

JESUS THROUGH THE EYES OF – The Emmaus Road Walkers

Luke 24:13-36

Sermon for Peace Church

April 11, 2010

PURPOSE - To declare the joy of Jesus to minister to His people in their doubts, through Scripture, at table ... uniting them to His Church

MAIN IDEA – Christianity is Jesus – known, shared, celebrated!

INTRODUCTION

Let's open our Bibles to Luke 24:13 – the passage just read.

1. Today we finish our series from Luke titled, "A Look at Jesus Through the Eyes of ... (various persons in this gospel) – who've been posted around our sanctuary.

KUDOS – to Jenne / CWPT for helping us enter this series!

2. There's been a simple message at the heart of this series:

CHRISTIANITY IS JESUS!

For me to live is Christ, writes the Christian, Paul, and to die is gain – because I will be with him face to face. – Phil. 1:18

CHRISTIANITY IS JESUS

3. We too have been reminded in this series that there are things that can **CAPTURE OUR HEARTS ABOVE JESUS!** The silhouettes illustrate them:

(i) Martha treasured her **BUSYNESS FOR JESUS** above Jesus Himself!

Mary chose the one thing needful!

(ii) The Pharisees treasured their religious life above Jesus – which then degenerated into pretense – concerned more about what others thought about them, than what God thought of them. They turned away from God in Jesus.

(iii) The Rich Ruler treasured his own sense of goodness above a humble hungering for God’s goodness in Jesus

The Centurion learned otherwise – “Behold, this is a righteous man!”

(iv) The temple merchants valued business & money, an idol that Zacchaeus had been set free from – cause He met Jesus and thereafter could give generously to others.

4. CHRISTIANITY IS JESUS – and so Paul states, *“I want to know HIM (Easter) ...in the power of His resurrection and fellowship of His sufferings.”*

Do you share that longing?

To know Him – Not just about him – It’s like you could know about a car by reading its manual. But who goes to a Lexus Dealership to just ask to read the manual. To know a Lexus, you want to DRIVE that car!

= fellowship, relationship, unity, direction, mission, being IN CHRIST
THAT’S what it means to be a Christian = to know Him!

5. If that desire has been born within you, then today’s passage comes as encouragement & instruction. It features the RISEN JESUS MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN TO THOSE WHO HUNGER FOR HIM.

(i) Jesus died alone - crucified by those who outright rejected Him, betrayed Him or cared not to know Him.

But there was a small band of followers who tried to stay with him. Some of those did deny him. Others just stood by in shock and helplessness, not knowing what to do. They had been his followers. It is to that band of brothers & sisters that the Risen Jesus began to make Himself known.

(ii) Now in doing this, in our passage Jesus is no longer limited by having a body like you and I have. His resurrected body was different. He has a body, but with more capabilities. He could both EAT FOOD and WALK THROUGH WALLS.

He could walk with people, then disappear!

He could operate in dimensions beyond space and time – which you and I are still limited by.

Bible teaches that his body was “sown as a SEED and raised a new plant PLANT (flower) – in glorious bloom. There’s organic connection, yet wondrous difference!

(iii) For 40 days Jesus ministered on earth in this condition.

Then He ascended into heaven and sent the Holy Spirit to continue to make Him known.

I.e. – Those 3 phases of ministry are kind of like those old 3-speed STICK-SHIFT TRUCKS. First gear of ministry – incarnation with body as you and I have; Second gear (40 days of ministry) – resurrected body; Third gear – Holy Spirit = full bore! – Taking the full story of God’s truth in Jesus, including his ascension to the right hand of God - making Jesus known to His people.

6. So today’s passage is in this second gear – 40 days of ministry.

Jesus is making Himself known – WHY? - to build a body on earth – a team – His presence continuing physically in this age, in relationship with Him!

These special appearances for 40 days are a brief transition to the age of the Spirit. In them He does makes himself physically seen to help the faith of this early church, leading them to eventually live in faith through the Holy Spirit.

(i) So you and I today won’t physically see Jesus like Cleopas does in our story. It’d be nice. But that’s not his mode of ministry now. Today, Jesus is with us through the Holy Spirit. He’s here! The Holy Spirit gives us the mind of Christ, makes real the love of Christ, strengths us to do His will.

