They wouldn't articulate it this way, but there's a term we use: backsliders. They have turned their backs on God.

It's a dangerous thing to be at a point where you want to quit on Jesus.

Look, we are all, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, going to go through dark nights. We're going to have times and seasons in our lives - some long, some short - when things are happening that don't make sense.

What I'm trying to encourage you in is this: don't allow those situations or circumstances, and the emotions that come along with them, to cause you to quit on Jesus.

This week, we were all watching Artemis II. These astronauts traveled farther from planet Earth than any people have ever traveled, over 700,000 miles. Have you seen some of these pictures? It's just amazing.

When I saw these pictures that were coming back, my thought, looking at something like this, was, "Good gracious. God created all of that? He's sustaining all of that? Upholding all of that? If He's big enough to do that, surely He's big enough to handle what's overwhelming me. If He's big enough to do all of that, surely He knows a little bit more than I do. Surely He can see a little bit farther than I can."

Isaiah chapter 55, verses 8 and 9:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

This is one of the things that makes God God. He's bigger than us. He has greater understanding. He has no limits.

He's promised that what He starts, He'll finish. That's Philippians 1:6. He's promised that all things - all things, no matter what you're going through, no matter where you are on this curve on the road to Emmaus, whether you're starting out on that bend in the road, in the middle of it, or about to come through it - all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.

Just like these two disciples, listen, you never know when Jesus is going to show up.

So don't quit on Him. Trust Him.

Whatever it is you're going through, whatever questions you have, Jesus, in going to that cross and coming out of that grave, shows you and proves to you that He is for you. He didn't quit on us. By His grace, may He give us the strength, the power, and the ability not to quit on Him.

These are the three don'ts when you're in a time when you don't understand. It's dark. You don't know your way. You don't know what to do. You don't know why things are happening.

Don't isolate yourself. Don't give in to discouragement. Don't quit on Jesus.

Now I'm going to give you three do's, but it's going to be in the context of the major points we're making today about what Jesus brings and how He brings understanding.

Jesus Brings Understanding Through Scripture

Here's what I want you to know. If you're taking notes, write it down: Jesus brings understanding through Scripture.

Luke 24:27: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

This had to be the greatest Bible study that's ever been given. Can you imagine? I know all of you have an awesome life group teacher you love, all right? I know you all have an incredible pastor and preacher you adore. I know that. But there ain't nothing like Jesus teaching the Scriptures.

Can you imagine?

Now, these two disciples still don't know it's Jesus. Remember, verse 16 tells us their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. But they said, as this guy was teaching - look at verse 32:

"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?'"

Listen to me: revelation and understanding come first and foremost through the Scriptures. Don't miss this.

Scripture's entire purpose is to point us to Jesus. From start to finish, the point of this Book that you hold in your hand, that you have on your device, is to point us to Christ.

The Bible says He began with Moses and all the Prophets and told them, taught them, the things concerning Himself.

Philip Ryken is the president of Wheaton College. Listen to what he said. He wrote a great commentary

on Luke's Gospel:

"Here Jesus gives us the golden key to unlocking the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures. They're all about him. Every part of the Old Testament finds its meaning and purpose in relationship to the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Scripture says it is only in Jesus that all things hold together."

That's Colossians 1:17.

"And this is true of the Old Testament. We cannot fully and properly understand anything from Moses to Malachi unless we see its connection to the whole gospel, including both the cross and the empty tomb."

Can you imagine what this Bible study would have been like, starting with Moses and going all the way to the Prophets?

Did Jesus say, "Hey, let's start in Genesis 3:15. Do you remember the Garden of Eden? Your great-great-grandparents sinned against God, and there was a curse. Do you remember what God spoke to the serpent?"

Did He point out Genesis 3:15, which says:

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring;

"he" - the coming Messiah - "shall bruise your head."

He's going to deal you a death blow - the cross and resurrection - "and you shall bruise his heel."

Did He take them to Genesis 22? Did He say, "Do you remember Abraham taking Isaac?" Did He say, "Read it over and over again and notice how many times it says, 'Take your son, your only son.' Does that remind you of anybody?"

Take him to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him there. Did He say, "Oh, did you notice that Mount Moriah is the exact same mountain as Mount Calvary?"

Did He take them to Genesis 22 and say, "Do you remember that He provided a substitute for Abraham? There is another Substitute on Mount Calvary."

