



Happy Easter! My daughters love to play dress-up. We have a bin full of dresses, outfits, tiaras, wands, costumes and much more in their closet. Frequently I come home from work and there will be a pirate in our house. One day I came home to find Zarina the fairy and a mean panda! Sometimes I walk in the door to find Elsa and Anna. One day I arrived and there was a skeleton running around our house; I got so scared that I almost ran outside. Other times I have come home to find out that we've adopted a dalmatian puppy. The dress-up list has grown over the years as our kids have grown, but it always puts a smile on my face.

How many of you play dress-up at your house? It's actually quite fun to join in this imaginative time with kids and see their creativity. Think about the last time you played dress-up. Did you know who the person really was? Have you ever been in a situation where someone had such a good costume that you couldn't tell who they were? Move to the spiritual side of things. Have you ever felt like God was hiding from you? Have you ever felt like no matter where you looked you couldn't find Him?

Open your Bibles to Luke 24 and let me set the scene for what's going on. Jesus was crucified two days earlier and now it's the third day. Most people went to Jerusalem to celebrate a big holiday called The Passover and we find that two of the disciples are returning to Emmaus, talking about what happened. It was about seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, meaning it would take just about two hours of walking to get home. They didn't have cars or planes like we have, so they had to walk. While these two guys were walking along, a third person joined their group.

This was normal back then; it's not so normal for us to talk with strangers but it was safer in that time to travel in groups. Guess who the third person was? It was Jesus, but God kept them from recognizing Jesus. It was kind of like He was wearing a disguise or a costume, but He wasn't. It was God who kept Him from being recognized.

A Journey of Self Discovery

So Jesus joins the walk to Emmaus with the two disciples who are leaving Jerusalem. Jesus wants to know what they are talking about, so He starts a conversation.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast (Luke 24:17).

Right after Jesus asks the question, the men stand still. They are confused and bewildered at everything that happened over the weekend and their confusion stops the journey home for a moment. Then one of the disciples speaks up and asks Jesus a question.

One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked (verses 18–19a).

Cleopas must have been sad to find out that this man, who was really Jesus, didn't seem to know anything that had happened. Jesus then asks a silly question, "What things?" Even Jesus has a sense of humor!

I imagine at this time they began their walk again; it was time to keep moving so they could get home before dark. While they walked, Cleopas answers Jesus' question and begins to fill Him in on all that happened in Jerusalem over the last couple of days. Cleopas gives a summary of what has taken place. It probably takes him much longer than what we have written here. He talks about the goodness of Christ and even calls Him a prophet! He explains how Jesus was crucified by the religious leaders. At this point in the conversation, I imagine Cleopas getting sad, and maybe a tear forms in the corner of his eye.

"... but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus" (verses 21–24).

He begins to tell Jesus how they were hoping Jesus was going to save all of Israel, but they can't find Him. You can almost hear the disappointment in his voice as shares with Jesus about all these things.

This is part of the discovery process. As Cleopas is sharing, he begins to realize how sad he is. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew something but you didn't realize you knew that thing until you said it out loud? God is really good at doing this; in fact, I think He is an expert! Think about the garden of

Eden. Adam and Eve had disobeyed God and sinned, so they hid from God. When God is looking for them, He asks them: "Why are you hiding from me?" and Adam answers "Because we're naked." You wonder if at this point Adam thinks: "You're right, why am I hiding from God? What are we doing?" Then Adam tells God what he did and why he's hiding. Sometimes in life we just need to be asked a question so we can say out loud what we already know.

Kids, do you ever do this? Do you ever ask your parents how to spell a word you already know how to spell and instead of them spelling it out they ask **you** how to spell it? Or maybe this happens with a math problem. When we ask questions of people who already know the answer, it helps them discover the answer when they hear themselves say it. There is something about hearing ourselves say it out loud. This is the first thing we learn on our journey; it's a journey of self discovery. When Cleopas says these things out loud he learns his misconceptions about the risen Lord, Jesus Christ.

Discovery in the Scripture

Cleopas begins his explanation to Jesus very strong but reveals his sadness, and eventually we find out that he has lost hope; his heart that was once warm with the love of Jesus is cold. Now it's Jesus's turn to speak.

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (verses 25–26).

