

Luke 24:13-35 "Don't Miss Jesus!"

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Amen. His heart beats. Praise the Lord. That's good news, isn't it? We've done that throughout this service to celebrate the risen, living Jesus.

It goes beyond one Easter Sunday, doesn't it? He's alive today. His heart beats today. Never more to die. That's why we're here, to rejoice in him. He meets with us this morning.

In fact, the living Jesus shows up in people's lives all the time, doesn't he? That's what he does.

He's like that. We're going to see it as we keep studying.

We're getting to the very end of Luke. Two people in my family this week said, so what are we doing now that Luke is over? I said, hold on. Just because we got to the resurrection doesn't mean we finished the book.

[0 : 59] Let me hang on a little longer. Jesus is going to appear now in several instances, show up in people's lives between his resurrection and his ascension to heaven.

He's only got a few chances to share his heart with his followers. What's important to the risen Jesus? We're going to see one of those stories this morning.

I've always wished I was there for. This is Luke 24. It's on page 885 of the Bible in the pew in front of you. You may find that helpful to follow along as we're going to read this story together as we go. This morning of Jesus meeting two of his followers who are sad and heading home. Let's pray and then we'll talk together. Holy Spirit, we need you.

We ask for your help because we are discussing things too great for us to know and understand.

The fact that our Savior is alive is too much for us to get our minds around.

[2 : 05] And so we ask that you would help us, that you would teach us as we look at the word of God together. Be with us and work in each of our hearts that none of us would miss Jesus this morning.

We ask it in his name. Amen. It's amazing how easy it is to miss someone great even when they're right near you.

A couple years ago, Christy and I got to go to an Auburn football game. Now, Alabama fans, we already sang a song with Crimson Tide in it this morning. So don't get jealous.

They were playing another Orange Tiger team that we'll go without naming. But we were hanging out before the game with our friends at a tailgate when all of a sudden I noticed a small group of people walking down the road near our tailgate.

And I looked up and this is what I saw. You see who it is? You see him right there? You can't tell from the great picture I got who that is? Right there in the middle is Cam Newton.

[3 : 14] See, he's got a... There it is. That's Cam Newton right there. Cam Newton, the Auburn quarterback, Heisman Trophy winner, national champ.

This guy's great. And I wasn't the only one who noticed. A handful of us out of the hundreds at the tailgate started walking quickly behind this crowd trying to get a picture that good.

And so we were walking behind them. And this was what was really amazing to me. This is why I tell you this story. Do you know how many Auburn fans came up to me as they saw us following this crowd and said, hey, who is that?

Who is that? Y'all, they had cheered for him. They'd spent Saturdays together for multiple falls. Hours cheering for him.

They'd watched him on TV over and over. They admired him greatly. But he walked right by him. And without his name on the back of his jersey, they didn't know who it was.

[4 : 14] Cam Newton was right there. And it was really easy to miss it, even if you were standing right beside him. That same thing can happen with Jesus, can't it?

For different reasons, perhaps, and in different contexts, we can be near Jesus. We can know lots about him. We can cheer for his team.

But we may not truly know him. That's where the tension develops in this story that we're going to read this morning. As we read this story, it's still Easter Sunday.

Remember, in Luke's account, no one yet has met Jesus. He hasn't appeared to anyone. Several have seen the empty tomb. But so far, no one has seen the risen Jesus.

And then, he shows up. Luke 24, verse 13. That very day, two of them who'd been in the room hearing these reports from the empty tomb, two of those were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

[5 : 20] And they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

Jesus himself, he showed up. Two of those followers of Jesus who've been in Jerusalem and hearing reports are now walking home a few miles.

And Jesus himself shows up. And we expect next to be, ta-da, it's me. Verse 16. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

When you see that passive voice in the Bible, it often is referring to God's work. What God is doing. Somehow keeping them from recognizing him.

We know Jesus' resurrected body is a bit different. But there's also divine activity going on here. We don't know exactly why right now. But I think we'll see a little bit as we keep reading what God is up to.

[6 : 25] Notice what Jesus does. Verse 17. And he, Jesus, said to them, What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk? And they stood still looking sad.