TODAY THE SPIRIT IS JESUS' AGENT OF MINISTRY – making Him known.

7. DO YOU CARE TO KNOW HIM ... PERSONALLY?

Jesus makes Himself known to those who hunger for this

And, from our passage, here are some places he does that:

In our sadness & confusion

In the Scripture

At the Table

In our Witness

(= our framework of work this morning, moving through the passage)

I. IN OUR DOUBT, DISAPPOINTMENT, CONFUSION

1. One of the walkers on the Emmaus Road was a fellow named, Cleopas – that we're told in v. 18. The other was probably his wife, Mary. We know from John's gospel that she was at Jesus' crucifixion with Mary Magdalene & Mary, the mother of Jesus (the 3 Mary's). Probably Cleopas & Mary had been in Jerusalem from Emmaus, their hometown, to celebrate the Passover. Now they're walking back home – 7 mile jaunt – and Jesus is about to make Himself known to them.

(i) He joins their travels and asks a question, *"What are you talking about?"*

JESUS IS INTERESTED IN OUR CONVERSATION!

They STOP and v. 17 – their faces are "downcast" ... = "sad / drawn in misery"
(other translations)

A. This is encouraging! Jesus makes Himself known when we're BUMMED OUT!
He's not far from us when we're in that state!

2. Here's the reason they're sad:

They're DISAPPOINTED. They had expected their leader, Jesus of Nazareth, to redeem Israel. Jesus hadn't done what they expected – He had been crucified.

But on top of that, they're CONFUSED – cause some of their friends had told them that his body was not in the tomb & angels had said, "He's alive!" (This is still the first Easter Sunday!) – so it's confusing! Now what? Is He alive? If so, where? For what reason?

(i) SADNESS / DISAPPOINTMENT / CONFUSION = feelings of everyday life!

Hopes are dashed. People disappoint Questions arise.

We experience those feelings in church. Even when we've heard this message that Jesus is alive, we wonder – "Well, where is He?"

3. Jesus IS near and about to make Himself known.

Cleopas & partner don't recognize Him. (It can be that much harder to recognize Jesus when you're in pain!)

It states in v. 16 that they were "kept from recognizing Him". Did the pain keep them that way? Did God keep them from that? Did their lack of faith keep them from that? - YES – to all 3!

BUT JESUS IS ABOUT TO MAKE HIMSELF KNOWN – by asking what are you talking about?

4. Here's the TAKEAWAY from this first point:

In their sadness & confusion, they're still talking about Jesus, TRYING TO FIGURE HIM OUT!

THAT'S THE CHURCH!

(i) Let me quote Spurgeon on this point (he puts it well):

"Christian people, commune together, but let your communications always be like these which are recorded in this chapter. Speak of Him, talk of Him, what you know of Him, of your sorrows about Him, even of your neglects of Him, of your ill treatment of Him, your sins against him.

Talk of these things to one another, for so long as they are about Him, it will be good, even to confess your faults to one another, for it will lead you to pray for one another and to join your prayers together, so that there will be greater strength in the petitions.”

5. Because Jesus makes Himself known to those who hunger to figure Him out - even in our disappointments & confusion, the vision of the church here is to be a place where we still talk about Him.

Yes, we'll talk about the Cubs & Sox, the weather and our plants – the Church is a wonderfully human organization.

But if we're not a place that's talking about Him – even in our disappointments, we're missing the mark. Then we've only become a CLUB. We're not the church.

Jesus asks: “What are you talking about?”

(i) So let's pay attention to what our conversations are about.

Let's be responsible to one another, even when we're wrestling with disappointment & confusion, to become a church that talks about Jesus. Can we do that?

➤ To ask in meetings, “What's Jesus doing among us?”

➤ To ask in groups / over coffee, “What's He doing with you?”

A. And when we're not sure, let's PRAY. Let's talk directly to Him, in faith.

“Join prayers, (as Spurgeon states) ... so that there'll be greater strength in petition.”

THE CHURCH IS A PLACE WHERE WE TALK ABOUT JESUS, trying to figure Him out – because in that context Jesus makes Himself known.

