

Resurrection Day Sermon
“Walking with the Risen Lord on the Emmaus Road”
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Bulletin Information:

“Walking with the Risen Lord on the Emmaus Road”

1. The Travelers’ Problem
2. Jesus’ Sermon
3. Burning Hearts and Opened Eyes

Scripture Reading: Luke 24:1-35

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Psalms: 42 (1, 3, 5); 15 (1-3); 29 (1-3); 53 (1-5)

Boys and girls, I want you to listen very carefully this morning. You would hardly find a Bible story so exciting as this one. And so I want you, especially, to pay close attention.

Here are two men who are very sad walking home from Jerusalem. It is almost as though they are going home from a funeral. They are so sad because their friend and Savior, Jesus, has been killed. And they don’t understand it. They don’t understand why he has died.

And while they are walking and talking and crying, suddenly there, walking with them, is a stranger, who, it seems, doesn’t know anything about what has happened. And so they explain it all to him. And he answers their questions. And this stranger, you know, is Jesus who had died. And it’s not till later that they realize this.

So this story is one of the most exciting in all the Scriptures. This morning, as we remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ, let’s look at it under the theme “Walking with the Risen Lord on the Emmaus Road.”

We will notice three things. First, “The Travelers’ Problem,” - these men have a problem that they need resolved. And then notice, second, “Jesus’ Sermon” - He preaches a sermon that answers their problem. And then, third, “Their Burning Hearts and Opened Eyes” - in the end, they see it all.

On the evening of the day in which Jesus arose we are introduced, in verses 13 and 14, to two of Jesus’ disciples who are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a distance of about seven miles, that’s about a two hour walk. We don’t know anything about these disciples except that one of them is called Cleopas and that they live in the town of

Emmaus.

These are not prominent or well known followers of Jesus. Rather, they are disciples of Jesus who mingled with the multitudes that had followed him, who came to hear his teaching when he was in the vicinity of Jerusalem, and who had witnessed the mighty miracles that Jesus had done.

On this particular weekend they knew that Jesus was in Jerusalem again and so they had come to Jerusalem to hear his teaching and to see his mighty works. But things had gone quite differently than what they expected. Instead of seeing Jesus teaching the multitudes, they heard the multitudes crying out, "Crucify him, crucify him. Away with him." Instead of seeing Jesus do mighty works, miracles and raising people from the dead, they saw Jesus put to death. And when people cried, "Come down from the cross. He saved others. Himself he cannot save," he stayed there. He didn't come down from the cross.

What had happened to their mighty Lord?

That was Friday. And now it is Sunday. And these two men need to get back to their village of Emmaus. They had intentions to get home, but early in the morning, as they are ready to leave they start hearing stories, rumors concerning Jesus who had died. They hear a rumor from a group of women who had gone to the sepulcher who said that the stone had been rolled away from the sepulcher and that Jesus' body was gone. These rumors, verse 22 says, caused them to be astonished. They were quite shocked at this news.

And there were more rumors than just from those women. There was the story that came back from the disciples. Peter and John hearing what these women said could hardly believe it so they themselves went down to the sepulcher to see and they came back with their own story. They saw where Jesus had lain. They saw the linen clothes, but he was gone.

And then there were other reports, too, a report from Mary that she had actually seen Jesus. And then an official report that had come from the Sanhedrin, from the rulers of the city, that his disciples had come at night and stolen his body away.

But these men need to get home and so late in the day they head off for Emmaus. And as they go, they are talking about all these things. These are the things that are on their mind.

Verse 14 tells us, "They talked together of all these things which had happened." They are trying to put them all together and make sense of them. What had happened last Friday in the crucifixion of Jesus? And now what do they make of these stories that they are hearing? That Jesus is risen? And how about what the rulers are saying? It doesn't make sense. How do they fit all this together?

You can imagine that it was quite a lively, animated conversation. And they're sad too. Stunned with grief that Jesus had been killed.

What a conversation that must have been!

And then, quite suddenly, Jesus appears to these two disciples. And when he comes, they don't at first recognize him and that's because he hides his identity from them. You see, in other of his appearances, the disciples immediately knew that it was him. Here, they do not.

