

Meeting Jesus on the Emmaus Road

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[0 : 00] We turn in our Bibles this evening to that passage that John Angus read to us in Luke 24.

It's that wonderful story of when the risen Jesus meets the two sad travelers on the road to Emmaus. We've got the points to follow here.

Jesus asks questions. Jesus explains the scriptures. And Jesus gives us work to do. Of the four Gospels, only Luke has recorded for us the story of the walk to Emmaus.

It was the afternoon of that first Easter day. And the two sad disciples began to make their way to their home in Emmaus. They thought it was all over.

Jesus was dead. They were a couple without hope. They were walking away from Jerusalem, the city of God. A bit like many people in our land today.

[1 : 13] Walking away from their Christian heritage. Walking away from their faith. Feeling it's all hopeless. Feeling it's ended. Perhaps someone here even feels like that.

Perhaps someone here or online is walking away from Jesus. You know, our society in some ways is defined by being after something else.

We're post-modern. We're post-Christian. We're practically post-human. Neither male nor female. Many folk share the hopeless walk away from Jerusalem.

We had hoped that with better education, better civilization, dare we say it, we're all nicer people. What's happening in Ukraine has reminded us that the things that happened last century can still happen again. War in Europe.

[2 : 20] Global warming makes us worry about the future. Many of us are on the Emmaus Road, walking along without hope. The two disciples weren't any of the eleven apostles.

There were two others. Unknown, really. Except one was called Cleopas, and the other was perhaps his wife. We don't know anything about them, really.

And here we see, of course, that Jesus didn't only appear to the apostles, after his resurrection. He appeared to ordinary people. Two ordinary disciples.

We know he appeared to a lot of ordinary disciples because he appeared to 500 at a time. But this incident is recorded for us. And they're walking along. Sad. Discussing what had happened.

And Jesus draws near and walks with them. Sort of thing that doesn't happen when we're driving in cars, does it? But it could happen. It did happen then.

[3 : 23] They're all walking along at the same speed. And they're not enclosed in a tin box. So Jesus walks along with them. But their eyes are kept from recognizing him.

I thought, what a wonderful picture this is of us sometimes. In our confusion and fear and hope and perhaps hopelessness some days, we think we're walking along on our own.

But Jesus is beside us, even though we can't see him. So now there's three people walking along the MS road.

The two disciples and the stranger. No, he's not a stranger. Jesus. Jesus. And after a while listening to the conversation, Jesus asks a question.

He says, what's this you're talking about? What is this conversation that you're holding with each other as you walk?

[4 : 23] You know, he asks a question. You know, in doing this, he sets us a good example of how we can talk with our neighbors. We need to learn to use questions.

Questions to get people thinking. You know, what do you mean by that? What do you think about? Have you ever wondered why? There's a very interesting book, which if you haven't read it, it's a great encouragement to use in questions.

It's called Questioning Evangelism by Randy Newman. Very interesting. And encourages us and teaches us how to use questions to bring the gospel into conversations.

What's this you're talking about? And we're told they stand still looking sad. It was a sad day for them.

They're surprised at the question. How come you don't know? Surely you must be the only person in Jerusalem who doesn't know what's happened these last few days.

[5 : 36] How can you not know? Are you just a visitor? Again, a question from Jesus. He doesn't answer their question. He asks another one. He said, what things are you talking about?

And they tell Jesus about himself. Jesus, a prophet. Mighty in word and deed. And our leaders had him crucified. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

And this morning, some of our women went to the tomb and came back saying he was alive. But some of the guys went and they found nothing. They didn't see Jesus. See, they hadn't understood. When they left Jerusalem, the people still hadn't understood. And they stand still looking sad. And they continue to say in verse 21, We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Besides all this, it's now the third day since these things happened. We had hoped. It was a tale of disappointed hope.

[6 : 46] Now, they were followers of Jesus. But they didn't expect to find Jesus on the Emmaus Road. After all, Jesus was dead. And they didn't even recognize him.

We read their eyes were kept from recognizing him. As far as they were concerned, it was all over. Jesus died on Friday. Today was Sunday.

The hopes were shattered. They were walking away from Jerusalem in confusion and disappointed hopes. And Jesus chose them for an amazing Bible study.

What a Bible study that must have been. Verse 25, it begins. And he said to them, Jesus said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into glory? O foolish ones. Now, that question must have made them sit up.