II. THROUGH SCRIPTURE

Second, Jesus makes Himself known through Scripture.

1. Be ready for this! To their sadness & confusion Jesus does not bring a word of comfort! HE REBUKES THEM!

Verse 25 – *“How foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”*

(i) When Jesus makes Himself known, don't fall into the mistake of thinking that that'll be a word of comfort.

- Sometimes it is! (In the cemetery earlier that day, Jesus had made himself known to Mary Magdalene with a word of comfort – calling her name, “Mary”)

- But here HE REBUKES. Jesus is upset at the UNBELIEF of Cleopas & partner!

(ii) HOW FOOLISH YOU ARE! - How can we tell when Jesus is rebuking us?

Probably a lot of different ways:

A. When things don't go as planned! – I.e. – I was part of a meeting awhile ago that really fell apart – In prayer afterward, Jesus showed me clearly my folly in contributing to that!

B. When life & ministry is not fruitful – love is not growing at church / marriage / family ... there's probably a rebuke in there.

C. Sometimes the Word grabs you – a verse convicts; sometimes a message pokes you in a way you don't like.

D. Jesus uses other Christian's passion, joy, hope to convict. I was rebuked not too long ago by the witness of another Christian pastor whose humility convicted me in a message he shared. That humility was in places I wasn't anywhere near.

How foolish you are – How slow to believe! = Jesus rebukes unbelief.

2. Then He builds faith to believe THROUGH THE WORD! Jesus explains the Scriptures to them.

D.L. Moody once said, *“I prayed for faith and thought that some day it would come down & strike me like lightning. But faith didn’t seem to come. Then one day I read in Romans that, “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” I had up to this time closed my Bible and prayed for faith. Then I opened my Bible and began to study, and faith has been growing since!”*

3. Jesus makes Himself known through the Scriptures.

He explains here from the Old Testament that the Christ had to first suffer, then be glorified.

I.e. – LIKE: Joseph was in the pit before he went on to glory in Egypt. Moses was first in the desert before He led God’s people to the Promised Land. Israel was in sin’s slavery before deliverance; was in exile before return. David went into the valley of death in order to come up again with Goliath’s head
= THE CROSS BEFORE THE CROWN - “The Christ must suffer before entering His glory.” ... These stories all bear witness to Jesus!

4. So here’s the TAKE-AWAY – We have to be people of this Book! We are a literate society. Jesus makes himself known through Scripture.

(i) Through reading Scripture he speaks into our lives – very personally!

Did you notice later in the story, after Jesus has completely made himself known, Cleopas & partner say to each other – “Man, we should’ve known it was Him! ... Verse 32 – *“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us.”*

A. That’s how you know Jesus is making Himself know to you through the Scriptures – you read it and He gives you heart burn!

= conviction, awe, excitement, vision, faith!

5. So if you want a life with the Risen Jesus, you must read the Scriptures.

ONE BOOK / ONE BODY! Reading that chapter each day is necessary!

- If you can't find time to do that, how important is Jesus?

(i) Plus taking the time to let the heartburn sink in!

That's our challenge = prayer, contemplation, solitude.

Jesus makes himself known through Scripture ... and third, AT TABLE.

III. AT TABLE

1. Now we come to the high point in the story. The walkers arrive in Emmaus. Jesus intends to go further. There's no reason to think he's play-acting. But they urge Him to stay. It's nearly evening – further travels could be dangerous (thieves, wild animals). Besides, they're captivated by this man. So Jesus stays – cause He's invited to stay.

Jesus makes Himself known to those who hunger to know Him - "Ask & you shall receive"!

(i) In their home, at table, Jesus makes Himself known this way:

He takes the bread of the meal, gives thanks (like the host of the meal would) and BREAKS IT. That's the key!

Most commentators believe that when He did that, He drew attention to the nail-marks in His hands / wrists.

They saw. They understood. Their eyes were opened.

= "JESUS IS ALIVE! ... He was with us the whole journey!"

Their life of faith is nourished ... AT TABLE!

2. What's the TAKE-AWAY here?

(i) Certainly it refers to our time at this table (communion). Here, in the breaking of bread, Jesus shows us His nail-pierced hands.

> "This is my body broken / blood shed ... for you!"

