

EYES WIDE OPEN

Luke 24: 13-35

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Last week we went back and re-visited the empty tomb as discovered by the women on the day of Resurrection. And their experience gave us some insights into our own personal transformation moments:

1. We will experience fear and great joy simultaneously.
2. As we express our transformation, others may think we're crazy & be threatened.
3. In our weakness and seeming unworthiness, God uses us to be his witnesses.

This morning, we continue with the thread of events that happened after Jesus rose from the dead. Turn with me to Luke 24: 13-35.

The Road to Emmaus

13-16That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

17-18He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?"

19-24He said, "What has happened?"

They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."

25-27Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to

suffer and only then enter into his glory?" Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

28-31 They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

32 Back and forth they talked. "Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"

33-34 They didn't waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: "It's really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!"

35 Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

We have a story about two people, one named Cleopas. His companion may be male or female, the text is unclear. Some scholars now speculate that perhaps it was his wife since Jesus was invited to eat with them in their home.

The story begins with these two people walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a 7-mile journey. Comparable to us walking from La Paz to Playa del Tesoro. And they were talking about the events of the last several days: the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus joins them, and they fail to recognize him. Which is what makes the story so appealing to us, the listeners. We know something that the characters in the story don't know yet. We know who they're talking to! And we begin to anticipate: When will they figure it out? When will they clue in to who this mysterious stranger is?

Jesus asks them what they're discussing and this totally amazes Cleopas. Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard? Where have you been, man?! Do you live in a cave, or under a rock? Are you from outerspace? Surely you've heard about Jesus and his death? And Cleopas begins to summarize the events of the last three days in a very succinct manner.

Upon hearing this series of events, the stranger calls them foolish and slow of heart for not believing what their prophets had spoken of for centuries: That the Messiah would have to suffer and then enter into glory.

The suffering servant Messiah was not what the Jews had been expecting when they thought of the Messiah. For decades, they had been dominated by the hope of an earthly theocratic kingdom. The Messiah would come and end the oppression of Rome. He would come with might and power. Their enemies would be crushed.

This is what the disciples of Jesus were still clinging to, even until the very end. Even though Jesus had constantly told them otherwise. They were fixated on “Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David that is coming!” All they could imagine was an earthly kingdom like had taken place under King David. They had no context to jump to another reality.

And Jesus’ death shattered all these hopes.

So strange was the idea of a dying Messiah, and so utterly alien was the idea that a cross could play any role in the mission of the Messiah, that the crucifixion of Jesus could mean only the complete disillusionment of his followers. This is why Paul says in I Corinthians 1:23 “Christ crucified is a stumbling block to the Jews.” By definition, the Messiah should be a reigning King, not a crucified criminal. (Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, Eerdmans, 1974, page 316)

So Jesus takes Cleopas and his friend back to scripture passages given to Moses and the Prophets, and explained all the scriptures concerning himself. What were some of the passages Jesus went back and referred to? Let’s look at a few found in the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel. God with us.

Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and

upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 42:1-4

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged til he establishes justice on the earth.

Isaiah 53:2-5

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

There is a paradox concerning the Messiah. Suffering will be involved. Jesus himself told this to his disciples. Listen to **Mark 8:31-34**.

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Out of my sight, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.” Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

Suffering was part of God’s plan for Jesus, the Messiah. And the disciples didn’t want to hear it, let alone believe it. And Jesus also told them, not only will I suffer, but if you follow me, you too will have crosses to bear. You too will suffer. You and I still don’t like to hear that, even today. We want Easter Sunday without Good Friday. And Jesus said, “It doesn’t work that way. That was never part of God’s plan.”

So it is with these Scriptures and many others that Jesus uses to go back and piece the puzzle together for Cleopas and his companion. They have a discussion for the

entire 7 miles of their journey! It must have been totally engrossing. After two miles I would have been complaining that my feet were hurting and could I stop for a lemonade, but apparently this didn't happen on their walk. The miles seemed to fly by because they were so immersed in the conversation. And yet, despite all the insights and knowledge they were gaining, these two people STILL DID NOT RECOGNIZE THAT THEY WERE IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS, THE RISEN CHRIST.

What might this point out to us?

Cleopas is looking at and talking with the Lord Jesus, but he is so preoccupied with ideas, concepts and principles that he is not fully present. He is so caught up in a theological conversation that it blinds him to the Truth walking right beside him.

Now, I'm not saying that this conversation wasn't necessary. That Jesus didn't have a purpose in its outcome. What they were learning was valuable and going to be implemented as the story is retold. But I think it also points out that sometimes we can be so caught up in knowing & understanding about Jesus, that we fail to recognize Jesus when he's right beside us!

When their journey brought them to Emmaus, the day was ending, and Cleopas and his companion urged Jesus to come and stay at their home. And while they were eating together, when Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to pass it to them . . . the story says . . .

Then, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

During an ordinary meal. A stranger's blessing. The breaking of bread.

Then . . . eyes wide open.

Recognition came not through intense conversation during an in-depth study of Scripture while they walked seven miles; it came during fellowship through the sharing of a simple evening meal.

Please hear me . . . I am *not* down-playing the importance of Scripture or the study of the Bible. It is very important, and gives us our faith foundation. In Ephesians we're told that the Word of God is our only offensive weapon against the forces of evil. The Bible instructs how to live our life with God.

But at the same time, recognition of Jesus is more than just an intellectual reading of the Bible. It is also a personal relationship. It is inviting him to your house, into your life. It is sitting down at a table with him. Sharing bread together. Remembering another meal he shared when he told his disciples: This bread is my body, given for you. This cup is my blood, given for you.

Eyes wide open.

All of us have a Road to Emmaus story.
It's a story that can reoccur many times in our lives.

Like Cleopas, we struggle to find meaning for the events in our lives. To understand who God is, especially in moments of tragedy, grief, and despair.

Where is Jesus in the midst of my struggle? What do the death and resurrection of Jesus mean for my life today? Is God in my head, or in my heart? Can I really trust what the Bible tells me? If I just study this a bit more, will it become clearer? Why did Jesus have to suffer? Why do I have to suffer? Where is my joy? What is God's perfect joy for my life?

Like Cleopas and his companion, Jesus is walking beside you in the midst of all these questions, in the middle of the mystery of your life. Seven miles, seven days, seven years, seven decades. Whatever it takes, He's with you. But He is also waiting. Waiting to be invited to your table, to have relationship with you, to have fellowship with you, to bless and break bread with you, to see you reach that "AHA" moment of eyes wide open.

Share story of Father Francis and Brother Leo.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the JOY set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him, who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:2-3)

Celebration of Communion.