

## Struggling to Accept

Lesson for April 9, 2023

**Unit II:** Experiencing the Resurrection

**Scriptural Background:** Luke 24:13-49

**Printed Text:** Luke 24:13-27, 30-31

**Key verse:** “Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.” (Luke 24:31, NIV)

In northern Chile, between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, lies a narrow strip of land where the sun shines every day! Clouds gather so seldom over the valley that one can say, "It almost never rains here!" Morning after morning the sun rises brilliantly over the tall mountains to the east. Each noon it shines brightly overhead, and every evening it brings a picturesque sunset. Although storms are often seen rising high in the mountains, and heavy fog banks hang their gray curtains far over the sea, Old Sol continues to shed his warming rays upon this "favored" and protected strip of territory. One might imagine this area to be an earthly paradise, but is far from that! It is a sterile and desolate wilderness! There are no streams of water, and nothing grows there.

We often long for total sunshine and continuous joy in life, and we desire to avoid the heartaches that bring tears to our eyes. Like that sunny, unfertile part of Chile, however, life without clouds and even an occasional downpour would not be productive or challenging. But though showers do come, they will also end, and the sun will shine again. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Psalm 30:5).

*Our Daily Bread*

In today's lesson, the sadness of the travelers on the road to Emmaus was soon brightened by the SON.

### Key Terms

1. **Crucified** (verse 20) – Put (someone) to death by nailing or binding them to a cross; fenced with stakes.
2. **Prophet** (verse 19) – A person who speaks for God or a deity, or by divine inspiration. In the Old Testament, a person chosen to speak for God and to guide the people of Israel. An interpreter or forth-teller of the divine will.
3. **Redeem(ed)** (verse 21) – Release(d) by paying a ransom. Having been saved or delivered from sin or its consequences. Liberate(d).
4. **Talking** (verse 15) – To consort with, converse with; commune with.
5. **Visit** (verse 18) – To go to and stay with (a person or family) or at (a place) for a short time for reasons of sociability, politeness, business, curiosity, etc.
6. **Walk** (verse 17) – To advance or travel on foot at a moderate speed or pace; proceed by steps.

## Lesson Background

The resurrection is a public testimony of Christ's release from His undertaking as guarantee, and evidence of the Father's acceptance of His work of redemption. It is a victory over death and the grave for all his followers.

The importance of Christ's resurrection will be seen when we consider that if He rose the gospel is true, and if He rose not, it is false. His resurrection from the dead makes it manifest that His sacrifice was accepted. Our justification was secured by his obedience to the death, and therefore he was raised from the dead Ro 4:25 His resurrection is a proof that he made a full atonement for our sins, that his sacrifice was accepted as a satisfaction to divine justice, and his blood a ransom for sinners. It is also a pledge of the resurrection of all believers (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:47-49; 1 John 3:2) As He lives, they shall live also.

It proved Him to be the Son of God, inasmuch as it authenticated all His claims John 2:19; 10:17 "If Christ did not rise, the whole scheme of redemption is a failure, and all the predictions and anticipations of its glorious results for time and for eternity, for men and for angels of every rank and order, are proved to be fantasies. 'But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.' Therefore the Bible is true from Genesis to Revelation. The kingdom of darkness has been overthrown, Satan has fallen as lightning from heaven, and the triumph of truth over error, of good over evil, of happiness over misery is for ever secured." (Hodge)

With reference to the report which the Roman soldiers were bribed Matthew 28:12-14 to circulate concerning Christ's resurrection, "his disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept," Matthew Henry in his "Commentary," under John 20:1-10, fittingly remarks, "The grave-clothes in which Christ had been buried were found in very good order, which serves for an evidence that his body was not 'stolen away while men slept.' Robbers of tombs have been known to take away 'the clothes' and leave the body; but none ever took away 'the body' and left the clothes, especially when they were 'fine linen' and new Mark 15:46 Anyone would rather choose to carry a dead body in its clothes than naked. Or if they that were supposed to have stolen it would have left the grave-clothes behind, yet it cannot be supposed they would find leisure to 'fold up the linen.'"

It's interesting that Luke doesn't try to describe the resurrection or explain it. Rather his account focuses on what eyewitnesses see. How they react. How they begin to grasp the momentous event that is indescribable.

In this passage, Luke narrates the story of a walk from Jerusalem to the nearby town of Emmaus, culminating in an appearance of Jesus himself. As you read and study this passage, look for what Jesus is seeking to drive home to his disciples, here represented by his two travelling companions.

