

The Road to Emmaus: a Journey of Grace

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Preacher: Rick Britton

[0 : 00] Continue the series and speak on the resurrection again this morning, at least on a resurrection! So I'm going to ask you to turn your Bibles to Luke, and we're in Luke chapter 24 verses! 13 through 35 and this is the passage on the road to Emmaus and hopefully my NIV is the same as this one. I'm going to read it from here. Actually, I'm going to read it from here because I forgot my reading glasses, so I will be struggling if I do it from here. Okay, this is the word of the Lord. Now, that same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, what are you discussing together as you walk along? They stood still, their faces downcast.

One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days? What things, he asked? About Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.

The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place? In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning, but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the woman had said. But they did not see Jesus. He said to them, how foolish you are and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, stay with us, for it is nearly evening.

The day is almost over. So when he went in to stay with them, when he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us?

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven and those with them assembled together and saying, it is true, the Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon. Then the two told what had happened on the way and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

[3 : 34] This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God. Well, I was going to start with an illustration about a guy who was walking the wrong or driving the wrong way down the Causeway Bridge in New Orleans. It's one of the longest bridges in the world. He's going north on the southbound lanes, gets pulled over by a cop, and the cop gently and generously stops him, pulls him over, gives him a ticket, turns him around. And that really is an illustration of what happens in this passage.

You have these two disciples walking the wrong way, going the wrong way, and Jesus comes and gently turns them around. And I'm not going to give you the whole illustration because I think this story that was just shared with us by Robert and Megan is a similar illustration of people, how God deals with all of us when we're going the wrong way in life. And Jesus comes into our life through his word, through his spirit, and gently turns us around from a disastrous situation, whether it's driving down a bridge into oncoming traffic, or whether it's going the wrong way in life. And I want you to see three things in our passage this morning as these two disciples walk along the road to

Emmaus. One, how Jesus pursues us. Two, how he opens our eyes with his spirit and his word. And three, how he rekindles our hearts with a living hope through his word and through the good news of the gospel and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So first, how Jesus pursues us when we're walking the wrong way or driving the wrong way or going down the wrong road in life. So Jesus, you've got these two disciples and he walks up and starts walking with them. And look how verse 13 starts. It says, that very day. Well, what very day? Well, this episode of these two disciples who are leaving

Jerusalem and walking to Emmaus down the seven mile road, this journey, the very day that these women, Mary, Joanna, another Mary, and a number of other women, see, go to the tomb to find Jesus' body and see two angels. And they say, he's alive. He's risen. His body is not here. Why are you looking for the living among the dead? The very day of the resurrection, these women run back and tell all the disciples what's going on. And the disciples are so excited. Peter himself goes running to the tomb. But these two guys say, no, no, we don't, we're not buying it. We don't believe it. Forget it. He's dead. We put all our hopes in him. We thought he was the Messiah. We thought he was going to redeem Israel. He's gone.

We're going to Emmaus. Now, the name Emmaus literally means hot waters or hot springs. Could it be that they were just trying to get away to a little spa in refreshment in Emmaus, you know, to let their troubles be melted away in the hot springs, in the hot waters of Emmaus, leaving Jerusalem, leaving hope, leaving all that behind? They were in despair. They didn't believe the good news. So they're running away from hope. They're heading the wrong way, away from hope, away from the truth of the resurrection, going to Emmaus to let their troubles be melted away in the hot springs. Well, Jesus walks up to them, and look at how he approaches them. Verse 17. He asked them, what are you discussing as you walk along? They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them named Cleopas asks him, are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who doesn't know what's going on? It's like his reply is just edged with frustration.

Seriously? You don't know? Have you been living under a rock? Are you the only one in Jerusalem who doesn't know what's going on? And Jesus says, well, what things? Jesus plays kind of dumb, like he doesn't know what's going on. Well, what things are you talking about? And Cleopas says, about Jesus of Nazareth.

