

Series: "Walking to Emmaus - When We Meet Jesus!"

Sermon: Emmaus 1: "Sharing the Road"

Scripture: Luke 24:13-16

Source: Adam Hamilton, COR, April 24, 2011

<http://www.cor.org/worship/sermon-archives/show/sermons/On-the-Road-to-Emmaus/>

Opening Video

I want you to hear the greatest story of all time. And I don't mean about how Wisconsin pulled out the win late last night! Oh no. This is a story that is the greatest story of history, of all peoples, of all times, of all places. This story is about something that changed everything, changed the future, changed eternity. It is a story that directly applies to you.

I suspect you've heard it before. I hope you have. But you've come today because this story is also your greatest story. You need to hear it again. You need to hear that it is still true! So, I invite you to hear it again, and as you do, may the Holy Spirit speak it into your hearts!

Reader: Luke, chapter 24

Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they didn't find the body of the Lord Jesus. They didn't know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them in gleaming bright clothing. The women were frightened and bowed their faces toward the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He isn't here, but has been raised. Remember what He told you while He was still in Galilee, that the Human One must be handed over to sinners, be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered His words. When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles.

If this story is true, then evil, hate, sorrow, tragedy, death, will not have the final word. If this story is true, then what you suffer will not last. If it is true, then you have hope!

You know, this past week I was reading through John's Gospel. And I read about how Jesus lived, and what He taught, and how He helped people, how He claimed to be about a work from God that would change everything. My hope inside was awakened again!

Then I read how He was betrayed, arrested, tried with a rigged trial, condemned and killed. And I thought to myself, if this is the way it ends, then this story is no different than countless others.

So, when I got to His resurrection, I thought, this is the way this story *ought* to end...the way I want it to end. What a great story! What a good plot development. Excellent story.

But the life-changing question was not, is it a great story, but is it true? Because if it is, then it changes everything!

Answering that question, ultimately, is simply making a choice.

Now you notice in the story that the earliest disciples struggled with this question. The women didn't really believe it at first. When they told the other disciples, they didn't believe the women. And when they tell Thomas—who wasn't there when Jesus showed up—he didn't believe

them either. But each of them finally met the risen Jesus. We have the witness of these stories. We have the witness of those who were there. Paul says in Romans that over 500 people saw Him. He said to his readers, if you don't believe me, ask one of them! That's a lot of witnesses!

But then we have the witness of every Christian since then who has experienced Jesus in his or her own life. That's a lot of witnesses!

And you came here today because someone was a witness to you. These are the witnesses. There is the story. Is it true? It's a decision you have to make.

There are six resurrection stories in the Bible. We're going to take a look at one of them. It's what comes next in Luke after the story you just heard. It's a story about walking with Jesus. We're going to see five important parts of what it means to walk with the risen Jesus today. Then, over the next few weeks, we're going to take a much closer look at it, for I think in this story is the basis for the whole Christian walk. It's worth coming back to. You'll want to come back for it. It's worth walking!

Two of them, who were not part of the 12 Apostles, but were a part of the 72 who had been regular disciples of Jesus, who had given up everything to follow Him for two or three years, were walking home. They had gone to Jerusalem the week before, hopeful and excited. But they watched Him die...well, from a distance, because they were too afraid to get very close. They spent Friday and Saturday in shock. You know what it's like after someone close and important to you dies. Every so often someone says, "I can't believe He's gone!" There's that deep sigh. We've all been there.

Come Sunday, they leave. There is nothing left for them in Jerusalem. They go back to their old life before Jesus. What a tragic picture! It all came to nothing! They had heard the women's testimony, but they thought it was hopeful visions of grieved women. They head for home.

Reader: On that same day, two disciples were traveling to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened. While they were discussing these things, Jesus himself arrived and joined them on their journey. But they were prevented from recognizing Him.

He said to them, "What are you talking about as you walk along?" They stopped, their faces downcast.

Home is seven miles away. That's about a two hour walk in that setting. So, that's like a drive to Duluth. And they talk along the way. "How could God let this happen?" "God maybe is good, but not all powerful." "Or maybe God is not good." "Or maybe God just isn't." Notice how their body language is described. Their faces are downcast with grief.

This is where we enter the story! Every one of us, at some point, will have to take a walk to Emmaus. Some of you have been down this road already! In this world we will have trouble. And it will hit close to home. There will be times when our faces are downcast, when all we had hoped for seems over. Perhaps it's the walk to the unemployment line. And you ask, "How did this happen?" Perhaps it's the walk away from the doctor's office. The feared diagnosis is confirmed. Perhaps it's the walk away from the courthouse and the marriage is dissolved. "How do you survive this?" Perhaps it's the visit to the prison, where your son is. All your dreams for him, gone! We know what it's like on the road to Emmaus - that walk home, faces downcast, when it seems hopeless.

