

Luke 24:13-35

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[0 : 01] Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening, in Christ's name, amen.! Amen. Be seated folks, be seated. Good evening everyone.

! If you're visiting, my name is Aaron. I work here.! If you're new, I'd love to say hi to you after. So come and say hi. So today's a really happy day in Churchland, because today we celebrate the fact that Christ is risen, which means that death has been defeated.

The resurrection means that Jesus is who he said he is, that forgiveness and eternal life are real and are offered to anyone who believes, and that God will one day renew the whole world and make all things new.

So it's a really happy day. I want to spend a few minutes now looking at a particular Bible story to do with the resurrection, which we just heard read to us in Luke.

[1 : 08] Now, Luke, who wrote this gospel, Dr. Luke, who wrote this gospel, he had access to all the Jesus stories, and there were lots of resurrection stories.

He had access to all the eyewitnesses, and there were lots of eyewitnesses. So it's interesting that he decided to include this little story in Luke 24.

This little story. It's interesting because, I mean, why is it interesting, Chris? You don't know? I'll tell you. It's interesting because who are these people that the risen Jesus sidled up to on the road to Emmaus?

One person is called Cleopas, and the other person doesn't even get a name. They're just a couple of randos.

Up until this point, we've never heard of them. We never hear from them again. It's not like some third century historian says, well, tradition has it that Cleopas became, you know, the bishop of Burkina Faso or something like that.

[2 : 16] We literally never hear from them again. Complete randos. So for all the resurrection stories to include, I think Luke included this encounter because they are just normal people.

They're normal people just like us. Normal people like us whose lives were completely changed. And I think that's the big idea here. The change that happened in them can happen in us.

It can happen in anyone. This is a story about cold, sad hearts that became warm hearts. Hearts that were filled with faith and hope and joy.

And that's what we're going to talk about over the next few minutes. So we're going to jump into Luke 24, 13 to 27. So we've got two people, Cleopas and, you know, no name.

And they're walking away from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. And while they're walking, they're chatting. And they're talking about all they saw in Jerusalem. What they saw was the crucifixion of the person they had put so much hope into.

[3 : 22] And it was a horror show. And they were so hopeful. This guy, Jesus, was supposed to be the one. And he didn't deliver in the way they wanted.

He didn't free them from Roman rule. He just died. And in their minds, Jesus died. And he failed. And he failed in the most humiliating way.

And they thought he was so powerful. He'd done these amazing things. He'd said these amazing things. And now he's dead. So he can't be the Messiah.

They wanted a Messiah in their own image, I guess is the way you could say it. So there they are. They're walking away from Jerusalem. They're confused. They're disillusioned. They're really sad. They're trying to process everything. And on the way, they're joined by a stranger.

And it's the risen Jesus. And they don't realize it. And Jesus just starts walking along beside them. So the obvious question, Chris, is... Okay, let me tell you. The obvious question is, how could they not know it was him?

[4 : 27] Well, a couple of reasons. Verse 16 says their eyes were kept from recognizing him. So in part, it was an act of God. God had something to teach them. So he kept them from seeing who the stranger was.

But also, there was just no room in their imagination for a Messiah who would suffer like this. I mean, the cross. It was a horror.

How could that have anything to do with redemption and freedom? That's what they're thinking. So the stranger says, What are you guys talking about? Verse 17 says, Well, they just stood still looking sad.

As if to say, There's only one thing to talk about. Cleopas in verse 18 says, How can you ask that question?

I mean, don't you know what's going on? How can you not know what's going on to the stranger? Which is obviously really ironic. And the irony is that the only person who actually knows what's really going on is the stranger.

[5 : 30] The one who Cleopas thinks is a bit clueless. So at this point, you'd think, Right. This is the perfect Hollywood moment. Right?

This is the, I am Gandalf the White kind of moment. Do you know what I mean? Right. Some people are nodding. It's like Jesus throws back his hoodie and it's like, It is I.

Let's get the band back together. We're back on track. Everything's going to be great. But no, Jesus holds back. And there's a good reason he holds back. Because Christ wants to teach us how hearts, how hearts are changed.

He wants to teach us how hearts are changed. How we move from stony hearts to soft hearts. From sadness to joy. From unbelief to belief. So what happens next?

Well, Cleopas tells the stranger what had happened. Kind of outlines all the facts as they saw it. And then says, verse 21, We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

[6 : 27] And again, redeem Israel for them meant freedom from political oppression from the Romans. And the cross, you know, stopped that dead in its tracks, I think. After this, Cleopas adds, as an aside, he says, There is some woman, though, and they said the tomb was empty.