Jesus enters into their situation and he listens. There's a lot we could learn from that, by the way, isn't there? But he still does that today.

Entering into our doubts, our fears, our disappointments. And these two followers have plenty of those, don't they? Let's keep reading.

One of them, named Cleopas, answered him, Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened these days?

I want you to feel the pain of what they're about to say to Jesus. There's a lot of things they've seen happening in Jerusalem. And this is more evidence of the historical reality of Luke's account.

[7 : 24] Listen, these things, everybody knows about them, right? Everybody's talking. You can ask anyone. They'll tell you what's been happening. And they're standing right there.

Feel the pain of what they're about to say to the risen Jesus right there beside them. Jesus said, What things? And they said, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

Ever heard of him? A man who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. And how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him.

But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it's now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us.

They were at the tomb early in the morning. And when they did not find his body, they came back saying they'd even seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said.

[8 : 24] But him they did not see. Y'all, these are the things we talk about and celebrate. Usually when you give this report of Easter morning, it's with joy.

He's not here. The angels told the women he's alive. But they're discouraged, aren't they? Him they did not see. We're usually celebrating our redemption by Jesus.

His mighty words and deeds. His death. His empty tomb. And they've witnessed all of it. But they're sad. Let down. Missing Jesus.

He's walking right there with them. And they don't know him. Isn't it so easy for that to happen? These followers are right there near Jesus but miss him completely.

They have an extraordinary amount of Bible knowledge. We'll see. They know the prophets.

They're good Jewish people. They're in the inner circles in Jerusalem for the Passover and the crucifixion.

[9 : 27] So what keeps them from recognizing Jesus? Disappointed expectations for one. They thought he would do different things in their lives.

And the fact that he's not delivering them from Roman oppression is frustrating and confusing to them. They had hoped that.

But the cross put that hope out really fast, really strong. That's why they're still down. Have you felt that in your own life before?

Some of you keep coming to church but deep in your heart you gave up on a living Jesus years ago.

In the midst of grief or heartache. They've also witnessed evil perpetrated by religious leaders.

[10 : 21] I bet there's more than a couple of you in here today who find it hard to see Jesus because of the marred vision of him that someone in church leadership has given you at some point in your life.

How about the chief priests and leaders gave the Messiah, the Son of God, over to be killed? You think that could leave your hopes discouraged?

Your vision of Jesus disenchanted really fast? I bet it would. Maybe you've felt that. How about being distracted from Jesus by busyness?

They've had so many things going on. All these things that have been happening. Plans they've been making. And they've missed who he really is for them. Now the good thing is I know that none of you are busy with the cares of this life.

But if you ever are. If you ever see that day. I warn you and I plead with you. Be careful not to miss Jesus in the rush of lesser priorities.

[11 : 32] It's so easy. Perhaps missing Jesus can even be caused by information overload. What do I mean by that? Well, they seem to know everything about Jesus, don't they?

They can tell you all sorts of things he's been doing, what he's like. But they've missed who he really is. I grew up in church as a pastor's kid and learned a lot of stuff about Jesus.

And spent several years knowing about Jesus without actually knowing Jesus. I knew in so much in some ways that I could keep my personal need for him at arm's length.

There were probably people at my tailgate that day who could have told you the score of every game that Cam Newton ever played in. Could have given you lots of statistics on him.

Knew lots of things about him. But when he walked by without his name on the jersey, they didn't know him. Kids, is Jesus just some questions and answers that you've memorized?

[12 : 45] Is Jesus just someone you've heard some stories about when you come to church? Or have you actually met Jesus in your life and seen how much you need him to die and rise for you?

Are you starting to feel a little uncomfortable for Cleopas and his companion? Him they did not see. We just can't find this Jesus anywhere.

They've heard all these reports and they've concluded, oh well. Empty tomb. Time to move on, I guess. Going home sad. On Easter Sunday.

Jesus is really not okay with where his followers are stuck. Sad. Disenchanted. Missing him. Verse 25. Jesus said to them, Oh 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? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

[14 : 00] One of the reasons Jesus is not revealed to them right away is that apparently he has a sermon that he wants them to hear and to understand. Remember, he's mighty in word and in deed.

