



Central Peninsula Church

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Luke 24:13-35
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One For The Road

SERIES: *A Savior for All People*

This morning, we're looking at the story of the two disciples along the road to Emmaus. One of the things I love about this story is that it involves a journey. I've always loved journeys. Some of my most vivid memories as a boy are of the journeys we took as a family. We would wake up early, before it was light out; my brother and I would climb in the car with our pajamas still on, maybe even in a sleeping bag; the car would have been packed the night before; and, of course, there would be the smell of coffee, which I didn't appreciate then like I do now!

One of the things that was so special about these journeys was the anticipation of what we were going to discover on the way. Maybe for my mother it was an antique store out in the middle of nowhere. I remember for us kids once it was a general store that sold rock candy. Sometimes it was interesting people or just the sunrise. But this element of adventure and discovery is part of every good journey.

And it was certainly that way with two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Their journey began in Jerusalem. And remember, it was in Jerusalem that Christ was crucified. So, for these two disciples, the journey began not with anticipation, but with disappointment and confusion. But, on the way, they made a discovery. First, it appeared to be a stranger that asked them some very annoying questions. Then they discovered this stranger to be someone able to open the Scriptures to them like no one ever had before. Finally, this stranger became their dinner guest, and it was there that they made the greatest discovery of all, that of the risen Christ, which turned their sorrow into joy.

There are many things in these two people's journey and discovery of Jesus as the risen One that parallels how we today discover Jesus and grow in our knowledge of him as the risen One. To be with Jesus is to be on a journey; a journey of discovery. I want us to look at this journey and process of discovery with that in mind.

I. We discover our own disappointment and unbelief.

Turn to Luke 24. The first step in this journey takes place starting in v.13. Here, the "stranger," Jesus, helps these two discover some things about themselves.

"And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these

things which had taken place. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him" (vv. 13-16).

Luke tells us that "two of them" had set out on this journey of about seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. These were undoubtedly two followers of Jesus, apparently of little notoriety. One of them was named Cleopas, and most think that the other was his wife. We don't know much at all about these two, but they were having an intense conversation over the events of the past three days. And then from behind, almost out of nowhere, Jesus walks up and joins them. This really wasn't unusual since it was wise to travel roads like this in groups for safety purposes. But what was unusual is that they didn't recognize Jesus. Luke tells us why. He says their **"eyes were prevented from recognizing Him."** It's very much implied that, for some reason, God was doing the preventing. Later, in v.31 when they finally recognized him, we're told that **"their eyes were opened"** as if God opened them. Remember that song we used to sing a lot? "Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus." One of the things this shows us is that we really can't know Jesus apart from God's help. If God doesn't open our eyes, we won't see him.

But isn't it significant that in the midst of their confusion and despair, Jesus was with them? Have you thought about that? Do you know that when you're overwhelmed with discouragement, when you have no idea why this or that is happening to you, when you've lost hope, he's there, even if you can't see him?

I believe that God prevented these men from recognizing Jesus because he had some things to teach them first. And it's very interesting the way he does that initially. He begins by asking them some questions. Look at vv. 17-19a.

"And He said to them, 'What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?' And they stood still, looking sad. One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, 'Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?' And He said to them, 'What things?' And they said to Him, 'The things about Jesus the Nazarene,...'"

First he says, "What are you talking about?" At that, they stopped dead in their tracks: "Have you been

living in a closet the last week? Don't you know what things have happened? Don't you read the papers?" But then Jesus comes back again, "What are you talking about? What things?" Now don't you think Jesus knows the answers to these questions? Why then does he insist on asking them and getting their answers? No doubt it was more for their sake than for his.

Throughout the Scriptures God asks people questions, not because he needs answers, but because, in giving those answers, we have an opportunity to learn a whole lot about ourselves. Remember in the garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned and hid from God. God comes along in the garden and calls to them, "Where are you?" Adam and Eve are forced to look at themselves hiding from God and from each other. Remember when Elijah ran like a scared rabbit from Jezebel, went into the desert and prayed that he could die? God comes along and asks, "What are you doing here?" And Elijah was forced to look at himself, a prophet of the Living God, hiding from a woman! So these questions force us to come to grips with where we're at. Often this involves the painful realization of our own unbelief or sin. That was the case here. Before these men could discover the risen Christ, they had to first discover their own unbelief.