## Lesson In Depth

### I. Distorted Vision (Luke 24:13-21)

**Two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus:** On this Sunday, these two disciples traveled to Emmaus from Jerusalem. As they walked together (probably returning from the Passover celebration in Jerusalem) it gave them opportunity to talk.

These weren't famous apostles, they were simple and half-anonymous followers of Jesus. "I take it as characteristic of the Lord that in the glory of His resurrection life He gave Himself with such fullness of disclosure to these unknown and undistinguished men... He still reveals Himself to lowly hearts. Here is the Savior for the common man. Here is the Lord who does not spurn the humble." (Morrison)

"There is considerable uncertainty about the original location of the village of Emmaus. Luke mentions that it was about seven miles (literally, '*sixty stadia*') from Jerusalem. If he meant round-trip, the reference would fit rather nicely with a town Josephus identified as Emmaus, which he located thirty stadia from Jerusalem." (Pate)

"Luke almost certainly obtained his information from one of the two disciples, and probably in writing. The account has all the effect of personal experience." (Plummer)

**They conversed and reasoned:** As they talked, they spoke of the things that were biggest on their hearts – **all of these things which had happened**, the things regarding the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus.

**Jesus Himself drew near and went with them:** Jesus came along side these disciples and **went with them** for a while. Cleopas and his fellow disciple are deeply engaged in a discussion at the beginning of the lesson. Apparently, they aren't walking too fast, because Jesus, travelling the same direction, overtakes them and then slows to walk along with them.

**What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?:** "What are you talking about?" Jesus asks. In saying this, Jesus skillfully played along with the conversation, encouraging the men to reveal their hearts. Even though He knew their hearts, there was value in them saying it to Jesus.

At that, the two abruptly stop, "stand still". Their faces are "downcast." This is the Greek adjective "pertaining to having a look suggestive of gloom or sadness -- sad, gloomy, sullen, dark." This is too heavy a subject to broach with a stranger while casually walking along. They must explain.

**Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened here in these days?:** Cleopas is surprised that the stranger hasn't heard about these things that have been going on in Jerusalem. Perhaps he is only a recent visitor to the city and is just passing through, Cleopas suggests.

**The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth:** The men explained what they did know about Jesus.

- They knew His name and where He was from.
- They knew He was a **Prophet**.
- They knew He was **mighty in deed and word**.
- They knew He was **crucified**.
- They knew He promised to **redeem Israel**.
- They knew others had said He rose from the dead.

**But we had hoped:** These disciples had a hope disappointed. Their hope was not truly disappointed; but in some ways their hope was misguided (that it was He who was going to redeem Israel). Jesus would show them that their true hope was fulfilled in Him and His resurrection.

The promised Davidic Messiah is widely anticipated to redeem Israel from her enemies and to set up the Kingdom of God afresh. "Redeem", the basic meaning is "to free by paying a ransom, redeem," but here it has the extended meaning "to liberate from an oppressive situation, set free, rescue, redeem." While we may think of Christ's work as a spiritual redemption from sin brought about by means of the cross, Cleopas and his friend are thinking of a military redemption, setting Israel free from Roman occupation. And, alas, this kind of redemption is impossible since Jesus is now dead. This is why they are so downcast.

The word "had hoped" (NIV) is the Greek verb *elpizō*, "to look forward to something, with the implication of confidence about something coming to pass, hope, hope for." In the imperfect tense it has the idea of continued action in the past, "were hoping." But now their hopes are dashed. Jesus had been crucified.

## II. **Rejecting Proof** (Luke 24: 22-24)

They are downcast, but also confused. Part of the day's events include an account from the women about Jesus being alive. They report this to Jesus as a curiosity, but clearly don't give it full credence or their demeanor would have been anything *but* downcast.

In Israel at that time Jewish rabbis disagreed over whether or not women could testify in court. Many thought their witness was unreliable, so if you're going to make up a story this isn't the best way to do it. But this is a proof the Bible's account is true. Instead of being written in a way so as to appear real in its culture and time, having men be the first witnesses, it's a historical account of what actually happened. But Cleopas and his traveling companion don't know about that. They have trouble believing the women, citing the other disciples who didn't see Jesus. But their memories are selective because in just a few verses (v34) they're going to remember that Jesus already appeared to Simon (Peter), which outside of this mention isn't shown in the gospel accounts.