Here are some words he wants them to know and understand in new ways because Jesus himself in the flesh is not always going to be there with them, is he? And he wants them to know and understand his word.

Now two reasons I'm jealous. First, because Jesus preaches probably a two hour sermon. They're walking seven miles. And it's a really powerful one.

So starting next week in an effort to be more like Jesus among you. Just kidding. The real reason I'm jealous, y'all, is can you imagine that sermon?

You just sat through this two hour sermon. You'd walk out on me, but you just sat through this one. Jesus unfolding everything in the Bible, beginning with Moses and all the prophets.

[15 : 05] He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Listen to me. The risen Jesus wants to open your Bible with you and help you meet him there.

Isn't that good? He wants to meet you there and help you know him. At Southwood, we are committed to being Christ-centered. Giving glory to Jesus, proclaiming the good news of his finished work is the goal of our corporate worship, all of our ministries, and our life and community together.

That's what we're about. So there's a reason that at a church committed to being Christ-centered, every single Sunday, this book is open on this pulpit.

It always points us to Jesus. That's what he's telling us. Since every page of the Bible points us to Jesus, every sermon, every Sunday school lesson, every conversation we have should point us back to Jesus so that we live each day in his strength rather than our own and for his glory rather than our own.

Amen? That's why God has us here. The angels did this last week, didn't they? Remember what they pointed the women at the tomb back to? Remember his words?

[16:27] Remember how he told you that this would have to happen? Jesus is going to do it again with his followers in the next passage, the next time he appears to them, and he does it again here, pointing them back to Scripture so that they understand who he is.

Here's where you know him, he says. I want you to know who I am. Open your Bibles. In this case, he especially wants you to know why he had to suffer and die to then enter into his glory.

I'll admit I don't know everything that Jesus said to these two on the road to Emmaus, but I think we get some idea from the way his followers will write things in the New Testament. They make many connections back to the Old Testament, I suspect, because many of them heard them from him.

The words here indicate that Jesus told them how the whole story of the Hebrew Scriptures pointed to a Messiah who would die to rescue God's people and reunite them to God in covenant relationship.

Maybe he started with Genesis. How God's people were created for a relationship with him that they broke by eating the fruit, and how in that moment God's promise to fix that relationship would come at a cost.

[17:52] The painfully bruised heel of the one promised to crush the head of the serpent. Maybe he mentioned the ram caught in the thicket that died as a substitute offering in place of Abraham's son Isaac.

Certainly he reminded them of the Passover lamb, right? Whose blood had to be shed to deliver God's people from Egypt and bring them to the promised land where they could worship him.

How as soon as God took up residence in the tabernacle or in the temple, what had to happen? Sacrifices had to be there for a sinful people to be able to live in relationship with a holy God.

All of those sacrifices had to start. And maybe even mentioned that the Messiah was the new temple in his flesh. Had they heard of the torn curtain yet?

Did you hear what happened a couple nights ago? The new temple is here because the Messiah has come. Maybe he explained how the bronze serpent was lifted up in the wilderness so that those who would look up at the serpent at what was killing them would live.

[19:04] And how someone had to be lifted up as sin for God's sinful people so that as they looked up at what was killing them, they too would live with God again.

And when God's people are run out of God's land and they're far from him, he sends prophet after prophet to call them home, to remind them he forgives, to reassure them that he loves them.

He will never give up on this relationship that he created them for. And all the prophets are saying that someone's coming to make sure it happens. And I bet you he talked about the prophet Isaiah who said there's gonna be a suffering servant.

The one coming to make this happen will not just be a glorious king, he'll be one. In order to bring many back into right relationship with God, will suffer. be pierced, crushed, wounded, sorrowful, to the point that the psalmist would say that he cries out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And Jesus said, have you heard those words lately? Do you see how it's all coming to this Messiah? Don't you see, Jesus says, that the Messiah had to suffer and die for you to know God?

[20:21] It was the only way. Before then, a glorious, triumphant resurrection. Friends, don't let anyone discourage you from your Old Testament.

Jesus wouldn't have it. I can't believe you're hearing that in churches these days. Every page of the Old Testament is preparing us to long for and rejoice in a Savior who brings us back to God, who

fixes the relationship we broke at great personal cost to himself.

