

Hope Restored

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Preacher: Greg Hendrickson

[0:00] Well, good morning, church. You can turn with me in your Bibles to Luke chapter 24, starting at verse 13. We'll be looking at Luke chapter 24, verses 13 to 35 this morning, as we draw near to the conclusion of Luke's gospel, which we'll be finishing next week.

So let me read for us Luke chapter 24, starting at verse 13. 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. 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 is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk? And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them named Cleopas answered him, are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?

And he said to them, what things? And they said to him, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, the man who is 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.

[1:33] 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 didn't find his body, they came back, saying that they had 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, but him they did not see.

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? Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them and all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He 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.

[2:42] So he went in to stay with them. While he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

And he vanished from their sight. 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? And 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 has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon. Then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Our story this morning begins with disappointment, confusion, and grief. Two disciples walking towards a village named Emmaus.

But these are not two friends taking a pleasant stroll on a Sunday afternoon, casually shooting the breeze. No, verse 15 says they were talking and discussing together.

[3:51] And that word discussing can also be translated arguing or disputing or going back and forth. They were engaged in a vigorous conversation about all these things that had just happened.

How Jesus, the one who they had hoped would liberate their people. How he had been condemned to death and shamefully crucified.

How had everything gone so wrong? The story they had been living in, the hopes that had sustained them, were now shattered into a hundred little pieces. And they couldn't see any way to put them back together again.

They were distraught. They were despondent. They were downcast. And so they were walking away from Jerusalem.

And that's a significant detail because for most of the Gospel of Luke, chapters 9 to chapter 19, Jesus was leading his disciples toward Jerusalem.

[4:53] And he repeatedly told them that his mission would be accomplished and fulfilled in Jerusalem. Chapter 18, verse 31, Jesus had said, See, we are going up to Jerusalem.

And everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him.

And on the third day he will rise. But then it says, And here these two disciples, having witnessed Jesus' crucifixion, were walking away from Jerusalem.

Still lacking understandings of who Jesus was and what he had come to do. Even when Jesus joined them in person, it says, Their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

Now perhaps we can relate to these disciples in their feelings of disappointment, confusion, grief. Maybe you're feeling disappointed and despondent these days.

[6:01] Perhaps some of your hopes have been dashed. Plans have been canceled, put on hold indefinitely. You're not quite sure what to hope for right now. The world seems topsy-turvy.

Perhaps you feel like the disciples in verse 17. Standing still, looking sad. Or maybe you find yourself confused, distraught, on edge.

You find yourself getting into heated arguments with the people who are closest to you. Or being rude to strangers if they seem naive and uninformed. Or maybe you're grieving.

Downcast. Maybe you just want to walk away from it all. I felt that way. I've gone up and down over the last three or four weeks.

I felt that way very strongly for a few days when everything was in the process of shutting down. I felt stir-crazy even when I hadn't been in my house all day. I wanted to get out, to go somewhere, to go anywhere.

[7:03] I was angry. I couldn't really pinpoint what I was angry about. I was quite unpleasant for the members of my household to be around, though they were very gracious and patient with me. Now, for some of you, feelings of disappointment and confusion and grief may not be primarily connected to the coronavirus.

You might think, just being told to stay home for a few weeks? That's the least of the traumas I've been through. I'm used to life being unpredictable and confusing and disappointing and overwhelming.

This isn't new for me at all. But regardless how particularly we might experience disappointment, confusion, and grief, what we see in this story is how Jesus meets us in the midst of all those things.

And this morning we'll see in this passage that Jesus meets us in three ways. First, he listens to us patiently. We'll see this in verses 13 to 24.

Second, we'll see that he challenges us boldly through the scriptures in verses 25 to 27. And third, we'll see that he breaks bread with us intimately in verses 28 to 35.

[8 : 21] So first, we see that Jesus listens to us patiently. You know, that's the first thing Jesus does for Cleopas and his companion. Jesus comes alongside them.

He walks and talks with them, but mostly he listens. Now, maybe you're wondering, who was this guy Cleopas and who was his unnamed traveling companion?

Well, presumably Luke refers to Cleopas by name to indicate that he was the source of the information in this story. Ancient books didn't have footnotes, but authors commonly referred to witnesses or sources by name.