To understand this, we should remember that in His appearances after His resurrection, Jesus did not always appear in the same form. Rather, His form was suited to the specific situation. For example, when He appears to Mary, He says, "Touch me not." But to Thomas, He says, "Behold, my hands and my feet." And He asks Thomas to touch Him. In another appearance, in order to show that He is really, physically risen from the dead, he eats with his disciples. But then, on a different occasion, He goes through closed doors as a spirit. To Mary He appears to be a gardener. But to His disciples in the upper room, He appears as their Lord. He can be recognized by them.

Now here, in Luke 24, He appears as a stranger. In verse 16, "Their eyes were holden that they should not know him." Mark 16:12 says that He appeared to them in "another form" as they walked, the idea being that he took different forms in his appearances, suited to the different occasions. Here, he takes on the form of a stranger, with a purpose suited to this situation. He does not come here to prove that He is risen, but to answer their questions about the suffering of Jesus Christ. Had they recognized Him, the whole subject would have changed, and their conversation would not have gotten to their perplexing question.

So He appears to them as a sympathetic, naïve stranger who is ready to talk with them and to help them with their problem.

They are so engrossed in their conversation that, at first, they do not even notice this stranger. Perhaps He was following them closely or, perhaps, He overtakes them. In any case, He overhears their conversation and, in verse 17, asks a question: "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" He notices that they are sad. This is why He comes to them—not only to answer an intellectual problem, but to cheer them. Their question touches their souls. It weighs heavy on them. It makes them sad.

For His sympathetic question, Jesus is rebuked by Cleopas (v. 18): "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" Cleopas is saying, "Where have you been, man? Everyone knows about this. This is so important to me that I expect that everyone else should be talking about it, too. And you don't know anything about it?"

But Jesus is not deterred. He presses them. He asks, “What things?” He draws them out. He lets them talk. How helpful that can be sometimes, just to listen, to let others with their problems talk and pour out their hearts. They give you all the pieces. And you have only to show them how they fit together. That is what is going on here. These men have a handful of puzzle pieces and they do not know how to put them together. And Jesus finds for them, as it were, the key piece. And all the other pieces fall into place.

Let us look a minute at their puzzle pieces. Probably they said much more than what is here in this passage. They walked more than two hours. But here you have the gist of it.

In verse 19 they tell this stranger, “We’re talking about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.” With those few words they express all their happy experiences of the past three years. They had been witnesses to His power: the dead were raised; the sick were healed; the poor and the hungry were fed; the wind and the waves obeyed Him. And to hear Him teach—oh, what a treat. He was “mighty in word.” There was never a prophet like Him.

In verse 21, they say, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.” We were sure that He was the Messiah. Our hope, they say, was that He would help us. And He played into that thinking. Why, only a week ago He rode into Jerusalem at the shouts of the crowds: Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Everything about Him told us that He was the Messiah.

But, there’s one piece of this puzzle that doesn’t fit. In verse 20, “the chief priests and OUR rulers (that word “our” is important) handed Him over to the Romans to be condemned to death.” He could have been Israel’s deliverer. He could have saved us from the wretched tyranny of the Romans. But OUR leaders handed Him over to be crucified.

And what’s more, He Himself seemed to want this. At least, He went willingly. We’ve heard reports that He told His disciples not to fight in His defense. When He was on trial and there were all kinds of false accusations, He didn’t say a word. He was silent before His accusers.

And His death? It just doesn’t make sense to us. Why did he have to die? And why did he just lay himself down?

And now, they tell the Stranger, to add to all this confusion, there are these reports from the women—the tomb is supposedly empty. Supposedly there was an angel. And John and Peter have also seen the same things.

So this was their conversation. And they tell the Stranger: “There’s one thing here that really doesn’t fit. That’s the cross. Why should He suffer?” In verse 21 they say, “We wanted to trust that this was the Christ. It’s the third day since these things were done. And we remember that He did say something about the third day. But His death, the

crucifixion, it just doesn't fit." These two travelers stumble at the cross.

And this sympathetic Stranger walking with them listens. And then, after listening to them for a while, He speaks.

In verses 25-27, you have Jesus' answer to these men, a sermon about himself and the cross. In verse 25, you have His introduction. Jesus says, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Now, Jesus does not mean that these men are fools like the ungodly fool of Psalm 14 who says in his heart: "There is no God," and who does not want to know truth. No, these are men who acknowledge God and who want to understand these things. But their folly is their slowness in understanding, and especially that they do not understand the prophets and the suffering of Christ.

