

Easter: The Afternoon

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[0 : 00] Would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening. In Christ's name, Amen. Grab a seat, Tim. So over this Easter season, which is like a month and a bit, we're looking at three episodes that happened in one day, the day of Christ's resurrection.

Last week we looked at the story of the three women who came to the empty tomb expecting to find a body. And I said in that story how there's this pattern, right? These people come with a story, the story is corrected and they are changed.

And that I think is the story of salvation for many people, isn't it? You know, we have a life story. We have a way of viewing the world. We meet Jesus and it's changed. I became a Christian at 17 and my basic story, the way I wanted the world to work, was that I would be happy if I owned a really great car and had lots of money.

You know, I was 17, so that's fairly standard, right? Now, there is nothing wrong with lots of money and nice cars. I would prefer to have them both. My problem was that they were primary concerns for me.

And obviously I was setting myself up for a fairly thin life, thin, shallow, thin life, you know. That story was changed when a friend of mine invited me to a youth rally, which they had these kind of things back in the days.

[1 : 29] And what it was was they were putting me in big concerts, right? And so there'd be bands and people doing dances and skits and stuff. And then a speaker would get up at the end and do a talk, you know, like a sermon.

And I came to this event and I was loving it. It was great. The guy got up in the end and told me about Jesus from the Bible. And there's about, you know, about 500 people there in the congregation.

And at the end he said, who wants to become a Christian? If you do, come up the front. And so I just went up the front. It was great. It was good old-timey religion stuff, right?

It was fantastic, right? So I just, you know, came up the center aisle and stood at the front with about 10 other people and gave my heart to Jesus. And my story was forever changed.

You probably have similar stories like that. Okay, let's look at this passage today. Okay, Cleopas and somebody else, likely his wife, are on the road.

[2 : 25] What is their story? What were they thinking about the world at that moment as they walked? Well, our first clue is in verse 13 here.

Let me read it to you. That very day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about the things that had happened. Well, that's our clue really, right there.

They were going to a village called Emmaus. Luke here wants us to realize they were not just going to a village called Emmaus. That they were actually going away from Jerusalem. That's the big point of that first line there.

They were walking away from Jerusalem. Do you remember last week in a sermon I talked about how Luke, for 10 chapters, there's this big, the narrative is about Jesus' journey to Jerusalem.

It's all about going to Jerusalem. And here we have these guys. It's like a significant part of the story, right? And here we have these guys after the crucifixion are going away from Jerusalem.

[3 : 32] Luke is trying to tell us something here. These guys were confused and disillusioned because of what they saw in Jerusalem. That's why they're leaving. That's why they're walking away from it all.

Their bodies are doing what their hearts are thinking, what their hearts are feeling. For them, the crucifixion was an embarrassment, a failure, an end of their dreams.

It showed that Christ was not the king after all. He didn't live up to their expectations. That's the guts of it, right? He did not live up to their expectations.

And of course their expectations were wrong. I have friends who have walked away from the faith because it didn't live up to their expectations. I'll talk more about that shortly.

This is what these guys are doing, all right? But Christ, in his grace and goodness, wouldn't let them go on this retrograde journey.

[4 : 30] He wants to bring them back to Jerusalem. The next little section here, verses 15 to 18. So while they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, what's this conversation you're holding? They stood and looked sad. Then one of them, Cleopas, answered, are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?

I mean, there's a great irony here, right? You know, how can you not know, random stranger, you know, what's been going on here? Now the irony is that Jesus was the only person on the planet who actually knew what was going on.

The guy who Cleopas was saying, are you a bit thick? Right. Do you not know what's happening here? You would hope that Cleopas has a bit of a sense of humor later on when he reads Luke.

And he's going through it, flicking through it to see where he appears in it, hoping to look pretty good. Not so good. The other thing I think is interesting about this passage is, don't you think it's interesting that Jesus didn't reveal himself right then, you know?

[5 : 47] Like just kind of go, hey, what are you guys talking about? Oh, it's really sad, you know. Jesus died. Oh. Hey! Throws back his hoodie.

It's me! But we're back on track! Oh, eh? How about Jerusalem, eh? Crazy! Did you see it?

No, you didn't, did you? The woman saw it, you didn't. That's alright, we're back on track, let's keep going. But he didn't, you know, it's a really interesting thing.

It's important that he didn't tell them. Because it's hard to keep good news to ourselves, right? Really hard. And with Facebook, it's hard to keep really mundane news to yourself as well. I've noticed reading some of your updates.

But Jesus, he holds back, right? He holds back. And I think he's doing something to stop them from seeing him.

[6 : 48] I don't know what it is. He's doing something to stop them from seeing him, I think. And the reason he's doing that is he's trying to teach them something about how to experience him. He's trying to teach them about what happened at Jerusalem.

And we'll find out about that. He's trying to talk to them about their expectations. He wants to help them discover what their expectations are and why they're wrong. Okay, next little section, 19 to 21.

And he said to them, what things? And they said, all concerning Jesus of Nazareth, the man who was a prophet of mighty indeed, and word before God and all his people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified.

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Do you hear the pain in verse 21 here?

No, we'd hoped. We'd hoped he'd be the one to redeem Israel. We'd hoped he'd been the one. This word redeem here, for us it's kind of a spiritual word, right?

