

Luke 24:13-35  
Third Sunday of Easter  
April 30, 2017

In Christ Jesus, our Resurrected Lord and Savior, who comforts and strengthens us by speaking to us with His Word, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last Sunday I told you about a picture in my office of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Well today I am going to show you another one that hangs on my wall that is also very precious to me. It is this one that depicts Jesus and the disciples from Emmaus walking on that Easter Sunday afternoon. It is precious because it reveals the heart-warming story of Jesus' concern, care and love for these two lost and confused disciples.

Almost every day we read the front page headlines of terrorist attacks, domestic violence, child abuse, mass murders, and disasters around the world. Heart-breaking and heart-wrenching stories. But every time I take the time to look at this picture on my wall it is heart-warming. And that is our theme for this morning.

### **THE HEART-WARMING STORY FROM EMMAUS**

What do you suppose the disciples thought about that Friday night and all day Saturday after Jesus' crucifixion and burial? I'm sure many things went through their minds, but it was all gloom and doom. They lost all hope. Jesus was dead.

Maybe the words of Deuteronomy 21:23 filled their minds: "**ANYONE WHO IS HUNG ON A TREE IS UNDER GOD'S CURSE.**" The Man they had believed to be their Messiah and Lord; the Man they had confessed to be the Son of the living God; had died by being hung on a tree. What other conclusion could they come to but that Jesus died under the curse of God? How could Jesus possibly be the Son of God and the Messiah sent by God, if He died under God's curse? Could they believe anything Jesus taught? Was it all just a lie? What about everything He said about God's forgiveness? Was that a lie also? How could Jesus give God's forgiveness if He Himself was under God's curse? What a horrible time that must have been for them!

The two disciples on the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus on that late Easter Sunday afternoon surely did not have warm hearts. They too were cold and gloomy, filled with doubt and confusion. They were in deep discussion talking about the events of the last few days. We are told that they were conversing and reasoning with one another. Literally the words mean "to debate, dispute and argue vigorously." In other words it was an animated discussion, probably with hands flying, waving about and voices raised to make a point. But their agitation not only showed in their voices and gestures, it also showed in their faces. Scripture says they were sad, literally "downcast."

When suddenly Jesus comes up from behind them and begins to walk along with them. We are told **BUT THEIR EYES WERE RESTRAINED, SO THAT THEY DID NOT KNOW HIM.** They no doubt thought He was one of the many visitors to Jerusalem during this Passover celebration.

When Jesus asked them what they were discussing as they walked along so sadly, one of them Cleopas, was shocked. He answered Jesus question with a question of his own. **ARE YOU THE ONLY STRANGER IN JERUSALEM, AND HAVE YOU NOT KNOWN THE THINGS WHICH HAPPENED THERE IN THESE DAYS?**

Jesus knows, but wants to know what they know. So Cleopas tells Him. He gave a good summary of Jesus' ministry. He was a Prophet mighty in Word=**PREACHING** as well as in deed=**MIRACLES**. He preached with authority using God's Word. But the chief priests and rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.

The problem with Cleopas' summary of Jesus' ministry is that it is followed with this despairing phrase, **BUT WE WERE HOPING THAT IT WAS HE WHO WAS GOING TO REDEEM ISRAEL.** Their hopes had been dashed as they watched Jesus hanging helplessly on the cross. Why would God allow this travesty of justice to take place? Why did He do nothing to spare this Man who called Himself the Christ, the Messiah? They were even more bewildered and confused on that Sunday morning when they heard the news that the tomb was empty and the body of Jesus was gone. They waited in Jerusalem for further word, but now it was getting late and they had to get back home.

Their hope for redemption for Israel seemed a lost cause. But what kind of redemption? It seems these disciples were seeking for a physical rescue, to be set free from foreign occupation, especially the

Romans, or at the least they did not clearly understand the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus having to suffer and die under the curse of God? Even the news from the women that they had seen a vision of angels who said He was alive again didn't bring joy to their hearts, only more confusion, doubt and despair.

Like a parent who gently rebukes his children when they should have known better, so Jesus gently rebukes these followers of His. They too should have known better. Had they not read the Scriptures? Wasn't the suffering of Jesus an integral part of God's plan to save mankind? Wasn't it all mapped out in the Old Testament? **O FOOLISH ONES, AND SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE IN ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN! OUGHT NOT THE CHRIST TO HAVE SUFFERED THESE THINGS AND TO ENTER INTO HIS GLORY?**

What a marvelous privilege these two men had, to be taught directly by the risen Christ Himself, to hear from His very own lips the Old Testament scriptures that pointed to His suffering, death and resurrection. The Lord Jesus no doubt began with the fall of Adam and Eve and the first promise of the Seed of the woman crushing Satan's head, and in so doing He would have His heel bruised. Jesus no doubt quoted passage after passage and referred to the Old Testament types and pictures that pointed to the Messiah and His work. He no doubt quoted from Isaiah 53 extensively. He was telling these two disciples all this in order to warm their hearts.