In verse 27, we have the content of Jesus' sermon: "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." He opened up to them the Old Testament to show them what it was all about.

That must have been quite a sermon.

They had not seen it all—only parts of it. And so Jesus shows all of it to them. He began with Moses. That means that He began with the books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. He must have spoken of the mother promise of Genesis 3:15, that the Seed of the woman would come and crush the head of the serpent. He must have spoken of the shedding of the blood of animals to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve; of Abel's sacrifice of a lamb; of the sign of circumcision, in which there was shedding of blood. He must have spoken of Israel in Egypt, and of the blood of the Passover lamb on the door posts; He would have spoken of the Levitical laws; of sacrifice for sin; of the scape-goat that carried the sins of the people into the wilderness. He must have related to them the history of Israel, the conquest of Canaan, the judges, David, Solomon, the kings, and all the blood that was shed in sacrifice; all the suffering of God's people. And all the while, He was showing to them that the Old Testament spoke about Himself.

And of course, these travelers understood that about the Old Testament too. They saw Moses and David as types of the coming Messiah. But, they had never put together the suffering and the Messiah.

In verse 26, we have the theme of Jesus' sermon in this rhetorical question that He puts to them. He says, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" That's a powerful rhetorical question, the force of which was: "Yes! Christ must have suffered all these things. He had to. This was the point of everything that Jesus said to them.

You see, that was their question. Why the suffering? And he opens the Scriptures to prove to them not just that all of the Scriptures are about the Messiah, that they all

looked ahead to his coming, but to show them that all of the Scriptures reveal a suffering Messiah.

This is the way God always intended it to be—the way of sin, and through sin—grace. The way of the Fall and man's guilt, and the cross to pay for sin. Sin and its results must be dealt with. And the only way is payment for sin—the suffering of the Mediator.

They listened. And their hearts burned within them. They hung onto His every word. How well this Stranger understood the Scriptures. How well He explained passages that they never understood, drawing from the Scriptures all kinds of things that they had never associated with their Messiah. The suffering of Christ in the book the Psalms; the cross of Christ in the prophet Isaiah; and so on.

And Jesus spoke with them also of the glory of Christ as the goal of His suffering. This glory was not a national glory as they expected. But He took them back to the Fall and to their great enemies—the devil and sin—to show them that the Messiah would come not to conquer a political enemy but to defeat sin. He brought them through the victories of the Flood, of Israel in Egypt, of David over his enemies. And He showed them that these were all victories over sin and the power of darkness. The glory that followed, came always through victory over Satan and sin.

And as they listened, they began to understand the glory of Christ as spiritual and not earthly. They began to see that, yes, the cross was necessary, that it was about sin and Satan. And that the cross and the suffering of Christ was victorious—that it was His way to glory. They began to remember some of the words of Jesus concerning His own suffering—and that his kingdom was not of this world.

And so Christ, in this sermon, shows to them the unity of the Scriptures. He shows to them that the cross at which they stumbled was the key to it all. In verse 32, their hearts burned within them as they listened. That is, they believed what He was saying. They believed the Scriptures concerning Christ and His suffering. They saw the necessity of the cross.

And then, so quickly, they were home in Emmaus. How disappointing. They could have walked on and continued listening to this man all night long.

But they are home. And it is late. And so they compel this stranger to stay the night with them. After all, He will need to find somewhere to stay. Verse 29 tells us “they constrained him,” that is, they pressured Him to stay. And He consented. He came into their home.

And verse 30 tells us that He sits down to eat with them. Three weary travelers, and they sit down together to a meal. But this is more than just a meal with a new friend. He turns this meal into a memory.

He takes bread and He blesses it and breaks it and gives it to them and there is something strikingly familiar in what he is doing. Suddenly they remember the miracles of the breaking of the bread and the feeding of the multitudes. And they had heard about the last supper and the breaking of the bread. And this is all tied to what he has just been talking about, the necessity of the cross and the suffering and the Savior and putting it all together. They recognized who this is. Their eyes are opened.

And we can well imagine Cleopas opening his mouth to say something like: "My Lord, and my God!" Or we can picture him or his friend reaching out to embrace this Stranger.

But He is gone. He vanishes out of their sight.

