

Encounter with the Risen Lord

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[0 : 00] I had hoped, I had hoped that during this period of isolation and social distancing to have read more books, to have learnt a language, to have gotten a little fitter.

But my wife Alyssa has been keeping our kids busy with a whole lot of baking and I've been eating a lot of it. I haven't been reading, I've been getting stuck just on the lounge watching too much TV. I had hoped to be practicing and learning languages but I just haven't had the energy for it. I had hoped but I've not so far met those expectations.

Now admittedly these are unprecedented and difficult times. Some have lost jobs, some of us have had our hours cut to bare minimums, others are trying to work and study from home and there is just a mental strain that all of this takes on us.

I've been realising that I shouldn't be setting my expectations so high during this period. But we can always have a mismatch between what we had hoped and reality, between expectations and reality and we can end up being disappointed.

[1 : 19] Last week we celebrated Easter and it is the high point of the year for Christians where we celebrate all that God has done for us, where he has taken us from being his enemies and through the death and resurrection of Jesus he has made us his children with all of his promises and our resurrection is secured.

But we can, maybe a little while after Easter, after that high point, start to feel a bit disappointed with God.

We can feel there's a mismatch between what we had hoped to have as a Christian, what we had hoped to have day by day and the reality around us.

Today we're going to meet two people who are walking away from Jerusalem on that Easter day, on Easter Sunday, and they've been left disappointed and downcast, seeming to have had all of their hopes dashed with the death of Jesus.

And today we're going to see what we are to do when what we'd hoped for is not God's plan. So let me pray for us as we have a look at God's word for us today.

[2 : 32] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. Thank you that we can be meeting together online and we can continue to celebrate and remember all that you have done for us.

Lord, as we look at your word to us today, help our hopes be in line with what you have planned for us, Lord. Amen. So today we're in Luke chapter 4.

Please have your Bibles open. If you don't have a Bible, we would love to hear from you. We would love to get you a Bible so you can contact us. And we're going to be in Luke 24, starting in verse 13. Now that same day, two of them, two of them being two disciples, were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. So it's Easter day.

It is the Sunday. Two of the disciples, not the apostles, they're likely heading home to an outlying town called Emmaus. It's a roughly two to three hour walk.

[3 : 33] And two days ago, they saw that the man that they had been following get killed. And they're walking home depressed. So it's likely that they're not walking at a quick pace.

It's likely they're just trudging along depressed. And as they are walking, they're talking through everything that has happened, trying to process it. And as this happens, Jesus himself comes up to them.

But they were kept from recognizing who Jesus is at this point. Jesus is in his resurrection body. He looks the same. He can be identified as Jesus.

But these two have their sight clouded to his identity. Jesus comes up and asks them in verse 17, What are you discussing together as you walk along?

Their response is sorrow, disappointment, bewilderment. Verse 17 again. They stood still. Their faces downcast. It's such a posture of sorrow and disappointment.

[4 : 34] One of them, verse 18, named Cleopas, asked him, Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?

Cleopas, he comes across as incredulous. What? Haven't you heard? Where have you been hiding? Have you been hiding off in a cave somewhere? This is the biggest news. Sight in the Bible is often a metaphor for understanding.

And the irony here is that Cleopas, who thinks he knows what is going on, is blinded to who is before him. He thinks he has seen the situation.

He thinks he can explain it to Jesus. But he doesn't know what has really happened. And so Jesus asks, What things? What things have happened? What things have happened in Jerusalem?

It's almost like Jesus is inviting Cleopas to explain it, to check his faith, to check his understanding. And Cleopas, he almost comes across like an older brother, explaining things to a younger brother.

[5 : 40] Oh, you don't know what's been going on. Let me tell you. I can tell you everything. I've got the information. You don't have it. Let me tell you. Let me share with you. Verse 19. It is such a telling moment that reveals all that they thought about who Jesus is.

And their emotional state. They're depressed. They're downcast. They had hoped Jesus was going to be the one to redeem Israel.

To buy Israel back from the Romans who had control of it. To liberate this nation under the thumb of the enemy. They had hoped for two smaller things.

For the liberation of just one nation. Verse 21. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us.

They went to the tomb early this morning, but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they'd seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.