Did He take them to Exodus chapter 12, the Passover? Did He say, "You just came out of Passover. That's what we just celebrated. What's that all about?"

A family would bring a little lamb without blemish into their home and care for it. Then they would sacrifice that lamb and put the blood of that spotless lamb over the doorframes of their home. If the death angel passed over and saw the blood, it passed over that home.

Did He say, "Does that ring a bell to you? Does that sound familiar to you?"

Did He take them to Isaiah 53, the great passage on the suffering Servant, and just say, "Hey, let Me read you something"?

"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;

"and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

"Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;

"yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

"But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities;

"upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed."

I wonder if Jesus said, "Does that ring a bell? Is anything lining up?"

No wonder their hearts were burning inside them. It was so good, they said, "Would You keep traveling with us?" Jesus was going to go along the way, and they said, "No, keep coming with us. We want You to stay."

What I want you to notice, though, is how Jesus brought understanding. It was through the Scripture.

This is John 1:1 on display: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God."

Why didn't Jesus say to the disciples, "You want proof of My resurrection? Here are the nail-scarred hands. Here's where the spear pierced My side"?

That's what He's going to do for Thomas. We're going to look at that next week. Why didn't He do it with these two disciples?

Instead, He didn't start with His resurrected body. He started with the Scriptures.

Jesus knew He wasn't going to be able to physically walk with every one of us on our Emmaus road, but He could give you His Word. He could give you His Spirit.

This leads to the first do: press into Scripture.

When you're in a time when you don't understand what's going on, the first thing you need to do is open your Bible, grab your Bible, and press into Scripture. This is where you get revelation. This is where Jesus meets you - right here on the pages of Scripture.

The Scripture has everything you need. It says of itself in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness."

Hebrews 4:12 says:

"The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Do you want your heart to burn within you because God is speaking to you? The very first thing you need to do, if you're in a time of not understanding what's going on, if a curveball has been thrown in life, if you're confused, depressed, down, or sad, is get into your Bible.

That's where He brings understanding.

Jesus Brings Understanding Over Time

Secondly, I want you to know that Jesus brings understanding not just through Scripture, but over time.

I'm going to move fast in this, but I want you to notice that He didn't resolve the disciples' angst the moment He showed up. Instead, He asked them questions.

This is always how it is with Jesus. You know why? Because He's after a heart relationship with you. That's what He wants. He wants to walk with you. He wants our faith built up and strong.

What makes our faith strong? What builds our trust muscle more than anything else in life? I know you don't want to hear it, but isn't it true?

Trials do it. Troubles do it. Going through the fire does it. Unanswered prayer. Uncertain times. Waiting on God. These things strengthen our faith.

We don't like going through the bend in the road to Emmaus. We don't like going through the valley. But this is where God does His best work.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 12, "We see in a mirror dimly." That means on this side of eternity, we're not going to have the answers to all of our questions.

There are going to be situations that arise that cause us to look deeply at our faith. That's not a time to deconstruct faith. It's a time to press into the Scripture and wait patiently on the Lord.

This leads to the second do: trust God in the waiting.

He will reveal what He's doing over time, and it may not be on this side of eternity. I've heard that the most often repeated words in heaven are going to be, "Aha. I get it. It makes sense."

Waiting is never fun, but I'm telling you, there are some things God can only do in the waiting room of life.

God called me to pastor when I was 17 years old. I knew this was all I've ever wanted to do. I spent one summer in the youth group as a summer intern, and I said, "I ain't doing that again. I want to be the pastor."

I remember serving God in Dallas for 20 years and asking, "When are You going to allow me to pastor? You put this dream in my heart all those years ago."

I remember in my Psalms reading - because I read through the Psalms, two or three Psalms every single day - on September 5, 2016, I was in Psalm 27. I looked this morning, just so you know I'm not making it up.

Psalm 27, verse 14, says:

"Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

I wrote the date down: 2016. "God, You told me to wait."

Now, I wish I could say Champion Forest called me the next week, but He waited about five more years. All right?

But can I tell you, God bringing us here in 2021 - all those years of waiting - and I've got more than that date. Every time I read it, I would write another date and write another date. But I can tell you, it's been worth the wait.

It always is.

Nothing builds your trust muscle like waiting on God.

