

Christian Faith Is A Very Ordinary Thing

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Date: 03 April 1988

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[0 : 00] I pray that as we look at this word, that there may be something in it which would be private and personal to you in terms of your celebration of this Easter day.

Now, I always delight in the opportunity to preach on the road to Emmaus story, which is perhaps, I would like to suggest to the, I mean, this is that, you know, you can make these statements, they're cheap, but this one I think might come close to being right here.

Probably one of the loveliest stories in the whole of literature. You can make statements like that cheaply, but I would like to see some of you argue against it if you'd like to, because it is indeed a lovely, lovely story.

If you were to look at the third verse of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, you would begin to see how carefully crafted a story it is, because the Acts of the Apostles, like the Gospel, are written by St. Luke.

And in verse 3 of chapter 1 of the Acts, it says, Now, the reason I read that to you is to remind you that there were 40 days that Luke knew of, of Christ's resurrection and presence among his disciples on earth.

[1 : 45] And of that 40 days, Luke has very carefully chosen one day. And in that one day, he said all that he felt it was necessary to say, both as an historian and as a theologian and as a brilliant writer.

Because I don't think he could be called less than that. Where his brilliance came from, you can debate. But that's what this story reveals. So there are in the 24th chapter of Luke's Gospel, three stories.

One early in the morning. One at midday till evening. And one late at night. One when the women went to the tomb.

At midday, when two disconsolate disciples were walking alone to Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. And one to the frightened disciples huddled in an upper room, not knowing what was going to happen next.

All of them are marked, as we're told, by four things. The disciples were totally perplexed by what had happened.

[3 : 00] They didn't know and certainly didn't understand. Jesus appears to them and in each case, or someone appears to them, and in each case rebukes them for their not understanding.

And having rebuked them, they then are instructed. And having been instructed in each case, they then go out to proclaim what they've heard.

Now, the very great importance of you understanding this whole pattern I'll tell you at the end. In the meantime, I want to just get you to look at the story.

And the thing that I love about this story is that it makes Christian faith a very ordinary thing. You know, we tend to think of religious experiences in terms of being highly dramatic events.

You know, something, I mean, sort of a Paul on the, on the, where was Paul about? The Damascus Road. We tend to think that, and we tend to build our lives upon one or two hugely dramatic events that overtake us.

[4 : 29] And I assure you, although you are far too young to understand this yet, even the most dramatic circumstances of our lives, which totally enthrall us when we experience them, gradually turn to dust and the paper yellows and starts to tear and fragment, and the experience is gone.

Dramatic as it may once have been. And in this lovely story, you see Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, walking on the road, which wasn't any four-lane highway, just a path to a village seven miles outside of Jerusalem, joining two people so engrossed in conversation, they scarcely noticed him when he came and drew alongside and walked with them, and certainly they didn't recognize

him.

And as they walked and opened their hearts one to another, they to Jesus and Jesus to them, they had a strange drawing together with one another, and then when they got to their destination and Jesus made as though he would have gone further, they said, stop.

It's getting towards evening. come and spend the night with us, so they offered him the most ordinary kind of hospitality. And he went into their home and they sat at table in whatever manner it was their custom to sit at table.

And the bread was put out for their sharing this simple meal together. And it's hard to imagine how or why, but Jesus takes the bread and breaks it and blesses it and gives it to them.

[6 : 33] And only then do they recognize who he is and he disappears from their sight. A walk on a country road, a simple meal around a table, a conversation as they went, these, the most, I suppose the most ordinary constituents of our constituents of our daily life, the circumstances of our daily life, Jesus meets them.

This is the first Easter. This is to my mind the most wonderful story that Christ works in this way to join two disciples walking alone, to share the conversation with them, to stop at their home, to go and sit at their table, to break bread with them.

And in those very ordinary circumstances of ordinary life, those things which make up our everyday, Jesus revealed himself to them.

No Damascus road about this, is there? but it's a lovely, lovely thing. And it's a great encouragement to me because I think that what we need to learn is that the Lord Jesus can indeed come to us in the very ordinary circumstances of our lives and make himself known to us in those ways.

And if you're out looking for some high and dramatic experience that will bring you the great moment of illumination that will last you for the whole of eternity, turn to this story and see how it actually happened on the first Easter day.

[8 : 23] And I hope you will be greatly encouraged as I consistently have been in reading this story. They walk, they talk, Jesus joins them, and they express to him their profound disappointment.

And they're surprised that Jesus, a stranger, doesn't know the things that have taken place in Jerusalem in these days. A prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and the people, by the high priest is delivered up to be condemned and crucified.

And we had hoped that he was to redeem Israel. they had these political aspirations for Jesus. Our world always has political aspirations for Jesus.

They would like him to give attention to the political chaos of our world and straighten that up and then if there's anything else he wants to do, he can do it. But there are certain priorities.

And the redemption of Israel from the thralldom to the Roman Empire was the thing that they thought needed his first attention and we thought that of him.

[9 : 43] But they crucified him. Some women came and said that he'd risen. But their own position was one of just frank unbelief.

They couldn't, they found that that was a completely unconfirmed report and went way beyond any possibility they had of believing in him.

And so Jesus takes them and talks to them. They are perplexed and he rebukes them. Oh, foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Was it not necessary that the Son of Man must suffer and enter into his glory? That the things which were to characterize the Son of Man were on the one hand suffering and on the other hand glory.