Jesus says, you'll meet me and know me better there. That's my story. And it's yours too if you trust in me. Amazing words, I'm sure, was much better than that.

It was longer. But the story continues. And it leaves us in suspense for Cleopas and his companion. They still don't understand.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going and Jesus acted as if he were going farther but they urged him strongly saying, stay with us for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.

[21 : 36] So he went in to stay with them. Jesus diverts to Emmaus. I think Cleopas and his companion, something's going on in their hearts but they're not, don't let this guy go yet.

We're still not sure we've got it figured out. But Jesus stops not just because it's dark but because he wants them to know him.

Their eyes aren't open yet. Verse 30, when he was at the table with them, 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.

Luke doesn't tell us for sure what God used to open their eyes to see their Savior but we know it was as he sat and ate with them as he blessed and broke bread.

Maybe maybe seeing his nail-pierced hands up close. Maybe watching the way he blessed the bread and spoke to his father in a way no one else did.

[22 : 44] It was like he did before the feeding of the 5,000. Maybe that helped but whatever it was they have an experience with the risen Jesus.

An experience of his deeds. Deeds that match his words. Not isolated deeds. Deeds that match his words. They've heard and confirmed the truth of a living Savior.

It's not just that he was promised to rise from the dead. He's actually here. We're seeing him. They said to each other did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road while he opened to us the scriptures?

Cleopas said when that happened did you feel something? I was feeling something. That's why it was Jesus. Even even the empty tomb and the discarded grave cloths hadn't hadn't helped them believe but now they see Jesus.

Jesus wants them truly to encounter and experience him. That experience of meeting him and knowing him personally is different for each of us isn't it?

[23 : 56] But Jesus still makes himself known today. How has it happened in your life? Maybe through an answered prayer? Through a burning heart as you were reading or listening to God's word?

Through an unmistakable voice calling you to follow and trust him? What was it like for you? Pastor Chunu is one of many I got to know in India a few weeks ago.

His story is remarkable but not at all unusual. Chunu grew up in a Hindu family that prayed to many different gods and goddesses but never heard anything back from any of them.

Never had anything like a relationship. Never considered that a possibility. As a young man he got seriously ill and doctors were perplexed.

Multiple Hindu priests praying to multiple gods. They were getting desperate and nothing was helping but he had a friend who got really concerned for his life. It looked like perhaps he had days to live and so his friend took him to a Christian pastor.

[25 : 05] He'd never heard anything about Jesus but he went to this pastor who prayed for him and for his healing and Jesus met him. Healed him. And ever since that day Chunu has been learning more of this living God.

a God that he knows now he can actually have a relationship with. He's been learning from the Bible. He studied God's word. He's sharing with others about the Jesus who met him.

And so I got to go and as I taught that week we talked through the stories of Ruth and Jonah and others in the Old Testament and he would say oh yeah that's my God.

I recognize Jesus there. That's what he's like. I've met him. He met God in his deeds first. first and then in his words.

Maybe your story is more like my story. Kids I was in church like you remember. I told you I knew a lot about Jesus.

[26 : 09] I'd learned a lot of things. I knew he loved people. I knew that he died for sinners but I really wasn't sure I was one of them.

I mean I was supposed to be true that I was a sinner but I don't know it didn't always feel like that. And so it took some time as I got older for me personally to realize my need for Jesus.

I remember one night when my sin was so overwhelming to me that I got really scared. I was afraid of what a big sinner I was and I didn't know what to do about it.

I went to talk to my dad. I said dad help. I'm scared. And he told me about God's love for me. And other people at my church told me about God's love for me so that Jesus met me there and I had this overwhelming sense not just that Jesus loved people and died for sinners but that Jesus loved this sinner and died for me.

I recognized the Jesus that I'd heard about over and over in the Bible since my birth. In fact there's several ladies here this morning from the church I grew up in and since they're here I might as well just say they taught me in Sunday school what Jesus was like.

[27 : 38] They taught me in eighth grade literature class what Jesus was like and then I met him. then he showed up and all the things I'd learned about made sense and I knew him and I praise the Lord for how he works in our lives like that.

For me words first and then an experience. Jesus meets us often in very ordinary ways. If you've never met him or if he seems distant today lean into his word and his people he will meet you.

