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**Eastertide - The Great 50 Days**

**The Road to Emmaus: Open Eyed and Burning!**

**By Pastor Chris Cleary**

**Luke Chapter 24 verses 13 - 32**

1. **Introduction**

**Let’s remind ourselves again of the words of the Angel at the tomb on Easter Sunday Morning - “He is not here. He is Risen!”** - both simple and profound.

**Christ is risen! *-* Death could not hold Him! *-* The tomb could not contain Him!**

Now, Mary’s encounter with the risen Jesus, that first **Easter Sunday** **Morning,** transformed her heart with an incredible sense of joy and hope.

You know, God loves to take the **Good Fridays** of our lives **-** **that feel like the shadow of death** - and turn them into **Easter Sunday Mornings - filled with New Hope and New Life!**

But let’s not forget **- Easter** isn’t just a **one day celebration,** but **an entire season in the Christian calendar|** It begins on **Easter Sunday Morning** and continues for **7 weeks** - **The Great Fifty Days!**

For the disciples, **The Great 50 Days** turned from a time of deep mourning into a time of great anticipation!

Jesus had repeatedly told them to wait, that a gift was coming, and that gift was to be the power of the **Holy Spirit; the One Jesus said would be their helper.**

The Holy Spirit has the power **to change us forever,** **to bring us** **a new identity** as a **Child of God** - our adoption by faith, and so, by faith, we become God's and are welcomed into His family!

The Holy Spirit also has the power **to change us on the inside**; **we can receive a new nature and a new heart.**

God will always do a good work **IN** us before He does a good work **THROUGH** us.

1. **The Setting**

**The Emmaus Road Resurrection encounter with Jesus is amazing!**

As a dramatic story it has everything – **yet in so many ways it is quite an ordinary event:**

* Two people walking home together
* They are joined by a stranger they don’t recognise
* He asks them what they were talking about
* They tell Him and he goes on to explain the scriptures and what they had said about Jesus
* It gets late and they grow hungry and tired – they invite the stranger to join them in rest and food
* They sit together to share a meal and then the two recognise the stranger!

**Yet - it has so much to say and teach us**.

You know, that thanks to ***Blockbuster Movies, Thrill Rides, and Media Ad Campaigns,*** we have come to expect that - **if life isn’t “sensational,” something must be wrong!**

If we are not careful, we can apply those expectations, or cultural beliefs, to our spiritual journey **- and fail to see the hand of God in the ordinary events of life.**

Even more tragic **- we might fail to recognise His loving care for us in the midst of trials.**

Let’s face it, **life typically isn’t that often ‘sensational’ or ‘ultra fantastic’.**

Often, **life is ordinary and sometimes it can be painful**.

But that is **more often when we do the most learning and growing.**

**That is when we have the greatest opportunity to encounter the Risen Jesus . . . if we have eyes to see Him and the will to engage with Him!**

1. **The Story Unfolds**
2. ***Understanding the Setting - verses 13 to 16***

Prior to His arrest, Jesus travelled up and down the strip of land once ruled by David and Solomon, inviting the people of Israel to become a part of His kingdom, and promising abundant life. His followers fully expected that He would become their King and that Israel would again be prosperous and free. He was their Messiah. But on one fateful Friday afternoon, as the sun fell behind the horizon, the Son of God hung cold and lifeless on a Roman cross just outside the city walls.

As the sun rose on Sunday morning and the Passover feast came to an end, two of Jesus’s followers, disillusioned and resolving to leave their foolish dreams in Jerusalem, left for home. The dejected pair began the seven-mile walk to Emmaus even as rumours of resurrection circulated among the ranks of Jesus’s disciples

Luke describes the disciples’ conversation as bantering ideas back and forth with great emotion in a shared search for answers. The Greek translation tells us they were **“talking and discussing”**, but would be more literally translated as **“conversing”** and **“disputing”.** The disillusioned followers desperately wanted to know why their expectations of the Messiah had come to such a tragic end.