Jesus's response to the disciples can seem harsh, but if you look closely at what He says, Jesus is not being mean to them, but wondering why they don't believe the prophets. He reminds them He had to suffer and die so mankind could be saved.

Look what happens next: Jesus doesn't leave them in this place of sadness.

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (v. 27).

Jesus opens up the Scripture and begins sharing with them all that was said about Himself. Imagine what it would be like to take a long walk with Jesus and hear Him talk about all the Bible says about Him! We have to remember Jesus was only looking at the Old Testament; they didn't have the New Testament like we do.

Imagine Jesus starting back in the book of Genesis and talking about how the Messiah would be in the line of Abraham (Genesis 12). The conversation would continue to the book of Psalms when Jesus would talk about how He would be hated and mean things would be said about him (Psalm 69:4). The disciples are glued to every word of Jesus as He quotes the prophet Isaiah, saying that Jesus would be born to a virgin (Isaiah 7:14). Once

Jesus started quoting Isaiah 53 about Jesus being a sacrificial lamb, they never wanted the conversation to end. They began to regain the hope in Christ they had before!

Has this ever happened to you? Maybe you were sad or maybe you were hurt. This applies to both kids and adults right now. We feel hopeless about something but when we turn to God's word, our hope is restored. We read the Bible or someone quotes a Bible verse and our hope comes back. There is something unique about the word of God and the change it creates in us. As we read God's word we begin to discover more and more about Jesus and the love of God, we develop right thinking, and we grow in our relationship with God. The disciples were taught a loving lesson on the road that day. They learned that our journey is a discovery in the Scripture.

Discovering Jesus

So the disciples have just had this wonderful conversation with Jesus and the two-hour journey seemed like only 10 minutes. Have you ever taken a car ride that was hours long but seemed so short because of who you were with? Next thing they know, they are standing on the edge of their hometown. As they prepare to leave the main road and go to their house Jesus acts like He will keep on walking.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them (verses 28–29).

It was almost night, so it would have been unsafe for Jesus to keep walking on the road alone. This was a test to see if the disciples would be welcoming to Jesus. Would they respond how Jesus had taught them to respond?

Once they arrive at the house, we see something we don't expect to see.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them (v. 30).

Isn't Jesus the guest? When you have a guest over to your house, do you ask them to carve the turkey for Thanksgiving? Do you ask them to cut the ham at Easter? No! It would be rude to make your guest work. But in this case Jesus just takes charge as the host doesn't assume the seat of the guest. As He breaks the bread for them to eat, I imagine thoughts rushing through their mind. Maybe their memories take them back to the upper room where they last broke bread with Jesus on Thursday night. Maybe they think about when Jesus broke bread and fed 5,000 people. At this instant, they realize they're with Jesus! And just as quickly as they realize it's their Savior, He is gone! These men look at each other, thinking back to what just happened, and ask this great question.

They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” (v. 32).

Their hearts that were once cold are now burning with a new passion. Their hearts have been refreshed to the risen Lord. Will you remember this one thing when you leave here: The greatest discovery in life is to recognize the risen Christ. These men knew the greatest truth as their hearts burned with the love of Christ.

Sharing the Discovery

So what did they do after that? They didn't just sit at home and talk about it. They got up and left! They went back to Jerusalem. They walked another seven miles, in the dark, to get back. Remember, they didn't want Jesus to walk at night because it was unsafe, but they couldn't resist. They had to get back to the rest of the disciples and share with them what just happened. Once they opened the door to the room where the disciples were, they were told how Jesus had appeared to Peter; they didn't even get to speak first. Then they shared how they saw Christ!

This whole time Jesus wasn't playing dress-up; God had just hidden Him from their sight. God wanted to teach them a few more lessons. He wanted them to express what was in their hearts, to talk about what they knew about Jesus. Because they did this, they had a journey of self discovery. And the journey didn't stop there for these men. They also had a journey through Scripture when their hearts burned with love for Jesus. We need to have this journey. We need to have our hearts burn with so much passion that we are willing to walk seven miles just to tell our friends about Jesus.

Let me leave us with two ways we can respond to God's word. If your heart has grown cold to God's word, I invite you to think about what's happening in your heart. Then take time to read God's word and let it turn your cold heart warm again. Secondly, if your heart is burning today and you want to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I want to give you the opportunity to place your trust in Him and respond to His great love!

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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