And I don't think they know what that means. I don't know if they think that's good or bad. So what does Jesus do? Well, he doesn't jump up and down and go, It's me, it's me, it's me.

Look at verse 26. Jesus says, Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

And I think that's the central question, isn't it? Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer? They didn't think so. The disciples walking away from Jerusalem thought, Absolutely not, it's not necessary.

And they're thinking, they're thinking, That's not how redemption works. We're trying to get rid of our suffering. We don't want to enter into it. But we don't get redemption on our own terms, do we?

[7 : 32] So how does Jesus change their hearts? And remember, he didn't reveal himself at this point. He's still incognito. What did Jesus do? He opened the Bible. The Old Testament, verse 27, And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Jesus leads a Bible study. So do you see? They were kept from seeing Jesus so that they would know him through the scriptures. Folks, the Bible is all about the Lord Jesus.

It's meant to bring us to Jesus. It's meant to bring Jesus to us. Now I know that there are many ways we can sense Christ in our life.

But the supreme way is we meet him in the scriptures. And why is that? Why is that important? Why does that matter? Why is this the way that Jesus did it here? Because Christ wanted their faith, wants our faith, to be based on a proper, full understanding of God's word.

Because if it's not, our faith can become privatized, eccentric, a bit wobbly, a bit wacky, a bit odd. The Bible is God's way of finding him.

[8 : 50] So Jesus took them on a tour, showing them the link between Christ's suffering and redemption. And we don't know where exactly Jesus took them. It would have been about a two or three hour walk.

Maybe he took them to Exodus. And the story of God delivering his people through the blood of Lamb. Or Leviticus, which talks all about the atoning sacrifices.

Or maybe Isaiah, which tells of a suffering servant who will be pierced for our transgressions. Or perhaps Psalm 22, that says a Savior will die a God-forsaken death, pierced hands and feet. And that people will gamble for his clothes. We don't know what the Bible study looked like. But we are shown that we can't understand the Son of God outside of the word of God. So what Jesus does is he takes all their misconceptions and their disappointments and their grief. And he brings them to the word and he changes their hearts. And if we keep reading, which you will in a moment, it says their hearts were set on fire. And the wonderful thing about this is God continues to change our hearts as we encounter him in these words right here now.

[9 : 56] As I said later in the story, after Christ reveals himself in verse 32, the travelers say, Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road?

While he opened to us the scriptures? It's great, isn't it? As they understood the meaning of the cross, why Christ must suffer, because of our sin, their hearts burn within them. They have this visceral response like, yes, yes, this makes sense, yes. And I hope this is happening for you this Easter. Now when Blaise Pascal, the 17th century mathematician, became a Christian, he wrote the word fire on a piece of paper. And when he died, they found that piece of paper sewn into his coat pocket. And John Wesley, the 18th century theologian, described his conversion moment. He said his heart was strangely warmed.

And when Thomas Cramner wrote the 1549 Book of Common Prayer, in the preface, he said the purpose of a service centered on Christ was to cause the worshipers to be inflamed with love.

[11 : 06] The truth of the cross, the reality of the resurrection, should burn in our hearts, because it means that Jesus paid for our sin, that we are forgiven, we have peace with God, and we, like Jesus, will be raised from the dead to never die again.

It's wonderful. It's impossibly wonderful, isn't it? Before I finish, let me just say, I don't know what you think about all the things I just said.

Maybe you're a visitor. And perhaps you're like Cleophas, and you've got some of the facts about Jesus. Like, yep, great guy died a horrible death.

But what I've suggested is that there's a lot more going on. There's a lot more to Jesus. And the way to find out more, this passage suggests, is by getting into the Bible and seeing what it has to say about this man.

We are here every week. And I reckon a really good plan, if you want to investigate, is just keep popping in on a Sunday.

[12 : 23] Each week, we'll do the best job we can of opening the Bible and trying to explain who Jesus is. And I think if you did that, it would do something in you that you'd be really, really pleased about.

I really do. I really think that. And I'm happy to chat after the service. You have questions. I don't need to tell you that the world is a very chaotic place right now.

There's been this massive kind of, you know, vibe shift. And what Jesus offers us is something real and true and beautiful and something to anchor us in a kind of pretty crazy world.

We have lots of opportunities around this church. We want to give you every chance to know Jesus. And later on, Chris is going to tell you about a thing that he's doing, a really kind of a safe, easy space to ask all the questions you like.

Here we go. I hope that's been helpful to you folks. Richard is going to come and pray for us now.