Look at their response to Jesus' questions. First, they show their sadness and disappointment. Luke says they were "looking sad." And the reason for that is explained in vv.19b–24.

"...who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also 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 exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."

They express a loss of hope: "You know there was this man named Jesus from Nazareth, who did many great things and was a prophet, but we were hoping he was the Messiah; that he would redeem Israel. But instead, our own religious leaders crucified him. We hoped that he would be the one that would deliver our nation from the Romans; that he would sit on his throne as king over all. But now he's dead. Our hopes have been dashed." Then they go on and

express confusion: "Some women went to the tomb and his body was gone. And they said some angels told them he was alive. And some others went down to check it out, and, sure enough, the tomb was empty. But the bottom line is that nobody's seen him."

I love the way Jesus just listens here. He lets them get it all out. He lets them tell their story without correcting them; without rejecting them. He meets them right where they're at. Jesus honors spiritual honesty. You don't have to candy-coat your prayers. Tell him what you're feeling; tell him what you're thinking. Isn't it ironic that, the whole time they're expressing their disappointment and confusion, they're looking Jesus right in the face? He's right there with them, but they didn't know it; they didn't recognize him. We live in a world full of disappointed and confused people. People are suffering from "a neurosis of emptiness." Many of us here are disappointed or confused. Things haven't quite turned out like they were supposed to. My marriage, my career, my children, aren't quite what the storybooks said they would be like. And yet in the midst of this, Jesus is right there with us. He's the One who has conquered disappointment and confusion so that none of it is ultimate. Yet, he's so patient with us, walking with us through these times and just letting us get it all out.

II. We discover the Scriptures.

As I said, Jesus had some things to teach these men before they recognized him. First, he revealed their disappointment and confusion. The next step is for them to discover the truth of the Scriptures.

"And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (vv. 25–27).

These men were disappointed and confused because they didn't believe the Scriptures which had clearly taught that the Messiah had to suffer. And so, right there along that road Jesus unfolded the Old Testament Scripture to them. Isn't this one of the great scenes in all the Bible? Wouldn't you love to have been there? Later, after Jesus left, these two remembered how their hearts had burned within them. They had heard the Scriptures taught since they were children, but never had the Scripture come alive for them like this. That was because it was Jesus teaching them. We can read and study the Scriptures until we're blue in the face, but unless Jesus teaches us we can't really understand them. The Scriptures are of supernatural origin; they're the very words of God; and so they take the very mind of God to grasp.

Not only that, their hearts burned within them because they discovered Jesus Christ in those Scriptures.

Before they had read the Scriptures and found some rules to live by, but now they found a person in those pages. They saw Jesus on every page of the Old Testament. They saw, for the first time, how the law of Moses anticipates him. All those instructions about washings and sacrifices pointed to Jesus. And they saw for the first time that the prophets like Isaiah and Zechariah wrote of the Christ and how he would suffer. They saw Jesus praying in the Psalms, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**

When you read the Scriptures, do you see Jesus? Most of us read the Bible for good advice on how to live, which of course it gives us. But you can't separate that from a person; a relationship. What you really need is a savior. God wants to show us Christ. That's what the Bible is all about, Christ. Ultimately, our hope lies not in good advice but in Christ!

We can begin to see what it was that prevented these men from recognizing Jesus. He wanted them to see that whether or not they saw the risen Christ, the Scriptures had clearly taught that he would be crucified and rise again. Jesus wanted to wean these two from depending on anything but the Scriptures. I wonder if these two could have walked away right then without ever recognizing Jesus and still become powerful witnesses for him? This is so important for us. You and I don't have the benefit of seeing the risen body of Christ, but we do have the same thing Jesus offered these men. We have the Scriptures, which testify to the risen body of Christ.

So, the second discovery these men made on their journey was Christ in the Scriptures. In that they discovered their disappointment and confusion was completely inappropriate, since the Scriptures said that the Christ would suffer and then be raised.

III. We discover the risen Christ.

But God, in his grace, had a third discovery for these two. This, of course, was the discovery that the man they were talking to was actually Jesus.

“And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. But they urged Him, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.’ So He went in to stay with them. When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. They said to one another, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?’” (vv. 28–32).

