

**Easter 3**  
**April 30, 2017**

*"Jesus, Stay with Us and Restore Our Hope"*

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**LUKE 24:13-35**

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**N**ow that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> 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?" <sup>19</sup> "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. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." <sup>25</sup> He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. <sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> 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?" <sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." <sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Two elderly men were fishing for bass on a small lake. As they rowed their aluminum boat near the weed beds, one man stood up to cast his lure. He lost his balance, the boat capsized and both of them fell into the water. They did not know how to swim and they were not wearing their life jackets. As they struggled to stay afloat they began pulling each other down. Thankfully someone nearby tossed them a life jacket and pulled them to safety.

Two followers of Jesus are drowning in depression and despair as they walk the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Its spring. The grass is green. The flowers are blooming. The birds are singing. They have lost all hope because they have seen Jesus condemned

to death and crucified on a cross and buried in a tomb. They share their sorrow with other but they have no hope Jesus is the Christ and their Savior as they pull each other down.

Have you ever come close to drowning, not in water, but in the problems of life that pull you down and take your eyes off of Jesus? The problems at work, the problems in your family, the problems with finances and the problems with your own self and your weakness of faith seem more than you can bear. And it becomes worse when your best friend or your life long marriage partner share the same views.

What is it about this account of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus that so deeply touches us and affects our lives? We know what it is like to take our eyes off of Jesus and lose sight of the hope that is ours whether we face good times or bad. We know what is like to have Jesus come to us and rescue us. Today we want to speak to you on this theme, **“Jesus, Stay with Us and Restore Our Hope.”**

### **Hope is lost**

There is no other way to say this. The two disciples who followed Jesus have lost their hope. “Now the same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.” It’s the same day. It is the day that Jesus rose from the dead. The reports have come in from the women and from Peter and John that the tomb is empty. Do these two disciples go to the tomb and examine it for themselves? Do they dwell on Jesus’ promise to rise on the third day? No, they assume the worst.

It says, “They were talking with each other about everything that happened.” They were drowning in despair. They were pulling each other down. They were assuming Jesus died and was a total failure and total disappointment. They didn’t have a clear view of God’s plan to rescue people from their sin through the death and resurrection of his Son.

When I was a pastor in Santa Barbara, there was a girl named Jennifer who came to our Sunday school through friends. She was baptized and never missed a Sunday even though her parents were not believers. Then she stopped coming. I called her on the phone and asked about coming to church and Sunday school. She said, “Pastor, I prayed for a horse and Jesus didn’t answer my prayers. I don’t want to come to church and Sunday school.” When things don’t work out the way we want them to work out it is so easy to become disappointed with who Jesus is, and what he has done to save us and his plans for our lives.

You can see how much these disciples were drowning in despair by their responses to the stranger who begins walking along with them. This stranger is Jesus. They do not recognize him because Jesus miraculously kept their eyes from seeing that it was him. Jesus interrupts a very intense conversation. They were talking about everything that had happened. They kept discussing it intensely. In all their words about how awful everything was, there are no positive words to remind each other that Jesus promised he would rise from the dead. Resurrection words are not part of their vocabulary.

Jesus came up to them. He saw the worried and concerned looks on their faces. He heard the sadness and sorrow and hopelessness in the words they shared with each other. Do

you think Jesus sees the days your face is downcast? Do you think he hears your voice when it is filled with sadness and sorrow and worry and concern? Sure he does. He is at the right hand of God. He knows you better than you know yourself. As the old spiritual says, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows but Jesus." Psalm 139 says, "O Lord you have searched me and you know me... You are familiar with all my ways." "Jesus knows our every weakness, Take it to the Lord in prayer."

The depth of their sadness and sorrow can further be seen in the way they respond to Jesus when he asks them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They almost seem to lose their patience with this caring stranger who asks them about this intense conversation they are having. Cleopas impatiently asks Jesus, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" Jesus says, "What things?" Oh, don't you see the Savior drawing these dear disciples out of their despair by asking them "What things?" He is given them a chance to explain what they are thinking so he can show them how foolish they are for not thinking about the resurrection from the dead.

Oh how they pour their hearts out to this total stranger who seems to genuinely care about what they are going through. Oh how confused they are about Jesus as they say, "About Jesus of Nazareth. He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and the people." Yes, Jesus was a great prophet, but he was so much more than a prophet. In their confusion they have lost sight of the fact Jesus is their Lord and God. All they can talk about is the terrible death he died at the hands of the Jewish leaders and Roman government. And they pour out their hearts about how disappointed they were in him. They hoped he would be a great king who would deliver the nation of Israel from its problems and troubles. They even talk about a report they heard from certain women and some of the disciples that the tomb was empty. And they share their disappointment because Jesus said he would rise the third day and now it is the third day and they have not yet seen him.

Imagine for a moment that all the pieces of the puzzle have been put into place and there is one piece left. How easy it would be to put this one piece into place. Or imagine a Wheel of Fortune screen with this words "Christ is risen" with the "r" missing in "risen." We marvel how these disciples can lose their hope when everything happened just as Jesus said it would and just as God planned it would.

Be careful about pointing a finger at these two disciples without realizing three fingers are pointing back at you. In the lowest moments of life it is easy to lose touch with the reality that Jesus has risen just as he said. Martin Luther was going through such a low time in his life. Thankfully he had a loving wife who knew how to help him during this terrible funk in his life. Katie Luther dressed in black mourning clothes to greet her husband when he came to breakfast. He was shocked and asked, "Katie who has died!" Then she told him since he was living as if Jesus had died and were not alive, she thought it would be best to wear mourning clothes. Jesus has so many different ways of coming to us in our lowest moments of life. He brings people in our lives who help us see that Christ has risen. He has risen indeed. He sends us the Comforter who will teach us all things and bring everything to our memory. Oh, what love we seen in Jesus as he helps these disciples who are drowning without hope.

## **Hope is restored**

"He said to them, 'How foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' Jesus is not being cruel to them as he calls them "fools" for not believing everything the prophets have spoken especially about his suffering and death and resurrection. Perhaps you have heard people say about someone, "He's not the brightest bulb in the room," or "She's not the sharpest knife in the drawer." Such words can be harmful and harsh and hurtful. There is nothing but the deepest love on the face of Jesus as he says to them, "How foolish you are.."

As they walk along Jesus opens the Old Testament Scriptures and shows them verse by verse why he had to suffer and die. He started with Moses in Genesis and took them through the Prophets especially the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah predicted with great clarity and specificity that Jesus would be wounded for our transgressions. He predicted he would rise from the dead with the words, "And he will see the light of life."

It is spring. The grass is green. The flowers are blooming. The sun is starting to set in the western sky and sad faces are turned into joy. Great artists love to depict this joy on the faces of these disciples. Later they would say, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Look at the joy on their faces. See yourself in their faces. Look back at your life. See all the joyful moments when Jesus opened the Scriptures to you and showed you the reason for his suffering and death for your sin. See the mountainous debt of sin in your life that condemns you, including those times you have lost sight of your great hope. Now see these sins completely paid for in Christ.

They listened to Jesus open their Scriptures to them. As the sun is setting in the west, they strongly urge Jesus, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening." When you hope is restored you want Jesus to stay with you. You want him to keep that flame of hope burning brightly in your life. So it was with Henry Francis Lyte, a pastor serving a poor fishing village in England who was dying of tuberculosis. He preached his last sermon to his little flock. That evening he watched the sun setting in the west. He thought of his life coming to an end. He also thought of Jesus coming to these two disciples and restoring their hope. He went back to his study wrote the words of this popular hymn, "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.