### **I: JESUS BROUGHT HOPE TO HEARTS THAT WERE DISAPPOINTED.**

When they got to Emmaus, Jesus acted as if He were going on, but they were so moved by this Man's words that they invited Him into their home. What a blessing for them that they did! Jesus their teacher, now became Jesus their host. He took the bread that was being served, gave thanks for it, broke it and gave it to them; and their eyes were opened. They **KNEW HIM!** Not only does this mean they recognized Him as Jesus, but they **KNEW HIM BY FAITH!** Now it all made sense. Weren't their hearts on fire as He opened the Scriptures to them? His words cut deeply into their hearts, convicting them of their unbelief and despair, but also assuring them of their hopes and dreams. Jesus had been assuring them that He was risen and alive as God had prophesied.

### **II: JESUS BROUGHT UNDERSTANDING TO HEARTS THAT WERE CONFUSED.**

But then He disappeared. With hearts on fire with zeal, love, devotion, service and conviction of faith they got up and hurriedly went back the seven hilly miles they had just come to tell the disciples all that had happened. Imagine the conversation on the way back to Jerusalem. No longer were their eyes downcast, their hearts heavy and sad, their shoulders drooping. But now with eyes uplifted, with happy hearts and with a joy-filled spirit they burst into the house where the Apostles were to proclaim the good news. And even as they had good news to tell, they heard good news. The same Lord Jesus had also appeared to Simon on that day.

Are not these two disciples perfect examples of us so many times? How often are we not disappointed in life? How often are we not confused and bewildered by what happens and why things happen? Because of our sins we too do not see Jesus as we should. We walk away from Him, not with Him. We are spiritually weak, often despairing, grieving and despondent.

Thankfully Isaiah tells us the Lord will not snap off the bruised reed, nor snuff out the smoldering wick. The faith of both of these disciples was faltering, flickering, deeply bruised and bent, just like ours is so very often. How easy it could have been for Jesus to condemn them for such foolishness, to severely reprimand them for their faithlessness and angrily walk away from them.

But Jesus couldn't do this. He is perfect **LOVE!** Yes, He did gently rebuke them, for they needed to realize their lack of faith, their failure to comprehend the Scriptures. But then He gave them the assurance that as He lived they would live also.

### **III: JESUS BROUGHT COMFORT AND JOY TO HEARTS THAT HAD BEEN GRIEVING.**

And that is still true today. Yes, when our hearts are drooping, our eyes downcast, our spirits depressed because of the pressures of daily life, broken relationships, the anxiety of sickness, the fear and uncertainty of the future, the loss of loved ones, the pain of death, the guilt of sins committed, our heavy work load and job commitments, and a multitude of other problems in life, Jesus comes to us and says: **BECAUSE I LIVE YOU WILL LIVE ALSO!**

The good news is that as we walk through life, our Savior comes up beside us in His Word and speaks to us. Yes, He reprimands us too, for our doubt and worry, for not taking Him at His Word; for not trusting Him as we should; but then His glorious **GOSPEL PROMISE: GIVES HOPE TO OUR HEARTS THAT ARE DISAPPOINTED;**

**GIVES UNDERSTANDING TO OUR HEARTS THAT ARE CONFUSED AND GIVES COMFORT AND JOY TO OUR HEARTS THAT ARE GRIEVING.**

Jesus comes to us, walks along beside us in His Word and fans the flame of our faith, strengthens and straightens the bent reed of our spiritual understanding. He is the one Friend who not only has compassion on us but also has the cure for us. In despondent, bewildering, distressed-filled, sorrowing days He is there with His promises of Forgiveness, Peace and Eternal life and shows us how it applies to each of us.

He is our greatest Counselor! Notice how He counseled these two grieving, confused friends. First He lets them speak, lets them pour out their hearts and feelings and tell of their grief, confusion, doubt, despair and uncertainty. Then He responded with the only remedy---**HIS WORD!**

So also Jesus comes to us today and says, **Speak to Me, tell Me about your grief, your doubts, your concerns, your fears, your worries---call upon Me in the day of trouble, cast all your anxieties, worries and cares upon Me, lay your sins, your failures upon Me through repentance---in prayer talk to Me and then listen to Me---hear My words speak to you in your weekly worship, in your daily devotions, in your bible study---I have died to pay for all of your sins and I have risen again conquering death and assuring you of life forevermore.**

These two men might never have recognized Jesus or had their faith reawakened through His Word had they not invited Jesus to stay with them; **ABIDE WITH US** they said. May we daily pray, **LORD, ABIDE WITH US! SPEAK TO US! WALK WITH US DURING THIS EASTER SEASON WITH THE JOYOUS AND POWERFUL MESSAGE OF THE RESURRECTION FRESH IN OUR HEARTS, AND RISEN LORD, CONTINUE TO WALK WITH US THROUGHOUT EVERY SEASON OF OUR LIVES.**

Then our hearts, too, will burn within us in zeal, commitment, love, devotion, service, faith, confidence, courage and dedication to our Savior-God as He reveals His Good News of Forgiveness, Life and Salvation, warming our hearts and assuring us of eternal life with Him.  
Amen.