[7 : 49] Redeem. Back then, it actually meant to be released from slavery. And it's a bit of a clue to what these guys were thinking. You know, like, they expected that Christ would be king and be glorious and rule, but they probably thought it meant getting rid of the Romans.

Certainly not his death, anyway. And so, Cleopas thought his, and this was a mistake, he thought his primary problem, the presenting issue in his life, was political oppression.

That's his big issue, right? And if Christ could change that, he'd be happy. Everything would be okay. We would be free. But of course, the Bible teaches us that we are slaves in our hearts.

That's our presenting issue. And our real captivity is to our own desires, our desire to be the ultimate authority in our life.

So this is one of the things that Jesus is trying to teach them about, get them to understand. So he really cleverly gets to the heart of their disillusionment, cleverly gets to their story, and now comes the correction.

[9 : 02] Story, correction. 25 and 26. And he 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 his glory?

Well, that's the central question. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer? Well, the disciples thought, no. No, it wasn't necessary. That was a mistake.

It was wrong what happened in Jerusalem. The crucifixion shouldn't have happened. It didn't need to happen. Their attitude, I think, is a great challenge to us.

In their minds, they're thinking, this is not how redemption should work. You know, you should free us from our suffering, not enter into it.

I think sometimes in our heart we like the idea of redemption, as long as it doesn't involve suffering and pain. We like the idea of sanctification, as long as it doesn't hurt us and trouble us.

[10 : 08] We want salvation that looks like the best possible life now on the West Coast, right? We want the happy life.

We want a happy life. Perfect marriage, perfect kids that will fulfill our dreams, a great job, good hair. We want people to think we're attractive.

You know, we want these things. And, you know, the cross doesn't necessarily give us this stuff. We want to join Cleopas sometimes, I think, and walk away from Jerusalem, away from the cross, because the way of Jesus might not give us the life that we want.

Jesus did not give Cleopas what he wanted, and so he walked away. Walked away from it. And it's all a bit depressing, isn't it? But I want you to remember that Christ went after them, as Christ goes after you.

So how does Jesus change their hearts? Verse 27, And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them all the scriptures, and all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

[11 : 23] So it's amazing how Jesus deals with their slow hearts. Again, he didn't just say, Hey, it's me, you know. Still incognito, Jesus leads a Bible study with him on this walk, which would have been a few hours, about seven miles, right?

He leads a Bible study with these two folks. And it would have been, you know, like a pretty good Bible study, you know. Like, it would have been a great Bible study. We don't know what he said. It's a complete conjecture, but I would think, maybe talking about Genesis 22, like the sacrifice of Isaac, God asking Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, or maybe the Passover lamb, perhaps.

Scriptures which aren't selectively read, not selectively reading the scriptures to hear the story about a king who will come and overthrow the Romans and kill all the bad people, right? But scriptures that talk about what the Messiah will actually really look like.

The servant king. The suffering servant. See, Christ did this Bible study with him because he wanted their faith to be based on a proper, full understanding of scripture.

Because if it's not, our faith can be privatized and it can become eccentric. Now, of course, there are many ways we sense Christ and experience him, but the supreme way we meet him is in scriptures.

[12 : 52] And it makes absolute sense that this is the way, that our confidence is rooted in God's word and God's truth and not our experiences, you know.

If they just had an experience on the road to Emmaus, it's an experience that, you know, later on could have been questioned and doubted. But by actually Christ taking them to the scriptures, giving them an understanding of God's word, they can always go back to that, right?

They can always look that stuff up for themselves and go, yes, actually, you know what? It actually does say that the servant must suffer. Okay, moving on.

Now Jesus heads over to their house for some food. Verse 30, 31. And when he was at the table with him, he took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them and their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he vanished from their sight.

Ah, that's cool. It is significant that it was over a meal that Jesus chooses to reveal himself. It's significant because it's the image of the meal in the Bible.

[14 : 08] In the Bible, that is one of the ways Christ uses and has used before. It's a picture of what redemption is for, is what I'm trying to say here. The meal, this meal, you know, the breaking of the bread, this is a foretaste of what the Bible calls the heavenly banquet.

And when we trust in Jesus, we trust in the promise that we will enjoy him forever in a heavenly banquet. So Christ is, is pushing out their expectations of salvation beyond them just being politically free and to something infinitely grander and it's this picture of this incredible banquet.

And God uses this meal to give them that picture. So these guys are transformed as a result of this. And what does that look like? Verse 33, and they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.

They headed back to Jerusalem. The cross, which was a stumbling block for them, now becomes the means by which salvation happens. Before, it was a stumbling block to salvation.

We don't have salvation because of the cross, was their thinking. And now, we have salvation because of the cross. Now go back to Jerusalem.

[15 : 30] to walk the path that Jesus walked, which is our calling. Let me finish with a question now. Are you disillusioned? Are you disillusioned with your life?

Is it not what you expected? Are you disappointed? Is your faith not delivered on what you wanted?

Are you wondering whether it would be better to walk away from Jerusalem? Walk away from the cross? Well, if that is the case, would you let Jesus over this Easter season teach you, re-teach you the real meaning of the cross?

And perhaps, I'll finish with a scripture which maybe Jesus read to Cleopas on the road. It's from Isaiah 53. It's a scripture that is meant to reorient our hearts to what the cross is about and what we are slaves to and how we find freedom.

Isaiah 53. 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.

[16 : 49] He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with him, with his wounds, we are healed. We are like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Amen. Benj, would you come and pray for us, mate?