When we're struggling, maybe fatigued or frustrated, and can't see Jesus and can only think of everything wrong with our lives, we should pause and check our memories and ask, "Am I being selective in what I am remembering?" How has Jesus done good things for me and shown himself to me in ways in the past. If he has been good for years and years why would I assume he would stop now? Lord, may we not have selective memories but memories full of the goodness of Christ.

But now it's time for Jesus to answer them. And he actually begins to open their eyes to him, but not yet in the visible way they would prefer, and we would too. Instead, He points to himself in the Old Testament.

### III. Corrected Vision (Luke 24:25-27, 30-31)

**Slow of heart to believe:** Jesus told them that the problem with their belief was more in their **heart** than their *head*. We often think the main obstacles to belief are in the head, but they are actually in the **heart**.

**Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?** Jesus scolds them for not having hope and not realizing what has really happened. They should have believed what all the prophets have spoken, that the Messiah would suffer first and then be received in glory.

They thought the Messiah was going to be a political liberator, but Jesus shows them this isn't what the Messiah was going to do. He didn't come to be victorious like a military leader, but to achieve victory another kind of way, through his own suffering. Now this is a confusing concept to them and all Jews because it doesn't clearly say in the Old Testament that the Messiah is going to suffer. *Psalms 22* and *Isaiah 53*, tell us about one who is chosen by God and will suffer, especially the Suffering Servant of *Isaiah 53*.

- They were common, simple men.
- They had lost hope.
- They had lost joy – a sense of spiritual desertion.
- They had not lost desire – they still loved to talk about Jesus.
- They had not yet seen the *necessity* of the cross.

**Beginning in Moses and all the Prophets, expounded to them in all the Scriptures:** This describes *how* Jesus taught them. He told them all about the Messiah.

As the two travelers listen to Jesus talking they begin to realize they've missed something. Jesus had come to liberate his people, but not as a mighty warrior but as a sacrificial lamb. But still they don't recognize the one standing in front of them is Jesus. But now they've seen him in the Scriptures and so they're ready.

Jesus pretends to keep going but like good hosts they invite Jesus in to stay with them the night.

**Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him:** Though it was not what might be called a sacramental meal, there was something in it that showed them who the mysterious and wise guest was. Before their eyes were restrained (Luke 24:16); now **their eyes were opened**. In the intimacy of table fellowship, as Jesus breaks the bread and offers the blessing, they suddenly become aware of who he really is!

Morrison suggested several ways that they might have recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread:

- The way He took the place of host with “the quiet air of majesty.”
- The way He gave the blessing over the meal they would eat.
- The pierced hands that gave them the bread.

Jesus may be right in front of you, walking with you and sitting down with you at every meal – and your eyes could be restrained from seeing Him. We therefore should pray that God would open our eyes to see Jesus as He is, as being with us all the time.

But as soon as they recognize him, he disappears. He is gone. "Vanished" (NIV) or "disappeared" (KJV).

### **Lesson Summary**

Like Christians and churches who are blinded by preoccupation with their own immediate difficulties, these two disciples' sadness and hopelessness seemed to prevent them from seeing God's redemptive purpose in things that had happened. This lesson offers today's disciples – us – a parallel opportunity to rediscover Christ's presence in their lives, to gain fresh understanding of God's transforming grace and to form friendships that foster faith and support spiritual maturity.

This biblical account can speak to us when we feel that we are not on a positive journey forward, when both justice and peace seem far away, and when we feel that we are simply retreating or walking slowly into a future that we dread or fear. This story speaks to those who might think they have no energy for anything as positive as a pilgrimage at all, and whom God comes to meet as they struggle to put one foot in front of another. It is a story that is very honest about hopelessness and loss, but also about how God comes to find us in those places. It shows how God walks beside us and can transform even the deepest bereavement and loss into a journey of hope. This is a story that invites those who are deep in sorrow to walk in hope again.

Christ is not in the grave. He is risen, but even as the risen Lord who has ascended, He is still never remote to us though we may not be relating to His love and presence. He is always near and interested in us wherever we go whether in the city, in the country, on the road, in the garden, in the church, in the home, at work, every place. He is always there, ***but do we perceive His presence?*** We can allow our hearts to burn within us as we too walk with the Risen One and have our eyes opened by words and actions of gratitude and in the simple but sacred ritual of breaking and sharing bread in hospitality.