Now, Cleopas was likely part of one of the early church communities in Jerusalem or somewhere else. So at least some people back then would have known who he was. But over the last 2,000 years, that information has been lost.

This is the only reference to Cleopas in the New Testament. There's one more possible clue in John chapter 19, verse 25, which mentions a woman named Mary, the wife of Cleopas.

[9 : 27] C-L-O-P-A-S. Not quite spelled the same, but perhaps could be the same person, just had a variant spelling of their name. Anyway, Mary, the wife of Cleopas, is one of the witnesses who sees Jesus being crucified.

Now, if Cleopas and Cleopas are the same person, perhaps Cleopas and his wife Mary were walking back home to Emmaus from Jerusalem together. Now, that's possible, but it's really only a guess.

The only thing that is really clear to us is that Cleopas and his unnamed companion were not among the apostles. Right? When they go back to Jerusalem, they find the 11 apostles and the others with them.

Like, Cleopas and his companion were like Mary and Martha, Joanna and Susanna, Zacchaeus and Bartimaeus, Simon of Cyrene and Joseph of Arimathea. They were among Jesus' devoted followers, but not in the inner circle of the 12.

But that fact alone, I think, should encourage us. After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus did not only appear to the 12 apostles, to his inner circle.

[10 : 35] Jesus did not only appear to the future leaders of the church, whose names we all recognize 2,000 years later. Jesus sees and Jesus cares for every one of his disciples, no matter how well known or how little known we are.

No matter whether future generations on earth will remember our name or not. We may not know much about Cleopas and his companion, but Jesus knew them.

And Jesus came alongside them, and Jesus took the time to walk with them and listen to them as they were heading down the road. Notice how patiently and kindly Jesus engaged with them.

He began by asking simple, open-ended questions. What's on your mind? What are you all talking about as you walk down the road? Now, Cleopas' initial response in verse 18 was borderline insulting.

Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know what happened? In other words, are you completely clueless? Clueless? But Jesus wasn't put off by Cleopas' rudeness.

- [11:47] He graciously overlooked an ignorant insult, and he just asked another open-ended question. What things? What are these things? How would you put it in your own words?
- What are you talking about? What are you thinking about all this? You see, what's Jesus doing here? He's drawing them out. Proverbs 20, verse 5 says, The purpose in a person's heart is like deep water, but a person of understanding draws it out.
- And Jesus came alongside his disciples like a wise counselor, like an understanding friend, asking simple questions and taking the time to listen, to draw them out.
- In verse 19 through 24, we see the two friends launching into their confused thoughts. It's almost like a stream of consciousness concerning Jesus, a prophet mighty in deed and word.
- Do you notice how many times they say, and, or besides, or moreover? And, how the chief priests and rulers delivered him up. But we had hoped, and besides all this is the third day, moreover some women amazed us, and they didn't see his body, and they came back, and then some of those with us went, but they didn't see him.
- [12:57] Right? They're sort of telling all these facts that are on their mind, but they can't quite put it all together. They can't quite make sense of everything that's happened.
- They had a lot on their minds, but they were puzzled. And even though Jesus knew far better what had happened and why it all happened, he didn't immediately interrupt them.
- He kept on listening. And that's part of what a good friend does. You know, a good friend doesn't call you up on the phone when you're disappointed, or distraught, or downcast, and just start preaching at you.
- No, a good friend takes the time to listen, and ask questions, and hear you out. And Jesus is still that faithful friend who listens patiently to his disciples.
- Jesus has ascended into heaven, so we shouldn't expect him to show up physically as he did here, but he is still just as real, and just as present, and just as patient as he was back then.
- [14:11] Jesus is not put off when we are prickly or on edge. He graciously pursues us when we are downcast or discouraged or ready to walk away from it all.
- He patiently listens to us even when we ramble on somewhat incoherently. I mean, imagine listening to all the prayers that people pray to God every day.
- Right? Most of us, if we had to listen to all those prayers, we would get, we would become impatient. Right? All the people accusing God for things that God didn't do, or, you know, that are due to the sin in the world, all the, you know, all of us who see only, all of us who want something that isn't ultimately the best for us.
- But Jesus is very patient. He listens to all of our prayers. He wants to draw us out. It's helpful for us to put our thoughts and feelings into words even when we don't quite know what we're thinking or what we're feeling.
- Jesus is patient. He listens to them even when they foolishly think that they know more than he does. Jesus listens to us patiently. That's the first thing that we see.
- [15:35] But that's not all that Jesus does. The next thing we see in verses 25 to 27 is that Jesus challenges us boldly. And he does so through the scriptures.
- You see, a good friend does not only listen and ask non-directive questions and express support and affirmation. And a good friend also confronts and challenges our misguided assumptions.
- And in verse 25, Jesus spoke a word of challenge. Oh, foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Wasn't it necessary that the Messiah, the Christ, should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

You see, Jesus recognized and exposed one of their deeply held but deeply misguided assumptions. Now, what was that assumption?

It was this. Their assumption was redemption means deliverance from suffering. Look at verse 21. We had hoped that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel.

[16:45] Now, that word redeem means liberate, to liberate from captivity or bondage. See, like many other faithful Jews of their day, Cleopas and his companion were hoping that one day God would send the Messiah, the anointed one, the king, who would deliver them from oppression and bondage.

And their assumption was that the Messiah would be a holy conqueror who would defeat all their enemies, who would rule over foreign nations, and who would judge the earth in righteousness.

But instead, Jesus, and they were hoping that Jesus was that. But instead, Jesus had been rejected by the Jewish leaders and crucified by the Roman authorities.

His life ended in utter disgrace. And so they came to a conclusion that seemed completely natural given their assumption. therefore, Jesus must not be the Messiah.

He must not be the Redeemer and Liberator that we were hoping for. But in verse 26, Jesus directly challenged that assumption.

[18:01] Wasn't it necessary? Now that word is a word that Luke uses about ten times throughout his gospel to refer to God's defined plan and purpose.

So wasn't it necessary? In other words, wasn't it God's plan and purpose all along that the Christ, the Messiah, should suffer precisely these things and only after his suffering enter into his glory?

So he says to them, you should know that already because the scriptures have been saying that all along. You see, according to Jesus, redemption is not just deliverance from suffering, it's also deliverance through suffering.

The pathway to glory runs through suffering and not around it. That's what Jesus says. And Jesus says that that message runs through the whole Old Testament.

Now you might ask, where in the Old Testament does Jesus get that idea? That the pathway to glory runs through suffering and not around it.

[19:14] And that even the Messiah would have to suffer before entering his glory. Now the idea that the Messiah would suffer was certainly not the prevailing interpretation of the Old Testament in Jesus' day.

Modern scholars have found many ancient Jewish writings from the period between the Old and New Testaments. And different rabbis and different Jewish sects had different ideas and expectations about the Messiah, who he would be, and what he would do.

But on one thing they all agreed. The Messiah would be a victorious conqueror. He would not suffer rejection and betrayal from his own people.

He would not be condemned to die by a foreign ruler. he would not be shamefully mocked and hanged on a tree. No Jewish teacher before Jesus from all that we know had ever considered that the Messiah might suffer in those ways.

But Jesus said this is what the scriptures have been saying all along. Now just think about what we see in the Old Testament.

[20:23] Think about the stories of the most famous leaders in the Old Testament. Moses and David. Most people expected the Messiah to be a prophet like Moses and a ruler like David.

But think about their stories. Take Moses. Moses' life began with suffering. He was born into a people group whose very existence was threatened, who were enslaved.

And even though he was spared from mortal danger as a child and raised in Pharaoh's household, he didn't immediately rise up to power and glory. No, when Moses grew up, he identified with his own people and saw their suffering and it moved him.

But his own people rejected him and then Pharaoh wanted to kill him and so he fled to Midian and had to live there as a foreigner for 40 years in the middle of nowhere. And then when he finally returned to Egypt to rescue the children of Israel to liberate them from slavery, he faced fierce opposition from Pharaoh and stubborn disbelief from his own people.

and then when he finally leads them out, he leads them into the desert and he has to lead them in the desert for years and years. And a few times, the people he's leading want to kill him.

[21 : 41] For Moses, the pathway to glory ran straight through intense suffering, rejection, and shame. The same pattern holds if you look at the life of David in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel.

David's anointed king by the prophet Samuel and then what happens next? Does he ascend to the throne and win battles over all his enemies? No. Immediately, King Saul wants to kill him and David has to flee for his life and for years, David lives on the run, hungry, thirsty, in caves, in the mountains, in the desert, in the forest, among Israel's enemies.

Only after years and years of suffering does David rise to glory as king. Or take one other example. Take Joseph in the book of Genesis.

Now, Joseph's life seems to start out well. He was the favored son of his father, Jacob, in line to receive the lion's share of the inheritance but then his brothers get jealous and they turn on him and they sell him into slavery.

They sell him for the price of a slave. He's taken to Egypt, falsely accused, thrown into a dungeon and forgotten. He descended to the depths. And only later on was Joseph remembered and raised up to the right hand of Pharaoh and through Joseph the world was rescued from famine and his family was reconciled to each other but once again in the life of Joseph suffering came before glory.

[23 : 20] You see this pattern throughout the Old Testament. The pathway to glory runs straight through suffering. And Jesus says if that was the case for Moses and David and Joseph don't you see that it was God's plan all along for the Messiah as well to suffer before entering into his glorious reign.

And you know it's not just the stories of the Old Testament that show us this pattern. You can hear the same haunting melody in the songs. Songs like Psalm 22 which begins My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The first part of the psalm is about the suffering of a righteous person but the end of the psalm is a cry of victory. It ends by saying he has done it. Or look at Isaiah 53 the song of the suffering servant.

He's cut off from the land of the living stricken for the transgression of his people yet the next verse says he will see his offspring and prolong his days. The haunting melody underneath so many of the songs of the Old Testament the prophecies and the psalms is that suffering comes before glory.

And you can also see it in the symbols in the Passover lamb that was slain every year to commemorate the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt.

[24 : 49] Their redemption came at a price. And in all the sacrifices in the temple that over and over declared the forgiveness of sins and restoration of fellowship with God would only be possible through the shedding of blood.

You see the stories and the songs and the symbols of the Old Testament all speak of God's redemption not as just deliverance from suffering but as deliverance through suffering. Cleopas and his companion couldn't see that Jesus was the Messiah because they couldn't imagine that the Messiah could possibly suffer in such a shameful way as Jesus had.

And Jesus exposed and challenged their misguided assumptions so they could see him for who he really was the Messiah who had suffered and who was now ascending into glory.

But you know many of us share the same assumption of Cleopas and his friend. Don't we also want a direct route to glory that bypasses suffering?

or at least that bypasses certain kinds of suffering that we think are especially burdensome? Oh, we say that we trust and love God as long as he gives us what we think is fair, reasonable, or at least bearable from our point of view.

[26 : 24] But when God in his sovereignty completely disregards our standards and our expectations there's at least a part of us that just wants to walk away.

At times don't we become spiritually despondent, downcast, and distraught because we feel like God hasn't given us the glory, the power, the comfort, the life we've always wanted and instead he's put us in a situation where we must endure suffering and loss and shame and pain that we didn't ask for and didn't agree to.

And like Cleopas and his companion we can conclude that maybe Jesus hasn't come to redeem and liberate us after all.

But how foolish we are. How slow of heart to trust what God has been doing all along. In this fallen world the pathway to glory runs through suffering and not around it.

now that's a hard truth. It was a hard truth for them to accept back then. It's a hard truth for us to accept now. But here is our hope and our strength.

[27 : 37] This very pathway our Savior has trod before us. Jesus Christ has blazed the trail through suffering into glory with his own blood.

blood. It's as if the trail markers remind us of his blood-stained hands and yet that he has gone before us and risen again.

You see the road that we're traveling hard though it may be is not a dead end. When we walk with Jesus through suffering whether it's suffering that we simply can't avoid as human beings or whether it's suffering that we willingly take on in order to sacrificially serve others or suffering for the sake of obedience to the gospel itself Jesus promises that he will build in us endurance character and hope and an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

So brothers and sisters let's consider the suffering that Jesus endured. Consider the glory that he now enjoys and consider that in it all in the suffering and in the glory we are united with him.

He has gone before us and he is with us. So Jesus listens patiently to us he corrects us boldly through the scriptures and finally Jesus breaks bread with us intimately.

[29 : 18] verse 28 so they drew near to the village to which they were going Jesus acted as if he were going farther but they urged him strongly saying stay with us so he went in to stay with them when he was at table with them he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them and their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

You know the climax of this story does not come in Jesus masterful exposition and interpretation of the Old Testament important as that was but in his table fellowship with his disciples.