And the way to glory was through suffering. And the glory of God is revealed through the suffering of Jesus Christ. Didn't you know that that was what had to happen?

[10 : 51] Have you not read the scripture? And obviously they had it. And so beginning with Moses and all the prophets in all the scriptures he spoke to them of the things concerning himself.

The perplexed had been rebuked and now they were being instructed. In all the scriptures the things concerning himself. This was done within the span of seven miles.

And what a wonderful Bible study that must have been. Now the point one of the points here that I think you need to get hold of is this.

One of the reasons that miracles don't happen to you if you're a little bit miracle shy in your life at the moment great and wonderful things may not happen to you simply because you don't know the scriptures.

You don't understand. And so your first business is to be instructed in the scriptures. To hear the scriptures read.

[11:59] To read the scriptures and to receive the scriptures and to understand the tremendous span of the scriptures which open your heart to all sorts of wonderful and gracious things that it may be the purpose of God to do in your life but there's no use doing it because you wouldn't understand it.

And your understanding needs to be enormously enlarged by the reading of the scriptures so that you can begin to know the God with whom you have to do.

And then he can accomplish those things in your life. And your expectations and mine are informed only by the world in which we live.

Our expectation of God gets smaller and smaller and smaller and the possibility of him being at work in our life gets narrower and narrower and narrower till nothing but some kind of catastrophe that can open us up again can hit us in order that we can understand the miracle of God's grace at work in our hearts and lives.

And so he took them. Beginning with Moses and the prophets he gave them all the things concerning himself. Wonderful.

[13:17] people. And that's why I had this long talk with a very important person yesterday. We talked about youth in our society and the concern for youth and how we could bring youth to put their faith and trust in Christ.

We need to instruct them about matters of life and to tell them things they know perfectly well they wouldn't listen to no matter how eloquent you were.

I think the primary responsibility we have to our children is to teach them the scriptures. They've got to make the decisions. They've got to live their lives.

They've got to have the capacity to cope with all the variety of problems that are going to confront them. them. And the greatest thing we can do for them is to teach them the scriptures so that they have built into their lives and hearts that framework of understanding by which they can live out their lives and make their decisions and make their mistakes and make their confessions and find forgiveness and all the things that need to happen to them.

And that's obviously what Jesus thought of these disciples. That the thing that was most important for them before he could reveal himself to them was that they should do a quick review of the scriptures so that when he did reveal himself they would have some understanding of who he was.

[14:57] And I'm sure that Christ wants to reveal himself to us as individuals more fully and far more completely than we have ever thought.

We have to have our minds and hearts instructed by the word of God. So much so that our hearts begin for us to burn within us as Christ points out the scriptures to us and as we are taught the scriptures beginning with Moses and the prophets and we know the line of the kings and we know the judges and we know the priests and we know the prophets and we know the things they said and the words of scripture resonate in our hearts and minds and we hear and hear and hear until that framework of understanding is built right into our lives so that we can hear so that Jesus can do for us what he did for them.

what he did for them was to stay with them when they drew near to the village and he made as though he would have gone further they said stay with us for it's towards evening and you can imagine them going into their home and trying to put some nice things on the table such as they might have and getting bread and putting it on the table and the wonderful way that Jesus made himself the host at that meal and took bread and broke it and gave it to them and this is part of in a sense the model of the ministry of word and sacrament that God makes himself known to us in the sacrament in the breaking of bread and the remembrance of his death for us on the cross that the living

Christ in whose fellowship we walk by the ministry of the Holy Spirit is the Christ whose body was nailed to a cross both those people are the same one and the breaking of bread I was very moved when somebody first suggested to me that when Jesus took his hands and took the bread into his hands they like Thomas could see the nail prints it's conjecture I know but I'm sure it's good conjecture he made himself known to in the breaking of bread as I trust as we break this bread tonight in obedience to him he will make himself known to you well having made himself known he disappears from their sight love the lovely thing is that if they walked to Jerusalem that morning and if they walked back that afternoon they had now covered 14 miles but they didn't hesitate to walk

back another seven miles to take the news of what had happened and to proclaim the news that they had heard they were delighted to go and share this and so from their perplexity through the rebuke and the instruction

Christ revealed himself to them and then it becomes their bounden duty in which they took great delight that they would go and proclaim what had happened what had taken place as they walked with him in the road and how their hearts had burned within them so they went and they joined with the disciples and said what had happened can you imagine the incredulity of the disciples tell me again you were walking along the road and he came and joined you and you didn't recognize him why didn't you recognize him what did he say they would share all this and said but when he took the bread and broke it we knew who he was we've come to share the story

[19 : 50] I suppose melds into the next one because as they are sitting there with the disciples you get you get the news that Jesus himself stood among them appeared to the disciples well that's the pattern in the very ordinary circumstances of our daily life that Jesus chooses to make himself known to us walking along a road sharing hospitality sharing conversations sharing fears being instructed in the scriptures he makes himself known to them as I pray he will make himself known to us in a special way as he has promised in our sharing this meal on this Easter even in the year of our

Lord 1988 tertiary for murdered in life or 3 s e who were now 6 years we didn't want anything to what exactly at the beginning in another■■■ thing in Tom and a house and his neighbor to his appearance and the Faith goes on this