[7 : 55] And they thought they were Jesus' disciples. They thought they knew what was going on. And then his second questions. Was it not necessary for Jesus to suffer before entering his glory?

Well, they hadn't understood that at all. Even though Jesus had taught it, they hadn't understood it. They had hoped that Jesus would be an earthly conqueror.

An earthly conqueror. And even, even when they all knew him, after, later on, Luke records in Acts 1 verse 6, when he appeared to them many times, they still hoped that he would lead them in an earthly kingdom.

They asked, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel? In Acts chapter 1. They were still asking, are you going to liberate us from the Romans?

Are you going to lead our nation to freedom? They thought, you see, of the Messiah as a son of David, sitting on David's throne. Defeating the Romans.

[9 : 07] Establishing the kingdom of Israel again. And finding a kingdom of righteousness and peace. So Jesus' death on the cross just did not fit in with their hopes at all.

Until that Bible study on the road to Emmaus. Where Jesus is going to, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

I wonder what passages Jesus used that day. Did he take them right back to Genesis 3.15?

Where he read the promise that the seed of the woman would bruise, would crush the serpent's head. But he wasn't going to get off scot-free because the serpent would bruise his heel.

It would be a costly victory for the Messiah. He would be wounded. But the serpent would be defeated. He would be the serpent crusher.

[10 : 18] Or did he quote Zechariah 13 verse 6 to them? And say, if one asks him, what are these wounds on your back? He will say, the wounds I received in the house of my friends.

The Messiah had to suffer. It was all the scriptures concerning himself. And surely, surely he would have pointed them to Isaiah 53.

Verse 4. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was a chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep had gone astray.

We've turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. The servant in Isaiah, smitten by God, pierced, crushed and wounded.

[11 : 26] You can imagine as they walked along that road, listening to Jesus explaining all this to him. Psalm 16 verse 10 that we sung together today.

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your Holy One see corruption. Their hearts burned within them as they listened to this teaching.

Coming from a total stranger. As they walked along the road. And as they understood at last that the suffering Christ was God's plan.

And that by his death he had brought life and victory. They understood it then. Thine be the glory, risen conquering son.

Endless is the victory. Thou or death hast won. They understood. They understood. And their hearts burned within them. Within them and changed from the gloom of that Easter day up to then, to the amazed glory, amazed joy rather, of understanding.

[12 : 38] And they said to each other in verse 32, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us in the road, while he opened the scriptures to us?

They understood. All the other disciples had understood by this time too. And when they returned to Jerusalem, they would find that out.

And Peter in his Pentecostal sermon would say, This Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. It was all in the plan. It was all because God loved you and me.

It was all the plan that we might be saved. What an amazing Bible study that would have been. Jesus, the best teacher, expanding the scriptures about himself and their hearts burning within them.

[13 : 44] Do we pray and expect burning hearts when we come to church on a Sunday and on a Wednesday night? Do we expect it? Oh, that we would.

Oh, that we'd pray for it. And the great Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, was showing a group of young students for the ministry around his building once. The main hall set 5,000 people.

And afterwards he said, Come and I'll show you the boiler room. And the students said, Oh, no, no, no, no, no need to do that. But he insisted. And he took them downstairs where there were about 100 people praying for the work.

That was the boiler room in Spurgeon's mind. When asked why his ministry had so much success, he always replied, My people, pray for me.

My people, pray for me. It's a challenge to us to pray for the preaching of the word. We've got loads of preachers at the moment now that we're vacant. But we can still pray for them.

[14 : 53] We can still pray for them. When we listen to God's word, do we come with expectant hearts? Or do we just come out of routine, not really expecting much?

Friends, let us pray that God will touch us through his word, which is quick and powerful. Whoever the preacher is, that is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword.

Oh, that we would be people who pray for the preaching of the word. And then they invite Jesus to stay.

They arrived at a mess. And Jesus, the stranger, made as if he's going to go on further. By now, the stranger was a welcome companion.

And they urged him to stay. No, he's come with us. It's getting dark. It's not safe to travel in the dark. There's thieves and robbers.

[15 : 57] Come and eat with us and spend the night here. And Jesus does. He goes in and joins them at their meal.

And he went in to stay with them, we're told. Now, it's interesting. If they hadn't invited Jesus in, the way the scriptures are written, he would have kept on going.

