

April 23, 2023

St. Luke 24:13-35:

“It’s Good to Walk the Emmaus Road”

- I. What and Where.
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- III. It’s True.

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St. Luke 24:13-35

Dear Friends in Christ,

More than likely, we've either said it or heard it: "Misery loves company." It does if the company shares the same misery. Back in 2000, Steve May wrote:

At Miami University, psychologist James C. Coyne asked forty-five female college students to talk on the phone for twenty minutes with other women, some of whom were depressed - though the students weren't told that. Later, the students indicated they had much less interest in spending time with the depressed women than with those who were not depressed. Such reactions are part of a common vicious circle. Unhappy people often drive away the very people whose support they need, thereby worsening their depression and intensifying their need for support. (The Story File, Hendrickson Publishers, p.92)

Two disciples are on the way to Emmaus after the crucifixion of Jesus. They're unhappy. They shared the same experience. We're told, "they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened (v.14)." The conversation would reveal their loss of hope; Jesus was dead! *Misery loves company.* But there was One Person who would enter their deepest misery and keep company with them. He's the One who enters our misery. We're here to understand that . . .

IT'S GOOD TO WALK THE EMMAUS ROAD

I. What and Where.

So, what is the Emmaus road? Where is it? Well, we're on it every day. It's better known as *The Road of Life*. "That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened (vv.13,14)." *All these things that had happened:* The high moments - the low moments - the fears - the failures and the hope of a better tomorrow.

While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days (vv.15-18)?"

The truth is, the two disciples didn't know! They heard but never really listened to Jesus, the living Word, who had stated, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised (Lk. 24:21)." The truth is, they either didn't know or study Scripture such as, "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed (Is. 53:5)." That was prophesied some 700 years before the time of the Emmaus disciples. Sadly, they were very similar to the majority of church people today: lack of knowledge of God's Word.

The two Emmaus disciples put it this way: "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel (that is, the one to set up a new earthly kingdom). Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened (v.21)." It's always about the here and now, isn't it? It's about the joy and happiness I want here and now: *...we had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel.* Listen, that's been the thinking and pursuit of most Christians. "My little kingdom on earth." The Israel Jesus redeems is the Heavenly Israel, Jew and Gentile!

The truth is, a kingdom here could be anything from healthy investments to lots of stuff and papers of ownership to whatever you think. But you still don't - won't - own anything. The last breath says so. As Solomon wrote, "whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol (the grave), to which you are going (Eccl.9:10)." Retirement is simply a quick blink when compared to *the never ending other side!*

II. Comfort and Hope.

"And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

"So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' So he went in to stay with them (vss.25-29)."

The key words here are these: "and beginning with Moses and the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." That's Old Testament. It was and is exactly as Peter confessed: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life (Jn. 6:68)." It was and is exactly what the Holy Spirit taught the Psalmist who in turn teaches us: "The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple (Ps. 119:130)."

And so, the Living Word states: *the Christ should suffer these things.* Well, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son." The giving of that Son was to suffer every drop of punishment for every drop of sin. Calvary is not a failure. It is a victory, as Jesus said: "and then enter his glory." Those who believe in Him will enter that glory with Him.

I am a sinner. I have sinned fiercely and grievously against our Lord. I'm talking about me. I see the sin in me every day. I cannot spew forth such drivel as, "Well, if God is love why does He let bad things happen to good people?" That's not the proper question. The question is: "If we're so good and deserving of God's love then why do we think, say, and do the things we think, say and do?" Look at this world! Look at the human mess!! When Jesus spoke from the Cross and said, "It is finished!" - it is. Every sin you and I have committed, or would commit, has been punished in Him. As Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (Jn. 6:29)", and this: "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes on him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (Jn. 6:40)."

His entrance into eternal glory directs us to our entrance into eternal glory. His resurrection points to our resurrection. It is this promise: "Because I live, you also will live (Jn. 14:19b).

III. It's True.

But what about now? What about the struggles and disappointments that cannot be avoided? The pastors have seen it many times, and so have many of you; that moment of the last "Good-bye!"; that moment when the flesh aches for just a few more days - just one more visit. And then, that brutal, icy reality that all the working and planning and doing must end.

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures (vv.30-32).'"

He vanished from their sight. But don't let that steer you away from this: "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mt.28:20b)." Christ does not leave us alone. His presence is still there as we travel the Emmaus road. He comes to us in the Word, as the Psalmist writes, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps. 119:105)." He comes to us in the visible Word of baptism with the promise that God gave to Paul, "...be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name (Acts 23:16)." He comes to us in the visible Word of His Supper and feeds us the forgiveness of sins and points us to the eternal banquet (Matt.26:26-28). He comes to us with the promise, "and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me (Ps. 50:15)." He will deliver us in His time and His way, to our eternal benefit.

We don't want the Emmaus road - the road of life - to mislead us and our children that this world, its excessive amount of activities and pursuits, is the ultimate goal for living a contented life; that anything else is a dead end. The only dead end is the end of a life without Christ! We caught that from our text, didn't we?

And they rose that same hour (from the table at which they were with Jesus) and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!' Then they (the Emmaus disciples) told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of bread (vv.33-35).

The Emmaus Road is the road of life we must walk for a while. But we're not alone. As Jesus said, "...I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mt. 28:20b)." And then face to face in Heaven - forever!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott