

On the Road to Emmaus

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[0 : 00] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in the section we read, Luke 24, verses 13 to 35.

We're just going to follow through this narrative. As I say, it's one that's very well known to us and loved by all God's people. As I say, we're nearing the end of this remarkable journey in the life of Jesus.

We have followed it through from the pronouncement of his birth and followed through. And here we are coming very close to the end of this chapter. 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 all these things that had happened and so on. As I say, there's something about this journey that touches the life of every Christian.

Because we all at one stage or another, as we journey through the Christian life, we will walk like these two men. Feeling despondent, feeling down and feeling sad.

[1 : 10] I do not believe that you will find a Christian who has never at some stage in his or her Christian journey, but felt some degree of despondency.

Even although there are some Christians, and Christians are all different. Some people are naturally much more positive and outgoing and much more likely to look on the bright side of life. And others are, by nature, more pessimistic and tend to look on the dark side. But even in our spiritual life, there are bound to be moments when we feel heavy as Christians, where we might not have the joy that we've always had.

And that's part of what makes this incident, this story, so appealing, and such that we can so identify with it. Now, this chapter, of course, is focused on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I think one of the things that touches us is that the two men who are walking along the road, these two men that Jesus reveals himself to, are just two ordinary men, two ordinary believers.

[2 : 25] And I think part of why we are so encouraged by this is that we say to ourselves, well, these were just two ordinary guys.

You see, when we think about it, if the Lord had chosen to reveal himself to Peter and to John, we would say, oh, well, that's Peter and John. They were just about to embark upon this amazing apostolic ministry.

They were just going to be used mightily by the Lord. So it's understandable that he would reveal himself to these two giants, so as it were, in the early church.

But it wasn't. One of these men was Cleopas, and we don't even know the name of the other. But these are the people that Jesus chose to reveal himself to. And the Lord continues to do that. He makes his presence known to his people, to young, to old, to rich, to poor, to people with everything and people with nothing. And that's one of the wonderful things, one of the encouraging things about the way that the Lord works.

[3 : 30] And so we find these two men, and they're journeying in the dark. And they, I suppose, are just feeling, as we know, so despondent. But what makes this chapter so thrilling is that the narrative moves from this sense of despondency and darkness and discouragement and heaviness, and all of a sudden it changes.

Well, I shouldn't say all of a sudden it changes, because there seems to be, even as we journey with the men, you can gather with them, there's a sense of the despondency has already changed. The full light of joy doesn't come until Jesus reveals himself. But even before that, they are so enjoying that journey that you can feel the change.

You can, as you read, if you get right into the reading of this, you can almost journey with them, and you're noticing already the change that's taking place as they begin to thrill with the companion.

That's their walking with.

Did not our hearts burn within us? And so we see how eventually the sorrow changes to joy. The gloom and despondency gives way to triumph.

[4 : 46] And you know, that's how it's always going to be in the life of the Christian. Today you might be in the place of despondency. There might even be some here. It's an awful place, a place of despair.

There. I hope not. But you may be. But you know, if you love the Lord, you will not be left there. You will be taken. And you know, the wonderful thing is that the Christian life always ends in triumph. Because that is how it will be at the end of the day. You know, every believer will be taken. And it won't be long. As it says there that on that journey, in the narrative it says the day is far spent. You know, the day is far spent in your life and my life as well. And you might be young here and saying, oh no, it's not. It is. Our life is just a fleeting flash.

Our days will soon be over. But you know, for the believer, it's going to be extraordinary. Wonderful. Because whatever storms or despondencies or darkness you've experienced, it will be changed in a moment.

[5 : 52] The storm will be changed into a calm. And you will be brought into the desired haven. And into that palace of the king. And there the joys which are eternal at his right hand forevermore.

And you will say like the Queen of Sheba said, the half was not toward me. The Christian life is a life that always ends in joy. However it may be for you at this moment, one day it will change.

And that's, in a sense, almost glimpsed a little of here. Of how there is this absolute and complete change from the despondency and the despair into the great joy and liberty and freedom.

Just as it says in Psalm 126, as men that dreamed were we. Science bondage God turned back as men that dreamed were we. How often that has happened.

It's happened in your life already. It will continue to happen. But its fullness will happen in glory. But anyway, as these two men, as they went on, as we say, very discouraged.

[6 : 56] They were discouraged because they thought things were different to the way that they actually were. And how true that is for you and me as well.

Because often we think we know how things are. But actually they're not the way that we think they are. How often that has been true in your experience and my experience.

How often we've worried ourselves sick over things that we shouldn't have worried about. We thought things were going to work out in a particular way.

We thought this and we thought that. We thought that's what these men were saying. We thought. How often we've thought and we've thought it wrong. And we've got ourselves tied ourselves in knots.

And that's why it's so important to trust the Lord. And it's so hard to do because naturally, naturally we think we know. We think we've worked it out.

[7 : 56] We've worked it out from A to Z. We know where we're at. We know what's happening and we know what's going to happen. Or so we think. And along this course we worry. Or we get down. And so often, so often, we find that's not the way.

God has worked it another way. And so it's so important for us to trust the Lord. Now, as we read the story, part of what we enjoy as we read it is that we know the identity of the man or the companion who is traveling with these two men.

And so these two men, they're walking this seven-mile stretch from Jerusalem to Emmaus. And as they walk, they talk about Jesus. And they talk about all that happened.

And Jesus joins with them. But they don't recognize him. And of course, it's often been highlighted, and rightly so, that Jesus joins with them as they fellowship and talk about him.

And I'm sure as you look back over your Christian life, you can remember many occasions, not as dramatic and as vivid as we have here, but times maybe where you have, there might be just two of you, maybe two or three of you, but you've begun to talk about good things and to share and experience and to discuss things from the word.

[9 : 25] And like these two men, your reflection is this, did not our hearts burn within us? It was special. You won't forget it.

Maybe years have gone by and you still remember. Sometimes these experiences have been deep and profound and lasting. Other times maybe not so profound and deep, but still you are aware that there's been someone with you.

And of course it's Jesus. And so these men, they experience this thrill of having the Lord Jesus traveling with them. And then Jesus, as he travels, he asks them what it is that they're discussing. What are they talking about? And there's something almost humorous about the scene. Because these two men are busy telling Jesus everything that has happened to himself.

And there is something, it's interesting, but there is an element of humor in it. Because when you look at it and you say, this is really quite extraordinary.

[10:28] Because Jesus said to them, well, what happened? And here these two men are busy telling Jesus all about Jesus' arrest and trial and crucifixion and all these things.

And then Jesus, in verse 25, he says to them, oh, he said, oh foolish ones and slow of heart. You're so slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

and you know, I think what Jesus says is still true for us today. Because often we don't, we don't, despite all the knowledge we have and all the tremendous tools that are given to us to open our understanding and mind with regard to the Bible, we are still slow to learn.

I don't believe that any believer has, is what you would say the finished article in this world with regard to their knowledge, with regard to their faith, with regard to their understanding.

Over and over and over again, we have to learn the same basic lessons. And I'm sure there's many a time that the Lord is saying over you and over me, oh, he says, oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe.

[11:49] Many a time. Because we go back. Even in the whole realms of trusting the Lord. Have you not come through experiences and maybe they've been hard and difficult experiences and yet God has taken you through and you've said to yourself after that, you know this, from now on, I am going to truly rely on the Lord.

I am going to depend upon him because he has shown me that this is the way. He is worth trusting. How foolish and slow I have been to distrust him in the past.

We're not talking here about our salvation but in that day-to-day implicit trust. And yet, a wee bit down the road, we're back to where we were.

And we're not trusting him in the way that we should. And so often we are slow, slow to learn, slow to understand. But these men were slow to understand all that the prophets had spoken.

Because you see, their whole life had been caught up in Jesus. But they hadn't grasped. Yes, they knew that Jesus was the Messiah. But they hadn't grasped the mission of the Messiah.

[13:05] And their whole life has kind of collapsed. because, you see, it tells us here that they were the ones they had hoped in Jesus.

They had hoped that he was the one. Verse 21. But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. When hope goes, you know, life kind of goes with it.

even when hope is deferred. There's a version of the Bible that says, hope deferred makes the heart sick. And you know, there's truth in that.

When you really hope for something and you're longing and longing and longing and waiting day after day and week after week and month after month and year after year and it's not happening, it's not happening.

It makes the heart sick. But if something that you have set your whole life upon that you are absolutely persuaded and then everything is smashed and broken and collapses, your world collapses with it.

[14:11] And I don't think that we can in any way grasp or imagine just how much the bottom of these guys' world had fallen out. It's just empty.

Can you imagine what it would be like for you today if you were told you're never again going to see a Bible. Every Bible has to be removed.

You will never again see the Word of God. You're never allowed again to come to church. You're never allowed ever again to pray or engage in any company or fellowship with Jesus.

In fact, imagine as a believer and praise the Lord this won't happen but can you imagine for a moment if the Lord were to convey a message to us all saying, that's it.

You have so disappointed me in your Christian life that I have decided that that's it. I'm leaving you. I'm going to leave you all.

[15:16] Can you imagine how we would feel? We would be distraught because our life is Him. What is your life? You know, it's a very important question to ask.

What makes you tick? What is it that motivates you? What is it that fires you up? What is it that gives you the impetus to go on in life?

What is it that fills your horizon? You alone can answer that question. For the Christian it is Christ. Now of course we're caught up with lots of things in the course of a day and our life is filled with lots of things good and bad but in and through all these things Jesus is at the heart of everything. Isn't that true? He is our life. And let me say to anybody in here today who is not very sure just where they are the acid test of where you are is what does Jesus mean to your life?

Does he mean everything or does he mean very little? If you were told today that's it it's over no more opportunities of fellowship with Jesus it's a closed Bible no more prayer how would you feel about it?

[16 : 35] Would you say well that's alright with me? Or would you be distraught over it? Well if you were distraught if you were saying to yourself oh I couldn't bear that let me tell you there is a work of grace in your heart and in your life that is not the natural response in people's hearts the natural man sees no beauty in Christ that they should decide of if Jesus is the one for your heart for your life if he is at the very center of things then Jesus is your Lord and so it is very clear from these men that this is who Jesus was they felt they had lost everything well they hadn't they certainly hadn't lost the work of regeneration in their heart they certainly hadn't lost the image of Christ upon their soul they hadn't lost the desire for Jesus and that will always be true for anybody even if you feel you've lost your way you know sometimes a believer feels that that they've lost their way you might be here today and you feel you've lost your way in fact you might be here today a believer who has sat at the Lord's table for years and today you wonder am I a Christian at all and you might look around the church and you think everybody there all the other believers are so persuaded and so assured of their faith oh I'm all on my own no you're not many of the

Lord's people feel like that but you know you go back to the very start and you say to yourself where do I stand in relation to Jesus do I want him yes I do do I want him more than anybody else yes I do and you know sometimes you have to say well Lord if I've never come before I'm coming now because there's nobody else I want but you and then the Lord will reassure you that you are his but you know we sometimes go through these things because of the fears and doubts that are within our own heart because of the sin and so on anyway Jesus opens up to these men how things were and how things are and Jesus shows to them that he the Lord Jesus you see they thought that in the crucifixion of Jesus and the burial of Jesus they buried the hope of Israel with them but no Jesus said this is the way it had to be you are men who studied the word and all the prophets everything he's saying the Messiah

Jesus he's saying to and this is what as he's explaining about himself that he was the prophet like like Moses he was the son of David he was the son of man he was the suffering servant he's the Messiah he's all of these in one and this is the way it was to be in fact it wasn't the end of their hope in many ways it was the beginning of their hope it was the breaking out of their hope and they would see that in a little and so as they journeyed with them they didn't want Jesus to go on from them because at verse 28 it tells us so they drew near to the village to which they were going and he acted as if he were going further but they urged him strongly saying stay with us for a disturbed evening and the day is now far spent and I often think this is one of the most beautiful invitations that we find in the Bible this was a kind of invitation that would not take no for an answer and you know my friend that is the kind of invitation that Jesus will always respond to if you're here as an unbeliever today let me say to you if you really and truly with all your heart ask Jesus into your heart he will come he tells us that his word says seek and you will find knock and it will be open ask and you will receive him that cometh unto me

I will in no wise cast out if we really if we really mean it if we are sincere in our asking then he will this is what his word tells us and it's the same with regard to our Christian walk you know sometimes the Christian is saying I don't know what's wrong I feel so far away if we're far away then we're told in scripture to draw near to him we're told in scripture to draw near to him and if we do we're told that he will draw near to us so if Jesus if we feel that Jesus is far away and we feel we're cold and apathetic and indifferent and we're going along saying ah it's not the way it used to be and everything feels so far away got to ask this the obvious simple question are you drawing near to God are you because if not it doesn't say he will draw near to you it says you draw near to him and he will draw near to you it's putting our responsibility and onus upon our shells because remember as we've often said it all the resources necessary for us are in him and if we are his children and are

not experiencing all the blessings from our father in heaven then the fault is not with him we've always got to go and look at ourselves we've said it so often before and I keep saying it I have to say it to myself as I say it to you man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever not just in eternity but now we ought to be enjoying him here and now and if we're not then there's something wrong and it's not with him it's with us this is something we've got we've got to deal with and that's what we find with these men there's just such a wonderful time they're pleading with Jesus to come in it was this persistent asking this real pleading and they had so discovered the preciousness of what they enjoyed they did not want to lose this and so they asked that Jesus would stay with them and they say stay with us for it is two or evening and the day is now far spent as I said at the beginning that is true for all of us some of you in here today you may feel that to be really true in your experience and you know that most of your life is already past you hope to live for a good few years yet but you know that you won't live for as many years as you've already lived you know that are you still outside the kingdom today if so what are you doing about your situation and may I say your predicament because it's a real predicament if you're still outside the kingdom the day is far spent but remember

[24 : 20] Jesus came in with these people I know this is at a natural level but let us for a moment take it to a spiritual level the day was far spent but Jesus came in with him and let us praise the Lord it has been true spiritually that the Lord has come in with many or at least with some that we know when the day was very far spent but please seek him urge him to come in and as we say he will not refuse where there is a sincere genuine pleading but the day is far spent and then Jesus goes in with him and we find him reclining at the table with him sharing a meal and it's a real pastoral situation and there's almost a hint in it as you read it of the last supper where he takes the bread and blesses it and breaks it and all of a sudden their eyes are opened and they recognize him there's instant recognition as we said at the beginning this moment of joy utter joy absolute joy

I don't know how or why they didn't recognize that it was Jesus we do know verse 16 tells us but their eyes were kept from recognizing him whether that was because of unbelief whether it was because there was some difference about Jesus because on every occasion that he revealed himself there wasn't an instant recognition or was it because it needed a spiritual enlightenment I tend to think that certainly the spiritual enlightenment was part of it because just in the very same way as when we come to faith in Jesus Christ it is by spiritual enlightenment our eyes are opened all of a sudden what was a fog to us becomes clear you know that's one of the difficult things when you're sometimes trying to show the way of salvation to somebody else the way of salvation is clear to you because you have come into the kingdom and sometimes it's very hard to try and explain the way because you can see and when you're trying to explain it to somebody who can't see we've always got to remember that we need to have our eyes opened we need it and that's that's the key and you yes we are duty bound to explain to people the way of salvation from the word and we're told that the faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word but we're always as we are sharing our faith with somebody else and explaining the word let us also be praying

Lord open this person's eyes open their eyes that they may see what I'm saying open their eyes to understand what the word is saying because that's the way of salvation so I think maybe there's an element of that here as well that this was the spiritual enlightenment and then we see the joy it all began to make sense and see these men they can't contain themselves even although it's night the day is far spent they've come in they've had their meal they've no intention of going any further they've walked far enough for the day all of a sudden seven miles seems nothing and they're going as fast as they can making their way back to Jerusalem to tell the others the great news you know that's the response of the gospel you always want to tell it's a strange thing for somebody to be a believer and has no real interest in telling anybody else about others and savior in fact it doesn't quite measure up there's always this response that you want to tell others about about Jesus it's like the woman of Samaria when she discovered this was the Messiah she couldn't contain herself but ran back and said come see a man who told me all things that ever I did now I do recognize that we're all different and some people are introverts and some people are extroverts for some people it's very difficult to actually speak but you know sometimes the most powerful effective witness of all is a life and a life that is lived following the Lord displaying the Lord in everyday life is often the most powerful and effective witness and when the opportunity is given to speak a word then that word will go with far greater power because of the impact of the life you see if the life of a Christian is not lived well irrespective of what they say it's not going to carry much

weight but if it's a beautiful

Christ like life then the words will have a far greater impact and make a greater impression well today we have this risen saviour today he has he is seated at the right hand he is ruling he is governing and he is still saving if you are in here today and you are unsaved why go out that door without seeking the Lord I would ask you that before you go out of this building today that you would seek the Lord don't turn away and say I leave it till I get home I leave it some other time don't ask him now let's pray Lord our God we we pray that we might indeed have this ever growing desire to know

[30 : 51] Jesus and to become more and more like him we long to be able to see Jesus and to see him yes it is by faith and we give thanks that one day it will be by sight for all who have seen him by faith they will forever see him by sight we pray then to help us to look to Jesus to believe in him and to trust him we pray then to bless us and bless our time together and we pray to bless a cup of tea which will take place next door and bless a time of togetherness and fellowship and that we might give thanks for every provision made watch over us and do us good and take us home safely in Jesus name we ask it Amen Amen David I will grab my free Samuel

Oh and you know him and in die way asundo all things are in feel