[8 : 42] We thought he was a prophet, powerful in word and deed, before God and all the people. But the chief priests and the rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. And what's more, we hoped he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And it's been three days since all this happened. Well, friends, these folks had lost all hope. But here's the point. Jesus doesn't wait for us to be walking down the wrong, the right road. When he sees two disciples, when he sees two of his chosen ones walking down the wrong road, he goes after them, just as he went after these two wayward disciples who are on the wrong road, heading the wrong way in life. And you know, that's how all of us have had that experience. Think about John Newton. He was a slave trader, grew up in a Christian home, went completely the wrong way in life. And Jesus found him, pursued him, turned him around, and he wrote that great hymn, Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. Think about C.S.

Lewis. He was a proud atheist professor. And Christ went after him, not with lightning bolts, but through long walks and honest questions with thoughtful friends, until Lewis finally called himself the most reluctant convert in all of England. God turned him around. He's going down the wrong way. Turned him around. And what about Chuck Colson? Christ met him not in the White House. He was Nixon's notorious hatchet man. The Lord met him not in the White House, but in prison after he'd gone to jail for what he'd done with Watergate, with the Watergate scandal, and turned that disgraced politician into a bold evangelist for Christ. Friends, these men were headed the wrong way, but Jesus caught up to them, and that's what he does.

Just like he caught up with these two guys on the road, Demaus, when they're going the wrong way, heading away from hope. Maybe some of you are heading the wrong way. The road of disappointment, despair, bitterness.

The road of cynicism, no longer thinking the Bible is true or relevant. The road of self-reliance, trying to manage life on your own apart from God's help. Friends, the road to Emmaus is a lesson about the P in tulip. You all know what tulip is? It's the P in tulip, the perseverance of the saints or the preservation of the saints. It means that Christ will never, if you are his, he will never leave you. He will never forsake you. He is for you. When you are faithless, he will be faithful. In tough times

when they come, remember the question he asked these two disciples. What are you discussing together? Hey, what's going on in your life? Tell me. He didn't let them go off on their own. He intervened. He pursued them. Like the one lost sheep out of the 99, 99, Jesus pursues his wayward children who are heading the wrong way in life. That's what he did for Robert and Megan. That's what he did for me. That's what he's done for you. If you really think about how you came to Christ, he's done that for every one of us. So here's the point. Jesus doesn't abandon you. He goes after you. And, um, and, and that's what he did with these two disciples. So that's, that's point number one. Jesus pursues us even when we're wandering down the wrong road.

Point two, Jesus opens eyes to the beauty and glory of the gospel and the resurrection. And he does it by his spirit and through the scriptures, through the scriptures. That's why it's so important that we, that we proclaim the word of God. Jesus opens our eyes with his word.

[13:28] Look at verse 25. He said to them, to these two disciples, how foolish you are and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not Moses have to suffer these things and then enter? Did not Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in the scriptures concerning himself. So Jesus comes up to these two Wade word disciples heading the wrong way in life, heading down the wrong road in despair.

And, and, and, and he says to them after they say, Hey, you know, we're just, we're bummed out, man, because Jesus, we thought he was Messiah. And Jesus says, how foolish you are. How foolish.

Now that's a strong rebuke, isn't it? I mean, it's not like he wasn't mentioned words. He says, how foolish you are. But friends, sometimes strong rebukes are needed to wake us up.

Rebuke can actually be a positive thing if it's meant to correct and turn around someone who's walking the wrong way in life in a dangerous situation, driving the wrong way, not a one-way corridor.

And, you know, Jesus doesn't just rebuke them, but then he gently corrects them with scripture. Doesn't he? Doesn't he? He, he begins, he says, verse 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in the scriptures concerning himself, the Messiah.

[15:17] He explained to him that everything that happened, including the resurrection, his death, had to happen, and it was all according to the scriptures. In fact, verse 27 is one of the most remarkable passages, in my view, in all of scripture, because Jesus gives the first post-resurrection Bible study. He goes to Genesis, he goes to Moses, he goes to the Pentateuch and walks them through the entire Old Testament, showing how it all pointed to him, his life, his death, his atonement, his resurrection, his glorious reign. That is an amazing, you know, I don't know exactly what Jesus, you know, where he started in Genesis, and what passages specifically he took these two disciples through in this Bible study. And I think when I get to heaven, I'll ask them, Lord, can you repeat that

Bible study you did on the road to Emmaus? I'd like to, I'd like to hear that one. But let me, let me do some sanctified speculation on what Jesus may have shared with them. He may have gone back to Genesis 3.15, the verse that we call the proto-first evangelion, proclamation of the gospel.