Their hearts were burning within them on the road when he opened up the scriptures and that's what motivated them to urge him so strongly stay with us don't leave us we want more we want you to be our guest our honored guest.

You know sometimes people don't yet have a clear understanding of who Jesus is they can't quite put that into words but they have a deep sense I need him I need that and maybe you've sensed maybe that's you maybe you've sensed the presence of God in Jesus you feel drawn to Jesus for some reason even though you can't quite put it into words even though you might have lots of questions and remaining doubts but if that's you reach out to Jesus in prayer say Jesus I want you I need you help me stay with me don't leave me Jesus responds to prayers like that you know if Cleopas and his companion hadn't urged Jesus to stay most likely Jesus would have simply passed on continued on his way and they would have missed out but don't miss out on Jesus someone said only those who desire his company will come to a deeper realization of his identity and you know that prayer is not just for people who don't yet know

Jesus personally or who are just beginning to see him for the first time that prayer is for all of us who have tasted and seen that he is good who have trusted him and claim him as our Lord let us cry out to know him more deeply more purely more fully Lord stay with us don't leave us now you know we shouldn't just think well you know if Jesus is God I guess he'll do what he wants to do and if he wants to draw close to me and help me he will and if he doesn't he won't so there's nothing I can really say or do about it no Jesus wants to whet our appetite so that we earnestly desire and seek out closeness with him so that we say stay with us Lord and he says yes I will you know the beautiful thing is when we pray Jesus often gives us far more than we ask for because Jesus doesn't come just to be their guest when they sit down at the table

[32 : 19] Jesus becomes the host he takes the bread and breaks it and gives it to them just like he had done when he fed the 5,000 on the hillside and just like he had done when he ate the last supper with his disciples what was Jesus saying by becoming the host of this meal he was saying I am your good shepherd I will lead you and feed you I will take care of you and I will do so even to the point of laying down my life for you on the road their hearts were burning but at the table their eyes were opened and then Jesus vanished now that might raise questions for us but Jesus was about to ascend to his father in heaven so he wasn't going to hang around in one place very long in his resurrected body but here's the point in our disappointment in our confusion in our grief

Jesus comes alongside us and patiently listens to us and he confronts and challenges our misguided assumptions through the scriptures but Jesus hasn't come just to lend a listening ear or only to teach us important truths but to share life with us to break bread with us to look us straight in the eye and say you are mine and I am yours now and forever and in the book of revelation chapter 3 verse 20 Jesus holds out that promise of intimate fellowship to everyone who believes in him behold Jesus says I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into him and eat with him and he with me that's what Jesus promises to be with us yes to listen to us yes to teach us but ultimately to dwell with us the story began with disappointment confusion and grief but it ends with courage clarity and hope verse 33 they rose with renewed courage instead of walking away in disappointment they returned to

Jerusalem without delay that same hour they went right back to the place they had previously wanted to run away from to a place where as Jesus disciples they might be persecuted only three days ago Jesus had been killed there but they went right back with renewed courage and when Jesus meets us he gives us courage to go back even to hard places that previously we wanted to run away from and then verse 33 says they found they rose with courage and they found the eleven and those with them gathered and proclaiming the Lord has risen indeed their confusion was replaced with clarity now there are only two places in Luke where that word translated indeed appears the first place is when Jesus dies and the centurion says indeed he was a righteous man and now at the end of the story the disciples proclaim indeed he has risen you see at the end of the story at the end of his gospel

Luke wants us to know two things with great clarity about Jesus he was righteous all the way to the end and he is risen and he is now alive and if those two things are clear in our minds then everything else out over time so disappointment is replaced with courage confusion is replaced with clarity and finally grief turns to hope verse 35 they told and what did they tell this time not they did not only speak out of their grief and distress they told how Jesus had met them on the road and at the table brothers and sisters Hebrews 13 6 says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever he still meets us in our disappointment in our confusion in our grief he still listens to us patiently he still challenges us boldly through the scriptures and he still breaks bread with us intimately that we might take from him and receive from him courage and clarity and hope to sustain us let us pray

Lord Jesus stay with us be our companion in the way kindle our hearts and awaken our hope that we may know you as you are revealed in scripture and in the breaking of bread indeed you are righteous and indeed you are risen hallelujah amen no oh please you

[38:16] I I I I I