A. The Bread & cup are signs of His presence – but not like a Coca Cola billboard sign in the middle of the Sahara desert – where reality is a great distance from the sign itself.

No – the bread & cup are signs like a RR Crossing Sign – the REALITY is right there, next to the sign – like the sign & track together!

(ii) This table is a place that Jesus meets us to renew us in covenant relationship with God.

I.e. – Do you remember how God renewed Himself to Abram in covenant relationship? Had Abram split carcasses in half – parties to move through – “thus may it be done to me, if I perchance break the covenant”. The covenant, already established, was being renewed. And GOD MOVES THROUGH ALONE! - As a smoldering firepot

That’s what it means to “see those nail scarred hands” at the Table.

God has pledged Himself to you to death. Jesus’ death asserts this! Risen, there is now NOTHING THAT CAN SEPARATE YOU FROM HIS LOVE. Your sin is paid for by His death!

Our love is but grateful response

Every time we’re at THE TABLE, Jesus is here to make Himself known IN COVENANT-KEEPING LOVE!

3. The Table here also refers to the FELLOWSHIP OF GOD’S PEOPLE.

Christians eat together - here in the Fellowship Hall, at our homes – as a means through which Jesus can make Himself known!

(i) It seems clear to me that God has put the TABLE strongly into the IDENTITY of Peace Church’s new vision. Have you noticed that? It’s something we keep working at and working out!

A. Now the HOLY BOOK will always be central identity. That will never change in a church “reformed & reforming” according to the Word of God!

But since I've been here to help you work at a new mission, I've observed how THE TABLE has come up in various ways:

- We moved this table – gave it prominence
- For a stretch we partook of the Lord's Supper every other week – though now we've stepped back on that
- Those working on the Strategic Plan were led to build the table into our VISION STATEMENT – “Inviting People to Belong at the Family Table”
- This past program year – weekly family night – table
- Home Hospitality has been encouraged – we're still scratching the surface on that, but when we do practice it – like the Zacchaeus Luncheon, really good things happen!

This is GOOD – we still got lots to figure out with this TABLE VISION – but that's OK – let's just not lose it. Let's allow it refresh us year by year in who we are ...

... BECAUSE IT'S AT THE TABLE THAT JESUS MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN!

IV. BY WITNESS

Fourth & last, Jesus makes Himself to His hungry people know through the witness of His people.

1. Mr. & Mrs. Cleopas have met the Risen Jesus. His covenant love is sealed to their hearts. ... and they've got a story to tell!

(i) Even though it's now evening, THEY RUN 7 MILES BACK TO JERUSALEM!

“It's true! ... It's true / true / true!” they tell the Eleven!

Jesus is alive!

Verse 36 – *While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you”.*

(i) IT'S NOT COINCIDENTAL. While they were still talking - Jesus makes Himself known through the witness of His people.

2. What an encouragement it is to hear witness. The Spirit bolsters our faith through it!

I.e. – MOPS – just had their testimony time meeting! = annual favorite!

I.e. – Was reading the bulletin about Judy Alderden's brother-in-law, Wayne. The effects of his stem cell transplant have been "nothing short of miraculous".

I was blessed. Thanks for putting that in. That's the Church.

I.e. – I was at Illiana High School this past Thursday – parent/teacher interviews. Except I went also to find out from the 3 Illiana teachers how thing went with the team they led to the DR on Spring Break, working on the same Hernandez school project that we went on. The witness each of them gave to God's presence with them – through airports, the cooperation of the youth, materials arriving, the hard work, the sense of accomplishment. I had commissioned them at a chapel commenting how I had seen God really leading their trip to that point and Principal Boonstra said, "He just kept blessing it!"

That night I left there so lifted in spirit; so thankful. I tasted the peace of Jesus. He was real again – really real. I offered praise & thanks in my prayers!

Christianity is the Jesus – known, shared, celebrated.

3. The TAKE-AWAY – share how Jesus has become real to you – with friends, family and the church. Make a point to do it – at your dinner tables, in bed at night, talk about it ... because ...

JESUS MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN – through our witness / at table / through the Scriptures / and even in our sadness – as we talk about & pray to Him. AMEN!