Pick up your empty cups. Hold it. Look at how empty it is. Think about the emptiness in your life. Think about the ways you wish your life were full.

Reader: The one named Cleopas replied, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who is unaware of the things that have taken place there over the last few days?”

He said to them, “What things?”

They said to Him, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth. Because of His powerful deeds and words, He was recognized by God and all the people as a prophet. But our chief priests and our leaders handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him. We had hoped He was the one who would redeem Israel. All these things happened three days ago. But there’s more: Some women from our group have left us stunned. They went to the tomb early this morning and didn’t find His body. They came to us saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who told them He is alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women said. They didn’t see Him.”

Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! Your dull minds keep you from believing all that the prophets talked about. Wasn’t it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?” Then He interpreted for them the things written about Himself in all the scriptures, starting with Moses and going through all the Prophets.

Here we are in the story again! Notice how Jesus comes to the disciples. *Jesus shows up to them like He does to us.* They don’t recognize Him. Now, I think this is on purpose. God prevented them from recognizing Him at first. He comes along side them and joins in their conversation. “Why are you so sad?” He asks.

They answer Him, “How could you have missed this? Don’t you understand? Jesus is dead! And maybe our faith is dead, too.”

He doesn’t say, “Hey, guys, look, it’s me! See, it’s all OK! I fixed everything!”

Instead, He says, “Don’t YOU understand?” And then He begins to draw back on the Scriptures to explain that this is not a defeat, but rather that it was all part of God’s plan. Starting with the story of the Garden of Eden, and carrying through all the laws, and the prophets. He explains that the Messiah had to suffer. That’s how God said God was going to redeem things.

The stranger doesn’t change what happens, but, their perspective starts to change.

Jesus doesn’t usually fix everything instantly. He doesn’t always heal at the moment. But He always works on us to changes our perspective. We start to see things from a different angle. Rather than from our perspective, He helps us see God’s. What might God be doing Here? What is God doing with this? Maybe God is going to do something amazing with this. Maybe all is not lost.

Jesus changes our perspective, and with that, our hearts begin to change. Rather than being filled with grief and despair, hope dawns.

A couple of verses later, the two disciples exclaim that while He was teaching them, they felt their hearts begin to burn. A hope dawns. Life is rekindled. The future again has potential.

This is how WE usually experience Jesus. Jesus usually comes to us through a stranger, who speaks words of life, who helps us see things in a different way.

Two weeks ago David and Hellen Ash were in a terrible car crash. Amazingly, they are here today, sore, but healing. Hellen shared with the confirmation class how during this awful experience, Jesus showed up to them, over and over again. The nurse, after hours, came to their door and helped them. The hotel owner drove them to their wreck to get their belongings. Strangers showed up to help them all along the way. They spoke words that helped change their perspective. One of the emergency responders, when he looked at what Hellen could only see as a terrible crash site, told her that indeed God had protecting them.

Jesus came as a stranger to David and Hellen Ash. This is how we often experience Jesus.

Reader: When they came to Emmaus, He acted as if He were going on ahead. But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us. It’s nearly evening, and the day is almost over.” So He went in to stay with them.

Jesus acted like He was going to keep going. They thought He was a stranger, mind you. I think He was testing to see what they would do. I think this is why they were kept from recognizing them. What would they do? Remember, He had taught them to love God and others, that when you do good to the least of people, you do it to Him.

He had taught them, “When I was hungry you gave me food. When I was thirsty, you gave me a drink. When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.”

He was testing to see if they would practice what He had taught them.

They urged Him to stay with them! They passed the test! Yeah!

But, what would have happened if they had let Him keep going on? *They would have missed the risen Christ!* We meet the risen Savior when we welcome the stranger and help those in need. This is how we can live out our Easter.

Our Easter offering this year is going to the Community Helping Hand food pantry. It is given food to those who are in need.

Are you looking for Jesus? Do you watch for Him? Do you stop to help Him? Hold your empty cup again. In what ways can you offer a drink to someone who is thirsty? What can you do?

At this church, we meet Jesus every third Saturday morning. We do our own food distribution. If you want to meet Jesus, come and help. We unload the truck at 6 a.m. We then divine and organize the food. People starting coming through at 8 a.m. Cleanup starts at 10. Do you want to meet Jesus? After we have organized the food, we stop to pray before the people come in. Each and every time we pray that we would see Jesus. And we do. He comes through the door 200 times those mornings. If you want to see Jesus, come back on April 18th!

Then you will have your own testimony. You have the testimony of the early disciples who met Jesus. You have the testimony of others around you who claim to have met Jesus. And you will also have your own testimony. Jesus is alive! It changes everything!

