

May 8, 2011
Easter 3

"Walking with Jesus on the Road to Emmaus"

LUKE 24:13-35

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Christ {²⁶ Or Messiah; also in verse ⁴⁶} have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. ²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" ³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Two men were fishing in a small boat. Neither of them knew how to swim. They were not wearing their floatation vests. One man stood up in the boat to cast the lure toward the edge of the weed bed hoping to catch a bass. He threw the line out, lost his balance and tipped the boat over. Both men were floundering in the water, unable to swim. They desperately tried to grab on to each other and kept pulling each other under. Fortunately another fisherman heard their cries for help and was able to rescue them before they drowned.

Two men, two followers of Jesus are drowning in despair. They are walking together from Jerusalem to Emmaus about 7 miles. It is spring time. The birds are singing, the sun is shining, the grass is green, and the flowers are blooming. They pull each other down as they share their lack of hope with each other.

Have you ever felt like you were drowning? I am not talking about the time that you nearly drowned while swimming. I am talking about drowning in the problems of this life or drowning in some sinful condition or drowning in sorrow and sadness, or just drowning in yourself. It is scary when you start losing hope. You desperately cry, "Lord, help me. Lord Jesus, have mercy on me."

What is your road of life like this morning, on this Mother's Day? Whatever road you are on Jesus wants to come to you and bring joy into your life with his love for you and his words of comfort and peace that will always be a blessing to you.

Walking with hope lost

It is sad to see people lose their hope, especially people who follow Jesus. "Now that same day (the day of Jesus' resurrection) two of them were going to a village called Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem." This should have been the best seven mile walk of their lives as they discussed the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and what it meant for them. Instead they are discussing the horrible events of Jesus' suffering and death, and how disappointed they are with everything that has happened to Jesus. They are sharing with each other how their hopes have been dashed to the ground.

How well do you do discussing problems and troubles with the people that are closest to you in your life? Are you able to bring into your conversation the promises of God's Word or the fact that Jesus is alive and taking care of his people no matter how hard the times are? Do you see the cup half empty or half full or always flowing over? Psalm 23 tells us, "My cup runs over" and "Goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life."

Imagine for a moment two people spending their whole life together and never talking about Jesus because they do not believe in him? Oh I am sure they have close moments together as they talk about their love for each other, or the latest news, or the new cell phones they want to purchase so they can have the latest and greatest electronic devices in their hands. Our Lord Jesus said, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks." If the heart overflows with evil, or wrong ideas on how to be saved and have eternal life, two drowning people will only pull each other down even more.

Jesus wants to come into our lives and walk with us and take away the negative and sinful and evil thoughts that we may share with each other. He came to these two disciples and started walking with them and started talking with them. They did not recognize Jesus because he had hidden himself from them. He wanted to restore their lost hope by opening their eyes to the Scriptures. Jesus came into their lives by asking "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" Their sadness and sorrow was written all over the faces. If you are really close to someone, you cannot hide the sorrow and sadness when it comes into your face. Jesus knows our sadness and sorrow. "What friend we have in Jesus....Jesus knows our every weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer."

How upset they are with this stranger who asks them what they are discussing. "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and you do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" Some people might walk away after such a rebuke, but not our Jesus. He wants to engage them in conversation and bring God's Word into their lives. He wants to bring his Word into your life and mine. He asks, "What things?" They reveal how hopeless their lives have become and how much they are drowning in doubt and unbelief. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people." Is that all Jesus was to them, just a prophet? Where is the confession of faith that calls Jesus their Lord and God?

Before you become too critical and too judgment for their lack of faith and confession, think of the times, the terrible times when you lost sight of the fact that Jesus, your King of kings and Lord of lords, is sitting at the right hand of God and managing every aspect of your life. Think of the times you forgot the words of Paul in Romans 8 that assure you that nothing will ever separate you from the love of God that exists in Christ Jesus your Lord.

These two fellows were suffering from a form PTSD-Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. They could not get out of their minds what the chief priests and the rulers and the Roman soldiers had done to their Jesus. It almost makes you sick in the stomach to hear them say, "But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." Get a life. Get real. Jesus never came to this earth to redeem the nation of Israel from the Romans. Has Jesus asked you to pick up your pillow and follow him? He asks you to pick up your cross and follow him. And then they even have the audacity to reveal how they were amazed that the women and disciples went to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty. They even claimed to see some angels who said Jesus was risen. Before you call these two disciples on the way to Emmaus the two toads on the way to Emmaus because of their lack of faith and hope, be careful. It is OK to judge them but look at yourself first. I will take a good look at myself. With all that we know about Jesus' resurrection we should be living every day two inches away from the empty tomb, but do we? Forgive me dear Savior, for failing to fully grasp how wonderful it is to say 24/7 "The Lord is my Shepherd!"

Walking with hope restored

And now let's look more closely at Jesus as he reveals the truth of what really happened the past three days. How would you paint the face of Jesus as he opens their hearts to the Scriptures? Would you not show extreme joy and excitement, the same joy our Savior still has as he miraculously opens the Scriptures to you today? "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Jesus hits the nail on the head. He always does. He is spot on. They were foolish and slow of heart for not believing and seeing what the prophets had made clear to them.

How you ever heard someone say, "He is not the brightest bulb in the room" or "She is not the sharpest knife in the drawer?" That was not the tone of voice Jesus used when he called them foolish. There is nothing but love of the highest order as he leads them from slough of despond to the highest mountains of hope. Jesus joyfully tells them, "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Jesus wants them to know that the Messiah did not come to this earth redeem Israel or establish some Great Society or New World Order. He came to suffer and die to redeem us from our sin. He opened their eyes to the Old Testament Scriptures that clearly tell us what really happened on the cross. The Old Testament Scriptures tell us why Jesus went to the cross with such astounding clarity. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The punishment for our peace was upon him." Every week we gather for worship we are keenly aware of the huge debt of sin that we have accumulated. There is not a religion in the world or no amount of human effort that remove even a smallest fraction of that debt. The Old Testament Scriptures tell us Jesus has done it all for us. The Old Testament spoke of the suffering Savior rising from the dead with the words, "He will see the light of life." It says, "And beginning with Moses and the Prophets he explained to them what is said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

Seven miles. Seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The birds are singing, the flowers are blooming, the sun is setting. Sad faces are now happy faces. They did not want their walk with this amazing stranger to come to an end. They invite them to join them with these endearing words, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening, the day is almost over." When Jesus opens your mind and heart to see him in the pages of the Bible, you want to be close to Jesus. You want him

to stay with you and bring even greater peace and hope and joy into your life. They sit down for some food. Jesus takes the bread. He gives thanks. "Then their eyes were opened they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight." They would never forget those moments with Jesus for they said, "Were our hearts not burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Seven miles. Seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus and seven miles back from Emmaus to Jerusalem. Never mind that the sun has set in the west, and the birds are no longer singing, and you have to walk down the path under a waning Passover moon. When Jesus brings hope to you when you were drowning in despair, you want to walk and yes even run with the good news, "He is risen! He is risen indeed!"

A man walked along the beach. He only had a short time to live. He watched the sun setting. He thought of Jesus walking with the disciples. He returned and penned these words, "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide, The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee. Help of the helpless, Oh abide with me." Amen.