[7 : 08] Now this is amazing. They have all of the pieces of the gospel. They knew that Jesus was powerful in word and deed before God. They knew he had been crucified. They even know that there's something significant about the third day.

They know that Jesus' body is gone. They've heard that the women went to check and he's gone.

They've even heard that an angel has said that Jesus is alive. What more do these guys need?

They have everything right in front of them. But they're putting the pieces together incorrectly.

They've put their own hopes onto what Jesus came to do.

Their hopes that Jesus would free the nation of Israel. To free Israel most likely through a military victory. They've built up their own expectations of what Jesus came to do.

And then they've been left disappointed. Jesus had come to redeem. But not by freeing just one country from enemy rule.

[8 : 13] But to redeem all of creation. To liberate all of us. To buy us back at the cost of his own life. But Cleopas and the other disciple.

They can't see what has happened. Even though all of the pieces are there. Because they're stuck trying to understand what they had hoped for. I've always wanted to know how the game Mahjong works.

I know the game can be addictive. And I know it can be a game where people lose a lot of money gambling on it. I don't want to encourage that. But without the gambling aspect. I've always wondered how Mahjong works.

And so the last couple of weeks I've been trying to figure out the game. I don't understand it yet. I'm getting there. I'm getting better. But as I understand it with Mahjong. You're trying to get tiles in the right order.

You're trying to get pairs. So at the end you have a winning combination. But for Cleopas and the other disciple. They've arranged all of the tiles in front of themselves.

[9 : 17] Of the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. But then they've just grabbed a chess piece. And put it in. And they've grabbed a playing card. And a piece of toast.

And they've wedged all of these things in. And they're wondering why they don't have Mahjong. They're wondering why it doesn't work. All of the pieces for understanding the resurrection are there.

And yet they've hoped for something else. And they are let down. And they're disappointed and downcast. Jesus responds to their disappointment.

With some very firm words. In verse 25. How foolish you are. And how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

You've got it right in front of you guys. Come on. It's like when a child calls out to mom. Mom where are my shoes? And mom looks into the room. And it's like. It's right in front of you. The shoes are right there.

[10:17] How slow are you to believe all that the prophets have said. Did not the Messiah have to suffer all these things.

And then enter his glory. Jesus puts what they had hoped for. In the context of God's biggest story. The Messiah had to suffer to enter his glory.

We had to have Good Friday to get to Easter Day. Jesus had to suffer and die. So that he could be raised. To ascend to the throne above all thrones.

And have all the power. Not just over one country. Israel. In his suffering and death. He has not just redeemed Israel. But all of humanity.

Verse 27. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets. He explained to them what was said in the scriptures concerning himself. I can't help but imagine.

[11:17] How great this Bible study with Jesus was. It's likely that this was a three hour journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. And they've got Jesus explaining how all of the Old Testament fits together and points to Jesus.

Over the last couple of weeks of isolation. There's been a lot of movie directors and actors doing watch parties. Where you get to watch the movie that they've made. And they get to explain all the things that are happening.

And I think that's a pretty great thing. But can you imagine having the author of life himself. Explain the history of Israel. And God's story of redemption.

And how it all points to Jesus. Can you imagine just walking with Jesus for three hours. And having him explain everything to you. I think it would be marvelous. Verse 28.

As they approached the village to which they were going. Jesus continued on as if he was going further. But they urged him strongly. Stay with us. For it is nearly evening.

[12:19] The day is almost over. At this point. They still don't recognize Jesus. It's now nearly evening. And they're just welcoming Jesus in.

Because he's been kind to them. Are they just welcoming him in. Because they're good Jews. And they're showing good hospitality. Are they worried about thieves coming at night.

And so they have concern for this man. But later. Once they've recognized Jesus. They will say. Were not our hearts burning within us.

And as he talked with us on the road. And opened the scriptures to us. They had some measure of understanding. As Jesus explained the Old Testament.

They began to understand. But they still didn't see it clearly. It's like they could see the shape. Of what Jesus was talking about. But you know.

[13:15] In majong. The tiles hadn't been lined up yet. The penny hadn't dropped. Verse 29 again. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them.

He took bread. Gave thanks. Broke it. And began to give it to them. Now this is a very strange thing. For a stranger to do. Not that Cleopas and the other disciples.