They would have missed the final revelation of that day. You see, Jesus doesn't force himself upon us. Many a person has felt their heart warmed, have been moved in a service, but they haven't invited or urged Jesus to stay with them.

They've gone out and forgotten about what was said. Jesus speaks through his word and through his spirit, just like he did to these two. People feel the truth of the message.

Perhaps they feel their hearts warmed, but they put off urging Jesus to stay until later. They wait for a more convenient time.

[17 : 09] We saw this morning that the devil's a liar and this is one of his lies. Wait till tomorrow. Don't come to Christ today. That's one of the devil's lies.

2 Corinthians 6 verse 2 tells us don't wait until tomorrow. Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation.

Jesus invites us today. Revelation 3.20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.

The Bible is full of these invitations. Hebrews 3.15 As it is said, today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

Don't postpone coming to Jesus. He's here this afternoon. Just as he was with Cleopas and his companion. He speaks to us.

[18 : 11] He waits for you to receive him. You must receive him. Yourself. No one can receive Jesus for you.

The two disciples invited Jesus in to stay and they sat down to eat. And it's funny, strange, that it seems as if the guest became the host.

Maybe they had decided that this stranger was a kind of traveling rabbi and maybe they invited him to give thanks or maybe he took over at that stage. Either way he gave thanks.

And he took the bread, he blessed it, he broke it, and he gave it to them. And they recognized him. They had seen Jesus do this before. They recognized his movements. And they suddenly realized, this is Jesus. Why didn't we recognize him before?

[19 : 11] They'd had the Bible study. They knew what the Old Testament taught. Their hearts had burned listening to Jesus. And now they recognized him. Their unknown companion and teacher was the risen Lord Jesus.

And he disappeared. He vanished from their sight. You see, the days when he would walk with them visibly were over. His work on earth was done. And now they would walk by faith in the risen Lord.

Just like we have to do. Just like we have to do. He's with us today. Just as he was with them on the Emmaus Road. But we can't see him. But we know that he is here speaking to us from his word as he was then.

So they say, did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road? As the word became alive. Their despair was lifted.

They had a reason for living again. And straight away they said, we must go and tell the folk in Jerusalem. Earlier on they said, oh, it's not wise to travel after dark. Stay with us.

[20 : 20] But now that seemed like timid talk in comparison with the news they had to give. It reads as if they almost didn't finish their meal. They rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.

All risks from thieves and robbers were forgotten. They got news to tell. And as they walk or maybe run back the seven miles and arrive in the upper room where the rest of the disciples just bursting to tell their news.

They discover that the disciples had seen Jesus as well. They already knew. And they tell him what had happened to them on the road to Emmaus.

And Jesus suddenly appears among them. Shows himself without a doubt to them. And even eats a bit of fish to prove he's not a ghost. Because they thought he was maybe a ghost.

And lastly, Jesus gave them and he gives us work to do. In verse 44 of our chapter he said, These are my words that I spoke to you that everything written about me and the law of Moses and the prophets must be fulfilled.

[21 : 37] And he goes on to say, Thus it was written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead and that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. It was the plan. Again, I died to bring repentance and forgiveness of sins and you are witnesses.

You must tell this to all nations. Task is still ours today. Task is still ours today. To proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins.

forgiveness of sins. Beginning at Jerusalem. For us, that's Livingston. Or Bathgate. Or Winchborough. Or Whitburn. Or West Calder. This is the area. This is our Jerusalem.

We have to proclaim that gospel in Jerusalem and to all nations. We are witnesses of these things. God, Jesus has given us the work to do.

[22 : 46] I close with the words which we closed this morning. 1 Corinthians 15 verse 57 and 58.

Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Go and be my witnesses. That's what he says. That's our work to do. May God bless his word to all our hearts. Let's pray. Loving Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for that walk to MS. And Lord, for the Bible study that those two disciples had. And Lord, we thank you indeed that Jesus is alive as they realized, as they understood the scriptures at last.

We thank you. We have the scriptures. We thank you that it's all explained to us there. Lord, make it live to us. May our hearts burn within us as we think about it and as we walk with Jesus and hear his voice explaining it all to us.

[24 : 15] Father, bless us. We pray. Help us to go forth and tell, to be your witnesses to our Jerusalem, to our Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

We ask it in him.