Reader: After He took His seat at the table with them, He took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, but He disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, “Weren’t our hearts on fire when He spoke to us along the road and when He explained the scriptures for us?”

Here is where we enter the story again! You see, it was at the table, when they were eating together, that they could recognize them. It was in the breaking of the bread. Something clicked! They saw how He had done that at the Last Supper He had with them. He took the bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, and gave it to them. And He does it again. Then they realize it is Jesus!

He vanishes, but notice, the bread and drink is still there on the table.

Just like it is for us today! We are having this experience here today, on Easter. We, who have been walking with Jesus, we also get to eat with Him this morning. And when we do, we meet Him in a revealing way!

Pick up your cup again. This morning, you didn’t come to hear a preacher, or hear good music. You came thirsty, looking for living water! You came to share a conversation and a meal with Jesus! You came hoping the story is true! And the bread and the drink are here, ready.

Reader: They got up right then and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying to each other, “The Lord really has risen! He appeared to Simon!” Then the two disciples described what had happened along the road and how Jesus was made known to them as He broke the bread.

While they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

Look what they do! They get up, late that evening, and run back to Jerusalem. They pound on the door...”We’ve seen Him! He’s alive! This changes everything!”

Jesus then stood among them. When they all meet Jesus, look at what He gives them. Not wealth. Not happiness. Not healing. Not fixing all their problems. Not protecting them from troubles. But peace. *This is the true gift of Easter. The risen Jesus gives you peace.* Peace on the inside, when everything is crazy on the outside.

If you came this morning looking for a way out of your problems, hoping that Jesus could take care of everything, and make all your problems disappear, then you are missing the better gift. Jesus offers you something far greater. He offers a peace that grounds you, that heals you from the inside out, that makes your whole life right. He doesn’t always fix everything, but He fixes you!

We meet Jesus along the way, especially on the hard paths. Jesus won’t always fix everything, but He will change your perspective. We follow Jesus when we serve others. We meet Jesus when we break bread together. And Jesus changes everything by giving you peace.

Don’t miss out on Easter. You want to hear if it is true?

The story is your witness. The early disciples are your witnesses. The believers around you are your witnesses. This bread and juice here in front of you is your witness. But it is when you choose to believe yourself, then your inner peace that is stronger than anything you live through, that will be your own witness.

Pick up your cups yet again. Look at how empty it is. Notice how thirsty you are. Pray for God to fill you up, to satisfy you. When I read through the ending of the Gospel of John, again last night, I said, I chose to believe it is true. People often ask me, “Do you *really* believe it?” My answer is that not only do I believe it, I’m counting on it!

The story is true, and it changes everything. Jesus changes everything! He is waiting to meet you right now! All you have to do is carry your empty cup, and take a walk!

Holy Communion:

1. Prayers

Our world needs Jesus!

Broken, bruised, suffering. EMPTY!!

I'm going to invite you to a time of silent prayer.

Hold your cup.

Pray about the emptiness of our reality:

The siege in Kenya, Christians in the school, 147 killed! Evil disregard for life.

ISIS destroying priceless artifacts of human history in northern Iraq, a blatant disrespect of those people and all of our their heritage.

Pray for the nuclear framework resolution for Iran

The bomb threat in New York

The tax season.

Your own life struggles.

Pray for peace in our world. In our community. In your life.

Let's pray.

“Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord.” Only you, Risen Jesus, can fill the emptiness of our world, of my own heart. Amen.

2. Today we are going to invite you to walk with Jesus.

In a moment, we're going to ask you to walk down to the front.

Here there is a meal.

Here is a time to meet Jesus.

As you walk with Jesus, hear Him remind you what you are to remember, and understand.

Do you not understand? The Scriptures say, “On the night when He was betrayed....

Prayer of the Holy Spirit “May this be for us the body and blood of Jesus, so that we can be for the world, the Body of Jesus redeemed by His blood.”

The Lord's Prayer.

3. Receiving the meal:

Offerings!

Bring up your empty cups.

The servers will say to you “He is risen!”

Respond by saying “He is risen indeed!”

Take an egg. Inside is a piece of bread. - Some are marked gluten free.

Open the egg and remember how the tomb was opened.

As you take the bread out of the egg, remember how Jesus' body came out of the tomb

Eat your bread as you remember Jesus and eat with Him.

Hold up your empty cup, like we come to Jesus

Drink it, as you remember how Jesus quenches your thirst.

Remember to ask Jesus to fill you!

Take your empty eggs with you, as you remember that the tomb is empty.

Take your cup with you, as you remember that Jesus fills you.

Come, walk with Jesus!