Would invite a stranger in. That's a fairly normal thing. They would share their food. That's a fairly normal thing. But what Jesus does. His behavior is strange. Jesus is the guest in this household.

And yet he becomes the host. He is the one who took bread. And gave thanks. And broke it. That is the host's responsibility. It's like having friends over.

For lunch. When we could do that. And all of a sudden. Your friend. Your guest. Has taken the tongs. They've taken the apron off you. And they're standing at your barbecue.

[14:15] Cooking your lunch. It's like they've come in. And they've taken the best seat in the house. The seat of the host. This is what Jesus does. He comes in.

And he takes the position of host. He breaks bread. And gives it to them. And these disciples. Realize. That it wasn't just.

An uninformed stranger that they met. Verse 31. Then their eyes were open. And they recognized him. And he disappeared from their sight.

Jesus. Who had seemed blind. To the events in Jerusalem. Now opens. The eyes of the two people. Who thought that they could see. Jesus was no stranger. Taking over as host. But he's the Lord of every house. And they only see him. Because. Their eyes were opened. They are opened by God.

[15:09] As a divine gift. They had begun to understand. When the scriptures were opened. But they only saw Jesus. For who he truly is. When Jesus came to dwell with them.

And opened their eyes. The puzzle. Has now become clear. The confusion is gone. They have. Mahjong. They shout. Woo pie. Verse 33.

Says they got up. And returned at once. To Jerusalem. There they found the eleven. And those with them. Assembled. And saying. It is true. The Lord has risen.

And has appeared to Simon. Then the two told. What had happened on the way. And how Jesus was recognized. By them. When he broke the bread. Everything has changed. For these two disciples.

At the start of their journey. They were depressed. And downcast. Plotting home. And now they have seen. The risen Jesus.

[16:07] And even though it is late. Evening is now here. They get up. And are once returned. To Jerusalem. I wonder how quickly. They were able to return back.

And the excitement. And joy. That has propelled them. At the start of this passage. Cleopas described Jesus. As a prophet. And now at the end.

He is being described. As the Lord. They had thought. That he was the person. Who knew nothing. He was the younger. The subordinate. But he is revealed.

To be the Lord. Of the universe. No longer are they trying. To jam pieces. Into their picture. Of what Jesus came to do. Now they understand him.

And his role revealed. In the Bible. God's story of salvation. And the necessity. Of Jesus' suffering. Their eyes.

[17:04] Are finally opened. They haven't. Had their eyes open. Just from having the Bible. Explained to them. They haven't understood. Just because they were walking.

Next to Jesus. They can now see. Because of a divine gift. God chose. To open their eyes. To see who Jesus is.

What a reminder. That even though. We can have all of the pieces. In front of us. We can have read. The entire Bible. It's not going to make sense. For us. Until God. Puts it all into place.

And he reveals. The necessity. Of the suffering. Of Jesus. This began with. We had hoped. But now.

They see. What God. Had planned. Their hopes. And expectations. Of Jesus. Had to be adjusted. To be in line. With what God. Was doing.

[17:58] With his son. Cleopas. And his mate. Thought that Jesus. Was someone special. A prophet. Gifted by God. They didn't see. That he was Lord.

And they went. On a journey. Of understanding. With Jesus himself. Until they believed. Reading God's word. Is so central.

To who we are. As Christians. And who we are. As a church. Here. At St. Paul's. It's so important. That Jesus spent. Hours. Explaining. How the Old Testament.

Made its sense. And how it all. Pointed to Jesus. But we can read it. And not know. Who Jesus is. He needs to come.

And open our eyes. If you don't. Know him yet. Do what Cleopas did. Invite. Jesus in. Ask Lord.

[18:54] Open my eyes. So that I can truly. See who you are. But what do we do. If we feel. Disappointed with God.

What do we do. If we're in a position. Similar to Cleopas. And the other disciple. As they were heading home. Well we may be. Disappointed with God. If our expectations.

Don't match. His divine purpose. Just like the two disciples. They. They had a hope. Not in line with God's. And what do we do. Well we may not know.

What God has in store. For us tomorrow. But we do know. That God is going to send Jesus. He's going to bring us. All home to be with him. Our future.

And our hope. Is not living. The best life here. But trusting. That God. That God. Has a future. Secure. That is how we get our.