I love this beautiful picture of what happens when the risen Jesus shows up in your life. This is the end of the story. Cleopas and his friend realize they've been with Jesus.

Their hearts have been burning within them and despite the darkness it's not safe anymore without finishing their dinner. They hurry back to Jerusalem to tell everyone the big news. Verse 33 they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem and they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together saying the Lord is risen indeed and has appeared to Simon.

Then they told them what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. It's kind of funny to imagine them rushing in with their big news only to find everyone already talking about meeting Jesus.

[29 : 04] Hey y'all guess who we met? Hey Peter just talked to Jesus. Oh man no more surprise. It's like me running to find my friends. Hey I saw Cam Newton and they're standing there comparing autographs they've already gotten.

But we might think of that as discouraging. It doesn't dampen their enthusiasm does it? No way. Y'all the risen Jesus is not about who has the best story is it? It's about sharing together all night about the Jesus who met them.

Brothers and sisters here's a glimpse of gospel community. You want to taste it this morning? Just imagine Peter says he met me. Let me tell you about his grace for failures.

And Mary says he met me in the garden. Let me tell you how he showed up in the midst of my grief and transformed my life. And Cleopas says hey yeah he met us too on the road.

In fact he was breaking bread and then we recognized him. And hey y'all get your scrolls out. Open up. Turn to Leviticus. Look what it says about him.

[30 : 15] I never saw it before. He told us this. Can you imagine what that night was like? One of them after another. Do you see how Jesus is setting up his church to work?

People with different experiences, different stories, different gifts, now sharing how he met them. them and sharing his word together.

Is your small group like that? How could you help make it more like that? Stay for a connect community today. Connecting with each other around God's word.

Why? So that we all know Jesus more. Right? See this story shows us how committed the risen Jesus is to our knowing him.

He wants us to know him. In his word, in our personal experience, in particular through his people, he patiently and persistently lingers with us through our doubts, our pain, our struggles, struggles, because he doesn't want us to miss him.

[31 : 29] He wants you to know him and he'll keep working with you patiently. It doesn't always happen once in a moment. Jesus will stay with you. He wants you to have the relationship with your father that he went to the cross to give you.

We're going to see in the next passage how committed the risen Jesus is to our making him known. But here he begins by walking with us, opening his word to our burning hearts, breaking bread in

the midst of our lives, really showing up so that we will know and have relationship with him. The risen Jesus is so committed to you knowing him that he's here this morning. That's how passionate he is about it.

He doesn't want you merely to hear his word preached. He wants you to see and touch and taste his love for you.

So by his spirit he meets you in a meal. Jesus said that he sat with his followers that night. This is my body which is broken for you.

[32 : 51] Do this in remembrance of me and so I ministering in his name. Give this bread to you and say take eat. This is the body of Jesus broken for you. And after supper he took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink from it all of you. This table is not Southwood's table or the Presbyterian churches.

It's the Lord's table. So if Jesus who died and rose for you is your only hope, your living trust today, then please come eat, celebrate with us.

Come touch and taste and know Jesus more. But no matter how much you know about Jesus, if you don't personally trust him, if you haven't placed your faith in him and entered into a relationship with him, then we'd invite you this morning not to come to these elements, but to Jesus himself.

Contemplate these as you see them, the body and the blood of Jesus given for you. We'd love for you to still come forward to these tables. You can ask us to pray with you if you'd like.

[34 : 08] We'd love the chance to talk with you longer, maybe even after the service, and tell you more about Jesus. He's the one we'd want you to take this morning, not this picture of him that we celebrate.

And then some of you will be coming to this table to celebrate with us for the first time. And it's really special that you get to do that.

We're so excited. Our prayer for you, young ones, is that every time you come to this table, some of you maybe thousands of times in your life, that you will remember how much Jesus loves you, that you would taste that, that you would know him, and that you'd never forget that.

Let's pray and we'll celebrate together. Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself to us again this morning.

by your spirit, would you open our hearts, open blind eyes, bring life where there's been dryness and distance.

[35 : 17] Help us to see you and know you. Use these common elements for that holy purpose that our faith in you would grow. We would know you more.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.