1. ***A Revealing Question - verses 17 to 29***

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognising Him. He said to them, **“What are you discussing together as you walk along?”**

Jesus asked a question designed to engage the men in conversation, but Cleopas’ reply reveals a delightful paradox for the reader: **“Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”**

**Of course, if anyone understood what had happened**, **it was Jesus!** However, they did not believe Jesus had risen from the dead, so they were left with **three faulty perspectives.**

1. ***Their viewpoint lacked a spiritual dimension, leaving them with a human understanding of the events*.**
2. ***Their own agenda determined their expectations*.** Many disciples made the mistake of thinking that the Messiah would merely recapture the glory days of King David. But compared to the reality that lay before them - Roman oppression and a dead Messiah - their hopes for glory seemed to have been utterly destroyed.
3. ***They failed to acknowledge the resurrection***. If these two followers believed that Jesus had risen from the dead, two things would have been true. **First,** they would have been walking ***toward***Jerusalem to see the Risen Lord, not ***away.*** **Then they might have** seen the trials, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as the fulfilment of all He promised, **not as the end of their hopes!**

Finally, Jesus broke His silence to bring a reproof, ask a question, and offer an explanation. In the reproof, **“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”**

**Jesus demonstrated that the two followers knew the contents of Scripture but did not accept its message as truth. As a result, they failed to see God’s sovereign plan.**

His question, **“Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”,** pointed to the reason for their unbelief. They had confused their own expectations with the hope God was offering, and they had failed to see God’s ultimate purpose.

To help the two followers see, Jesus reviewed the entire history of Israel from the time of the Exodus to His own resurrection, highlighting God’s plan for the Messiah.

1. ***A Fascinating Dinner - verses 30 to 32***

In keeping with ancient Near Eastern rules of hospitality, the two followers then invited the **“stranger”** to stay the night. Jesus accepted their offer, yet maintained His cover in order to complete the lesson He had begun teaching them.

According to **Luke** their eyes were prevented from recognising Jesus. He revealed His identity only after taking great pains to explain to them **“the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”**

The disciples had been staring into the face of the risen Jesus, yet they were prevented from seeing Him until they buried their faulty expectations. Then, a careful review of the Scriptures gave them a divine perspective on what they once saw as dismal circumstances**. Once their eyes were opened to the reality and implications of the resurrection, Jesus became visible to their physical eyes.**

The Greek translation of **“eyes were opened and they recognised Him”** is literally **“their eyes were *completely* opened”** and **“they came to *fully comprehend* Him”.**

**This action was more than a mere recognition of His features. They came to recognise Jesus in all His significance as the Messiah, the Son of God, and their risen Lord!**

Then Jesus literally, with the Greek word ***aphantos,*** became **“invisible”** - meaning that He suddenly vanished from their midst once their eyes were open.

Finally, in **verses 33 to 35,** we find their new, resurrected hope carrying them back to Jerusalem to bear the good news to others.

1. **Application**

As Luke tells the story of the two despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus, we cannot help but identify with their pain.

* **We too,** are pilgrims on a journey through life.
* **We too,** despair of life’s circumstances from time to time.
* **We too,** lose heart when our expectations come to a tragic end.

**But remember, every trial is an opportunity to discover what God wants us to see.**

As in the case of the two followers on the road to Emmaus, **we must allow God to open our eyes.** **While this is something He must do on our behalf, we can nonetheless make the process less difficult in three specific ways:**

1. ***Invite God In -*** Have you invited the Lord into your life? Cleopas and his companion listened intently to the Voice of Truth and invited Him into their home. **If you haven’t begun a relationship with God, you will continue to struggle in vain.**
2. ***Seek God’s Perspective* -** To help the two disciples see their circumstances from God’s perspective, Jesus explained the Scriptures. We have the same opportunity to share God’s vantage point by reading our only completely reliable source of truth - The Bible. This doesn’t have to be complicated. **Simply set aside as little as ten minutes each day and read.**
3. ***Trust God’s Timing*** *-* God, in His perfect discernment, did not allow the two disciples to recognise Jesus until the time was right. He didn’t allow them to suffer in grief a moment longer than was absolutely necessary, yet He didn’t end their discomfort too soon. **Spiritual maturity rarely occurs instantaneously**. **Growth usually requires a journey, and journeys take time. Submit to God’s will and trust His timing. He is faithful.**
4. **Conclusion**

Circumstances, especially those involving loss, are usually perceived as difficult because **reality does not mesh with our expectations.** The two followers on the road to Emmaus undoubtedly felt utterly alone as they mourned the death of their dreams. During their suffering, God was indeed nearby, and He allowed their pain to continue until their own desires no longer held them captive.

**Like the two on the road to Emmaus, you do not travel alone. God is with you. Are you Willing To See Him; To Hear Him; Be Changed By Him? I do hope so!**

**Amen**

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