By this time these two probably sensed something special about this stranger. When they reached Emmaus, Jesus acted as though he would just keep on going. Why did he do that? I think he wanted them to invite him to

stay. That was important to him. He wouldn't stay without an invitation. And they did. Luke says that they “urged” him to stay with them. At dinner that night, Jesus did something very unusual. He did what the host was supposed to do. He took the bread and broke it and blessed it and began passing it out. He wasn't supposed to do this. Imagine on Thanksgiving day, everyone's sitting at the table waiting for the turkey to be brought out for carving. Carving of the turkey is the job of the host. There's a certain amount of pride that goes along with the job. But suppose a guest rose up and began carving that turkey. That's exactly what Jesus did here. But there was a reason for this. Something very important happened as he broke the bread. Verse 31 says, **“Their eyes were opened and they recognized him.”** Later in v.35 when they report all this to the other disciples, they said they recognized him specifically in the breaking of the bread.

Why did Jesus choose to be revealed specifically in the breaking of the bread? Some say that as they watched him break the bread, they noticed the nail wounds in his hands. Others say that when they saw him do this, they remembered other times when he had done this, like the feeding of the 5,000. And still others attach a symbolic meaning to this and say that this act is representative of communion. During communion we remember the crucified Christ. And so Christ is recognized in the church today as we take communion.

As true as any one of these may be, the central fact here is simply that God opened their eyes to recognize him as the risen Christ. How that happens is something of a mystery to us, but one of the things they had to do was to first invite him in. There is a curious mixture here of God's work and our work. Only God can open our eyes to know Jesus, but the impression I get is that he would have just kept on going if they didn't urge him to stay. At some point we have to extend an invitation; we have to say, “I want to know you; I want you to be in my life; I want to sit down and eat with you.” And the fact he did this all at a meal is fitting for Luke's gospel because in this gospel a lot of important things happen over meals. So we have to be willing to sit with him and listen to him as you would do at a meal.

Almost as quickly as they recognize Jesus, he vanishes from their sight. It's interesting, even though he vanished, they saw him more clearly than they ever had before. They saw him more clearly than they had when he was with them for 3-1/2 years prior to being crucified. They certainly saw him more clearly than they had on their walk to Jerusalem. That's because God opened their eyes. Notice that the very next thing they do is recall their time in the Scriptures with him. It's like the entire discussion now made sense, as if they had found a lost key or solved a great mystery.

IV. We discover the joy of being witnesses.

But the story doesn't end there. They've moved from sorrow to joy because they recognized Christ, but now they move from that joyful recognition to eager proclamation. Remember how the women saw the empty tomb and remembered Jesus' words and then came back and witnessed of what they had seen and heard to the Eleven? Well, now these two disciples also become witnesses. Look at vv.33–35.

“And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, ‘The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.’ They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.”

It's hard to believe but now they turn around and walk the seven miles back to Jerusalem. There is no way that was part of the original plan. They didn't even finish the meal. And don't forget it was getting late, and in those days, it was dangerous to travel at night. But nothing would stop them from sharing with the others what they had experienced. When you come to really see and know the risen Christ, you can't help but tell others about him. And notice that when they show up, they find that their own experience is confirmed by Peter's. The apostles tell them that Jesus appeared to Peter as well!

CONCLUSION

The journey's over. I wonder where you are at on this journey. To be with Jesus is to be on a journey; a journey of discovery. Which discovery is God leading you to these days?

Maybe you're just filled with a sense of despair or confusion. Do you know that he is still with you? You can't see him but he's there and he walks with you. Perhaps today you will realize that.

Is he asking you some very telling questions about yourself? Are you having to come to some very powerful realizations about who you are or what you've done? That's a painful thing. Maybe it's time that you just tell him the whole story. Pour your heart out to him and don't worry about what he will do. He wants to hear you out.

Or perhaps you're discovering the Scriptures. Perhaps you're being forced to have your whole view of life rearranged by the Scriptures. Maybe you thought the Christian life would be easier, but you've discovered that it's harder. And now you are beginning to see in the Scriptures that he never promised you an easier life, and that he called you to a life of following him to the cross.

Or perhaps you need to invite him to come and sit down and eat with you. Maybe he's waiting for your invitation. That can happen in a lot of ways. You may decide to join a small group of believers who meet together for fellowship and worship and study. That time around the table that becomes the place where he reveals himself to you in a whole new way.

Or perhaps it's just time for you to become a witness. He's asking you to make a 180 degree turn and go back and in the middle of the night and tell someone about what you have seen and heard.

To be with Jesus is to be on a journey; a journey of discovery.