

# Sermon Note: Thunder Road

## Trinity Sunday

### Introduction

This week's message continues our **God Is in the Radio** series by pairing one of scripture's most profound post-resurrection stories with Bruce Springsteen's *Thunder Road*. In both, we meet people who are weary, searching, maybe even stuck. The disciples walk away from Jerusalem with hearts heavy from disappointment. The singer's voice calls out to Mary from the porch—a voice offering invitation over certainty. Neither story gives us a clean resolution. What they offer instead is a chance: to step forward, to move, to trust the road beneath our feet.

We can understand why the disciples would want to escape Jerusalem, but perhaps this story is more about the courage to move at all. Perhaps it's about what happens when we choose not to stay stuck in what once was. Perhaps it's about what happens when we're willing to step out of what feels safe and familiar, and begin moving toward something new—even when we don't yet know what that is.

Sometimes we can't recognize the grace that walks beside us until we've already taken a few steps. Sometimes our own grief or expectations keep us from seeing clearly. And even then, Christ draws near. He walks with us, listens to us, and reveals himself along the way—often in unexpected ways.

### Illustration Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6TNF18oxirc>

This week's illustration video is a stripped-down performance of *Thunder Road* from Springsteen's MTV Unplugged concert. With just harmonica, piano, and voice, the song invites us into a moment that feels raw, reflective, and quietly hopeful—an open-door call to step into the journey.

### Video Discussion Questions

1. What emotion or memory surfaced for you as you listened to the song? The "Unplugged" concerts were intended to feel personal. Does this song in this setting feel this way for you? Why or why not?
2. Springsteen sings, "Don't turn me home again. I just can't face myself alone again." How does that line speak to the human longing for connection?
3. "We ain't that young anymore." How do you hear that line—resigned, realistic, hopeful?
4. The invitation in the song isn't to perfection, but to possibility. How is that different from how we usually think about "salvation"?
5. How does the theme of movement shape the emotional arc of the song? Where do you hear risk, hope, or trust?
6. Think about the line, "Show a little faith, there's magic in the night." What kind of faith is being asked for here?

7. In the Emmaus story, the disciples didn't recognize Jesus right away. Are there lyrics in the song that echo that kind of delayed recognition?
8. "You can hide 'neath your covers and study your pain..." How does this lyric speak to the temptation to stay where it's familiar, even when it isn't life-giving?
9. If this song is a kind of modern parable, what truth is it inviting us to notice about grace, presence, or the road ahead?

### **Luke 24:13-35 (NRSVue)**

<sup>13</sup>Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup>and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup>While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came 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 are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" <sup>19</sup>He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over 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 took place. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed 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 they did not see him." <sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

<sup>28</sup>As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. <sup>29</sup>But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup>When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup>Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup>They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" <sup>33</sup>That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. <sup>34</sup>They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" <sup>35</sup>Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

### **Scripture Study Questions**

1. The disciples were "discussing all these things that had happened" as they walked. How do you think they were feeling? What do you think was the tone of this conversation? Why do you think they felt compelled to this particular topic?
2. The text says "their eyes were kept from recognizing him." What do you think prevents us from recognizing Christ's presence in our own lives?

3. When Jesus asks what they're talking about, they stand still, looking sad. What does this stillness suggest about the emotional weight they're carrying?
4. They say, "We had hoped..."—a phrase filled with grief. Where in your life have you carried hope? Was this hope realized? How does this experience impact your faith and spirituality now?
5. Jesus listens before he teaches. Is this an important part of spiritual dialogue and/or spiritual transformation? Why or why not?
6. They only recognize him in the breaking of the bread. What does this moment suggest about the role of shared space, hospitality, and community in spiritual and religious life?
7. The story ends with movement—they return to Jerusalem immediately. What's changed for them, and what do you think was their motivation? Is this sudden change in direction important?

### **Weekly Action**

Take a walk this week—with intention. It doesn't have to be far. Around the block. Through a park. Down a hallway. As you walk, ask yourself: What am I carrying right now—grief, questions, memories, hope? What might Christ be noticing in me, even before I recognize him? Then ask: Where is the road leading next? What do I need to leave behind to move toward new life? After your walk, share something from that reflection—a phrase, an insight, a simple prayer—with a trusted family member or spiritual partner. Invite them to listen, or to take a walk of their own—maybe even a walk with you.

### **Prayer**

Christ who walks beside us, you meet us on the road—in disappointment, in wonder, in stories we don't know how to finish. You listen before you speak. You stay before you vanish. And somehow, in the breaking of bread, in the sound of a song, in the stirrings of our hearts—we recognize you again. Help us leave behind what no longer offers hope and new life. Help us move, even slowly, toward what you're making new. Open our eyes. Kindle our hope. Keep walking with us until the road becomes communion. Amen.