That's where God says to Satan, I will put enmity between you and the woman, Eve, and her seed, Messiah, and he shall bruise your head, a fatal blow, Satan. He's going to deliver a fatal blow, but you shall bruise his heel, a painful but not fatal blow, and that's the cross, right? So, so, Jesus could have started right there in Genesis 3.15 and walked them all the way through.

He could have talked about the Passover lamb in Exodus and how the blood of the lamb shielded Israel from judgment. He could have talked about how God provided manna in the wilderness to feed his people and how that he is the bread of life. Maybe he talked about how the bronze serpent was lifted up in the wilderness and all those who looked at the serpent didn't die. Their sins were forgiven. And how, if we look to the cross, our sins are forgiven. Maybe he talked about the sacrifice of Isaac and how Abraham said to his son Isaac, son, the Lord will provide a lamb. And the Lord did provide a lamb, so Isaac didn't have to die. All those things point to Jesus had to die on that cross. Maybe he took these two guys through Isaiah 53, the suffering servant passage, where it says he was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. Psalm 22 talks about the cross in similar language, a vivid picture of crucifixion written centuries before the Romans even invented crucifixion.

All these things are places he could have gone. Maybe he could have talked about the resurrection from Jonah, who three days was in the belly of the fish. Nobody survives in the belly of the fish three days. That's a picture of resurrection, right? Because Jonah did survive. God essentially resurrected him, helped him survive through that. He could have talked about Psalm 1610, where David, or the psalmist writes, you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your holy one see decay. See, even resurrection was known even in the Old Testament. It was something looked forward to. All these things speak about the life of Christ. And let me give you a couple of lessons from this Bible study that Jesus gave. Well, he could have talked about the reign of the exalted Messiah. And there are many passages that talk about the reign of the reign of the reign of the reign of the reign of the reign of Christ after he dies. So I think Jesus probably took him through a lot of that, because this was a seven-hour walk, seven-hour trip from Jerusalem all the way to Emmaus. So here's a couple lessons. One, the Bible is not just a collection of disconnected stories. It's not. The Bible is not a guidebook on how to live my best life now.

[20 : 14] The Bible is one story. It's the story of Jesus Christ. It's the story of creation, fall, redemption, and resurrection, and new life, and glorious future new creation. So it's not just disconnected stories.

Jesus said about the scriptures, he said to the Pharisees, these are the very scriptures that testify about me. The scriptures are the story of Jesus Christ from Genesis to Revelation. And that's what the road to Emmaus is all about. Here's another application. When we fall into sin, or succumb to cynicism, or spiral into despair, Jesus doesn't forsake us. He gives us assurance through his word. He helps us out of it. He doesn't let go of us when we doubt. He holds on to us and gently corrects us. He's the good shepherd. He's patient with his sheep. He doesn't want to see any of us go astray. He comes after us when we do go astray. But I want you to notice the staff that the shepherd uses to corral these wayward sheep. These two wayward sheep. What is it? The staff is the word of God. He uses his word to correct them and to bring them back. Second Timothy 3.16 says, all scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. And that's what we see in the road to Emmaus. I remember I learned the scriptures when I was a little boy. My mom taught Sunday school, learned John 3.16. But I went wayward in college. I didn't go to church. I was partying. I just lived a typical late 1970s, early 1980s party college life. And I got a job out of college and I moved down to Dallas. And I was feeling guilty about the way I'd been living. And I stayed in a hotel because I had a job, but I didn't have a place to live yet. I didn't know anybody in Dallas. I moved from Chicago to Dallas. And I'm in a hotel room and there's a Bible sitting in that hotel room. And it was called Good News for Modern Man. It was kind of written in a modern language. But I picked it up and I started to read it. And I'm like, oh, wow. I remember this stuff. My mom taught me about this. For God so loved the world. Oh, I started reading the gospels. And God used his word to turn my life around. That was the beginning of a real change in my life. And you know, the truth is, Christ was coming after me.