One of my favorite quotes is by author and pastor John Piper, who said, "God is always doing 10,000 things in your life, and you may be aware of three of them."

The resurrection proves God is for us. It proves that He has all the power in the world and that He has all things under His control.

So look, wait patiently for Him when you're on the Emmaus road. I promise you, when He shows up, He'll do exactly for you what He did for these disciples. He'll open your eyes. He'll speak words into your heart, and it'll burn like nothing else.

Jesus Brings Understanding in Communion

Third and finally, Jesus brings understanding through Scripture, over time, and - this is going to be an interesting one, but it's biblically accurate. I don't think my interpretation or hermeneutic is off - in communion.

Let me explain.

Look at what the Scripture says in Luke 24:

"When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

"And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight."

Look at verse 33:

"And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!'

"Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."

These disciples - I don't know how long they were following Jesus. It could have been just in the act of Jesus breaking the bread. Maybe they were there when He fed the 5,000, and He broke that bread, and there was just something about it.

I tend to think they were in the upper room. They saw Jesus break that bread and institute the Lord's Supper. There was something in Jesus breaking that bread that opened their eyes and caused them to go all the way back to Jerusalem after they'd walked all day. They left that moment and went all the way back to testify to what they'd seen and what they'd heard.

Jesus says that when we come to the Lord's Table, the bread represents His body broken for us. The fruit of the vine represents His blood poured out for us.

We still take the Lord's Supper today, and as Protestants, we don't believe Jesus is physically in the elements of the Lord's Supper. We believe it's symbolic - bread symbolic of His body and the fruit of the vine symbolic of His blood.

However, when we take the Lord's Supper, there is something very spiritual going on. In this act of taking the Lord's Supper, we are recognizing who Jesus is and what He's done. He manifests Himself in a special way when we're together, especially when we take the Lord's Supper.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Every time we proclaim His death, we're proclaiming His resurrection. We're proclaiming His return. We're, in a very real way, experiencing and having an encounter with the risen Christ.

Here's what I don't want you to forget, and here's where I'm going to link it to the third do: the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the church.

Don't take the Lord's Supper by yourself. You take it with the church.

"Where two or three are gathered in my name." Even at this meal when Jesus broke bread, there were two disciples - again, maybe three - when Jesus performed this act.

So here's the third and final do. When you're in an uncertain time, depressed, down, or discouraged, gather with God's people.

This is where communion is practiced. In the church gathered, it's where you find strength.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says:

"Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

I'm telling you, one of Satan's biggest ways of deceiving our culture in this day and age is getting people to skip out on church. I'm talking to the choir because you're here. But I'm telling you, whenever you're tempted to sleep in, whenever you're tempted to have another priority on a Sunday morning, that's just the first part of Satan's enticement to get you away from where you need to be.

When you're on a curve on the road to Emmaus and you don't know when that curve is ending, the last thing you need to do is skip out on God's church, where God's people gather, because the manifest presence of Christ is here.

He does something in our gatherings that He doesn't do anywhere else, and you can't get what He's doing online. It's great that you watch. We love people who are tuning in. But you need to be with the gathered church.

In Acts chapter 2, what was the early church doing? You read it in verses 42, 44, 46, and 47. They were together. They were together. They were together.

We need one another to overcome isolation, to fight through depression, to be encouraged, to keep going, and not quit on the Lord.

This past Thursday, April 9, marked 81 years since Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed by hanging because of his preaching and leadership against the Nazi regime.

The night before he died, they let him gather the prisoners together, some who would be hanged with him the next day, and they had a church service. They didn't have the elements to take the Lord's Supper, but they did break bread. They shared a meal. They worshiped. They prayed.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer opened the Bible and preached a message from Isaiah 53: "By his stripes we are healed."

When the service was over, they came and got him and a few others to lead them to where they would be executed. He was 39, by the way. His last recorded words were, "This is the end - for me, the beginning of life."

When we gather together like this, we may not get all the answers to our questions, but I'm telling you, Christ is present among His people in a special and unique way. When you get His presence, you often get His perspective. And you get His peace. It passes all understanding.

We're going to talk about His peace next week.

So wherever you are, whoever you are, I want you to keep pressing into Scripture. If you're on that curve in the road, if you're in that valley, keep trusting Him as you wait. Keep gathering with God's people.

Jesus will show up, and when He shows up, He brings understanding with Him.

Amen.