[19 : 49] Expectations. In line. With God's. Sovereign plan. We may be disappointed. With God. If we focused on. Part of the Bible. And not the whole thing.

The two disciples. Were right. To put their hope. In the redemption. Of Israel. Israel. But Jesus. Corrects them. To believe. All. That the prophets said.

And not just the parts. That stood out to them. Not just the parts. They liked. They had missed. Focusing. On the necessity. Of the Messiah's suffering. Now we too.

Can pick. And focus on. The parts of the Bible. We like. We can easily. Focus on one aspect. Of God's. Character. We can. We can focus on. His love for us.

And miss out on. The importance of God. Also being. Just. It is important. That we read. All of God's word. To fully understand. Who he is.

[20 : 44] And not just. Pick. The parts of the Bible. That we like. We may be. Disappointed. With God. If we are. Slow of heart. To believe his word.

If we read. God's word. And don't. Place our trust. In him. We will be disappointed. But our hope. Is sure. Jesus was raised. From the dead. And he promises.

To take us. To be with him. When we. Have these moments. Of disappointment. We need. To join together. To share. What God. Is doing. How he is.

Teaching us. To be trusting. In him. And his good plan. For us. It is hard. In this world. Of isolation. And meeting people. Over zoom.

And FaceTime. But it is one of the most. Joyful parts. Of church. That we're not just. A group of people. We're also a group of people.

[21 : 40] Growing together. Trusting in God. More and more. Each day. So share. What God. Is doing. With other people. With your community group. If you're not. In a group of people.

Who are. Growing. To know and love the Lord. Please get in contact. With us. We would love. For you to be. A part of our community. Here. Even though. We are. Isolated. And distanced. From each other.

Share what God. Is doing. As he. Adjusts. Our hopes. To be. In line. With his plan. When we're disappointed. Seek. Jesus. In his word.

If you don't have a Bible. There's. There's. You can read the Bible online. You can go to Bible Gateway. And read the Bible online. Or you can contact us. Email us. At office. At stpauls.org.au We would love.

To send you a Bible. While Jesus. Was explaining. The scriptures. These two disciples. They had their hearts. Burning. Because we can get. To know. God.

[22 : 36] Himself. Through his word. When disappointed. Work hard. To be teachable. To have humility. And be willing.

To learn. It's really interesting. Here. That when Jesus. Gave these two disciples. A really hard rebuke. When he said. How foolish you are. And slow to believe. They didn't get defensive.

They didn't go. Oh. I don't want to listen to you. I'm going to. I'm going to keep walking home. To Emmaus. Instead. They listened. To Jesus. And they had their eyes. Opened.

Lastly. When. Our spiritual drought. Of disappointment. Ends. And God has filled us. With his hope. Encourage each other. Just like. Cleopas.

Ran. Likely. Ran. Back to Jerusalem. To share the exciting news. That they had seen. There is in Jesus. When God. Works. Through us. Through disappointment. And leads us to hope.

[23 : 32] In his plan. Share that. These. Disappointed. Discouraged. Disciples. Believed. That Jesus. And their hope. Was gone.

They just. Believe him. Dead. And all hope. Was gone. But he was with them. Even. When they didn't. Realize it. Let's pray.

And thank God. That he continues. To be with us. When we don't. Trust. And we face.

Disappointment. With God. As he leads us. To hope in him. Let me pray for us. Dear heavenly father.

I thank you so much. For all of your goodness. To us. God. I thank you. For the reminder. Of how. You worked. A miracle. In these two disciples.

Life. That you open their eyes. To see. Who Jesus is. Lord. For those of us. Who don't know. Who your son is. Who don't.

[24 : 29] Fully. Understand. What you were trying. To tell us. Lord. Would you open our eyes. Send us back. To your word. And open our eyes. So that as we read it.

It is not just. An interesting book. But it is the words. Of life. Heavenly father. As we. Continue to face. A difficult. And uncertain.

Future. Help us. Not be disappointed. In you. As if you. Are not in control. And working out. Your good plans. Father.

Help us. To be reminded. That you are in charge. And in control. Of all things. And you. Will use. A difficult time. Like this. To grow. Our trust. In you. Help us.

To place. Our hope. In your plan. And not just. What we want. Lord. We ask this. In your son's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.