I trusted him as my savior at six years old. I was going astray. He was coming after me and turning me around. And that's how he corrals his straying sheep. Listen, Jesus still opens the scriptures today, just like he did on that road to Emmaus, just like he did in my life, just like he does that in all our lives. He pursues his wandering disciples. He opens our eyes through his scripture. And here's the third and final point. He sends us out to share the good news with hearts on fire. Grace sends us. It doesn't just convert us. It does. It changes us. His spirit through the word changes us. But then it sends us out. Listen, let me just remind you what happens at the end of this passage. I won't read it. But as they approach the village, Jesus pretends like he's going to go on farther. And they're like, no, go stay with us. They were so intrigued. They didn't recognize him yet. They're so intrigued. They're like, no, you got to come stay with us. Let's go have dinner. So they go back to the place where they're staying.

And there's bread and probably wine. And when Jesus breaks the bread, like we do in communion, like at the Last Supper, when he breaks the bread, what happens? Immediately they recognize who he is.

[24 : 47] And immediately, poof, he's gone. Amazing. I wish I could have been there. Wow. Now, so what happens?

What do these guys do? They go, well, that was good. Let's go. The spa's waiting for us, man. I can't wait to get into that warm water. No. It's nighttime. They immediately turn around and make

the return trip seven miles. It's like a four-hour-plus trip. In the dark, dangerous trip. Bandits on the road.

They immediately turn around and make the trip back. And they find the disciples. They go, it's true. It's true. Jesus is alive. We saw him. We ate with him. We recognize him when he broke the bread. It's what Peter said is right. What the woman said is right. Jesus is alive. What happened there? Jesus sent these two disciples back. Grace sent them back with hearts on fire for God.

Friends, grace doesn't just comfort us. It sends us. It sends us. It grips us. It sends us out to share the good news. And here's just a couple of applications to remember. One, like these two disciples, speak boldly about Jesus. Speak boldly about him. Speak about him in everyday life. You don't need a pulpit. Your dinner table's your pulpit. Your office, your text messages is your pulpit. All right, don't post cheesy Facebook posts like some of my friends do with corny pictures of Jesus, you know, but, but you know what I mean? Be bold about your faith in Jesus.

[26 : 43] Return to the community of faith. These disciples ran back to the other believers. They had left the community. They were, they were on their way out. We're done with this group. They came back.

Return to the community of faith. If you've drifted from fellowship, if you've been walking alone, grace is calling you back to the body of believers. Thank, thank God that, that he calls us back. Thirdly, live like someone who's seen the risen Christ. We've seen that we haven't seen him in person, but we have the sure promise of his word. He is risen. Live like it. If you believe he's alive, let your joy show, let your priorities reflect resurrection. What would you do differently this week if you remembered every morning, I have seen the Lord? I have seen the Lord. It's often been said, set your life on fire for God and people will come to watch you burn. And it's true.

And it's true. We've got awesome news. You know, when somebody gets engaged, they share the news because it's good news. It's awesome news. Friends, we have good news to share. Don't keep it to yourselves. Share it. So let me, let me conclude with this challenge. Where is your Emmaus road leading you?

Are you walking away in quiet resignation? Or will you turn around with burning joy? The risen Christ still meets his people in the word, in the Lord's table, in spirit and in truth. He still opens blind eyes and rekindles cold and discouraged hearts. And when he does, he doesn't just comfort you, comfort you.

He commissions you. So go, go. Because when your heart is on fire, your feet can't stay still and your mouth can't stay shut. Let us pray. Father, thank you for your blessed word. Thank you for the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for these, this episode in the Bible of these two disciples who were lost and discouraged and going the wrong way like many of us. Because it reminds us that you come after us. You love us so much. You come after us and you leave that other 99 sheep behind and come after us. Sinners who don't deserve grace, but you're just a gracious God. We thank you and we praise you and we pray that you would give us the courage we need to speak boldly the words of life in your word. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.