The purpose of this appearance has been accomplished. Now they understand the Scriptures. Now they know that Jesus must have suffered in order to enter into his glory.

Are they disappointed? Are they sad because he is gone? That is not what the text tells us there. They are filled with joy. Verse 33. "And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem." And verse 35. "And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread." And verse 32. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

They are overjoyed because of the understanding that they now have. Their eyes have been opened. Their hearts burned for the words that he spoke. There is joy on the way back to Jerusalem. "He is risen."

That very same night they got up and in the darkness of the night came to Jerusalem with this great news to share with the other disciples and the apostles who were rejoicing at the other appearances of Christ. They are filled with joy because now they understood the Scriptures and the necessity of the suffering of Christ.

What a realization, what an understanding for them to come to.

It reminds us of the book of Acts when Paul went on his missionary journeys and he went into the synagogues and he reasoned from the Scriptures concerning Christ. And these Jews had all their practices and all their knowledge of the Old Testament Scripture and the word that Paul preached by the power of the Holy Spirit would open their hearts and they rejoiced and believed the gospel and received it with great joy.

That is what has happened here. These men believe. They understand the necessity of the suffering and the cross of Christ. They had witnessed His glory.

Is this not a marvelous passage? I pray that the Holy Spirit has carried you along through it,

too.

As we close, let's draw some points of application from this passage for ourselves.

The first point of application is this; that if your hearts are open to understand the Scriptures as Christ explains them here to these disciples, praise God and thank God for such an understanding of his Word.

There are so many people who hold this book, the Bible, in their hands, who revere it as a sacred document, but they have no understanding of what the Scripture is. And what is missing is their understanding of the necessity of the suffering of Jesus Christ.

This is the central theme of the Scriptures. Ought not Christ to have suffered?

Our eyes are opened to that when we are overwhelmed, in ourselves, with a sense of our own guilt and sin. Then we see our need of Jesus Christ and the absolute necessity of his suffering.

Isn't this where our Reformed faith begins? Look at the Heidelberg Catechism, the second question and answer. "What three things are necessary for you to know, so that you may enjoy this comfort, and live and die happily?" What's the first thing we must know? This: How great are my sin and misery. Only when we know that, will we really understand the necessity of the suffering of Christ on the cross.

Thank God that he has opened your eyes to see this.

And then, second, let this live, not just in your mind, but in your hearts. Oh, may our hearts burn as the hearts of these travelers burned while Jesus preached this sermon to them on the necessity of the cross.

Like these disciples we can very often be confused by our earthly circumstances. We can very often look at our own circumstances and wonder why the pain and why the suffering? That was a part of their problem. They were sad. Why the suffering? Why the pain? They didn't understand it. God seemed to be weak. And this, their grief, is a part of what Jesus relieves as he speaks. He comes to them to show them that suffering is the way to glory.

That was true for him. He had to suffer in order to come into his glory. And that is an important principle for us in our lives, too. This is the way of the Christian life. Being a Christian does not mean that life is a bed of roses, that you will always be happy, clappy. No, the Christian life is a life of following after Christ, and of bearing a cross. And it may mean much suffering and rejection and persecution and perhaps even death. But this is the way to glory.

And that is what their faith grasps. May God give us that faith. In Romans eight verse

17 it's put this way. "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." This is the way of the Christian living in this world.

And then, third, we have here encouragement to take our needs in prayer to the Lord.

Are you confused? Are you troubled? Then take it to the Lord in prayer. As the psalmist says, pour out your heart, pour out your complaint, to Him. He will hear. He sympathizes with His people.

"Why are you so sad?" He asks these travelers.

Today we have a High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities, tempted and tried in all points like we are, risen victorious in glory, receiving the prayers of His people.

Let us listen to Him. Let us not wrestle with the Word of God, but let us hear it and put our faith in the Christ that God has revealed in all of the Scriptures.

Amen.

Let us pray,

Father, we thank thee for the risen Lord, for this glorious, wonderful message that he spoke to these two confused and sad disciples. And we thank thee that we have opened eyes. We pray give us burning hearts at the Word. And today, we rejoice in His glory. He is risen, and He is ascended, and He sits at Thy right hand. This gives us great hope and great confidence as Thy people in this world. Lord, we pray that He may come again. Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. For Jesus' sake we pray, Amen.