

Sermon: Luke 24:13-24
 The Road to Emmaus
 Tampa Covenant Church
 April 27, 2025

Proposition: The risen Christ draws near to us, walks patiently beside us in all of life and by his Spirit enables us to live out the hope of his resurrection.

FCF: Spiritual blindness to the truth of the resurrection.

RHF: Christ's death and resurrection provides the hope we need to live faithfully in this world as we look to the world to come.

(#1) Introduction:

Last week we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord, bringing us into the Eastertide season; thus, our Easter celebration continues for the next 50 days, culminating in Pentecost Sunday when we will celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. This season, we continue in Luke 24; focusing on the disciple's encounters with our risen Savior. If you set aside time to read the chapter this week, you'll notice all of the events unfold in one day. But we're gonna take our time and unpack each encounter, discovering how Christ's resurrection from the dead challenges life's assumptions and transforms us into a people of hope who live for Christ.

Today, we'll meet two weary travelers making their way to Emmaus. In the aftermath of the crucifixion, they're miserable and hope seems a distant memory. But Jesus draws near to them and asks questions that reveal the despair in their hearts and their myopic view of his person and work. Whether you're a follower of Christ or one who's exploring the Christian faith, the walk to Emmaus shows us that our risen Savior is always near; no matter what we're going through. He walks patiently with us in helping us to embrace the sheer beauty of his sacrificial love and the glorious hope that is now ours through his resurrection from the dead.

Our Risen Savior Draws Near: *Walks patiently with us (vv.13-19a)*

(#2) Luke tells us in v.13, it's "that very day"; resurrection afternoon. Earlier that morning, the women went to the tomb and found it empty. Hope had dawned but there was some serious confusion among Jesus' closest followers: *Was the body stolen? What exactly happened?* Now here are these two travelers, journeying home to a village called Emmaus, about a seven-mile distance. As they walk this stretch of dusty road, there's plenty to discuss in trying to make sense of the whole ordeal.

According to Luke, they're talking about "**all these things that had happened.**" Now we already know what had happened. *"Nothing less than the fulfillment of God's divine plan to reconcile all of creation to himself through the person and work of his Son."* Something cosmic happened but these travelers are clueless. And as we continue walking through this text, we'll see something our literary folks call dramatic irony. Which entails a contradiction of what the character is thinking and what the audience knows to be true. In other words, we know more than the characters in the story and we can't wait until they figure it out.¹ We see this type of irony in movies; tv shows, cartoons and plays... think of those **(#3)** scary movies! Danger is lurking just around the corner and the characters are totally oblivious while the audience is yelling, don't go in there! Dramatic irony heightens drama and creates tension. Here in v.15, we're now invited into the drama and **(#4) tension of the text.**

While they're discussing the things that had happened, Jesus draws near, gets in stride and we're told *their eyes were kept from recognizing him*.² Sounds a little tricky but it's not the first time we read this in Luke's gospel.³ Their inability to recognize Jesus could've stemmed from unbelief or maybe they were too weighed down by grief. But ultimately it seems this was Jesus' doing. In other words, he's exercising patience in enabling them to come to a saving knowledge of his (#5 Blank) person and work. Growing up in Ohio, my brother and I never exercised much patience when it came to eating pears from the trees in our backyard. As soon as they looked big enough, we'd pick and eat; never waiting for them to ripen. Thus, we developed a taste for hard and sour pears. To this day, both of us refuse to eat ripe, soft pears because we're too used to the sourness stemming from our impatience, not the sweetness that comes from waiting. There's a sweetness emerging out of the drama of this story and being brought to fruition through the divine patience of Jesus. He isn't rushing anything; rather he's allowing the truth of the resurrection to ripen in the heart of these travelers. As the drama continues to unfold, we'll see it's not simply the physical sight of Jesus that leads to salvation but believing in his person and work as revealed in the pages of scripture.⁴

So, Jesus doesn't roll up and (#6) let em' off the hook, rather he asks a question, *"what is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?"* And they just stop in the middle of the road with that gloomy look on their faces. And Cleopas⁵ gets a little snippy, *"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"* We don't know the identity of the other traveler, could've been Cleopas' friend, his wife, or son but whoever it was, I'm sure they were nodding in full agreement. If we put it in our context, think back to 9-11, the next day you're just outside of New York City, walking and talking with a friend. Out of nowhere, a stranger joins you and asks what you're talking about. You and your friend reply.... "All of the events from yesterday," "What events?" You would probably get a little snippy too.

(#7 Blank) They're rebuking Jesus for his seeming ignorance but in reality, they're the ignorant ones. Because Jesus is the only one who knew the things that had happened: He rode into Jerusalem that Palm Sunday. He felt the sting of being betrayed, arrested, and tried unfairly. He absorbed the beatings and mocking. He endured the pain and agony of the cross. He died and succumbed to the darkness of the tomb. But on the third day he experienced the power of God in raising his dead body to new life for their salvation and our salvation. And knowing all of this, Jesus doesn't lose his cool; neither is he playing resurrection games. He's drawn near to them to draw out what is lying in the core of their hearts; their spiritual blindness to the truth of his resurrection. (#8) So, he invites further dialogue....*What things?*

The Reality of the Resurrection: Overcoming Despair (vv.19-25)

The travelers responded by (#9) talking about Jesus' life: They knew he hailed from Nazareth. They recognized his personhood and his unique calling, in referring to him as, *"a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all people."* Perhaps these were the things they witnessed firsthand during his earthly ministry. Next, they spoke about Jesus' death, *"how the chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him."* (#10) Then in v.21, they reveal the condition of their hearts, *"But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel, Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened."* (#11) They conclude by describing how the women amazed them. They found the tomb empty and reported seeing a vision of angels who declared Jesus was

alive. And how others like Peter, went to the tomb and found it just as the women said but they didn't see Jesus either.

Now if you're paying attention to what these travelers are saying, you see where they're coming up short. They pretty much repeat what Jesus said of (#12) himself in Luke 9:22 and what the angels reminded the women of at the empty tomb, "*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.*" Cleopas and his companion have omitted the jewel on the wedding band of the gospel story; the resurrection. For them the third day didn't signal the good news of resurrection; rather it signaled a loss of hope because they assumed their Savior was dead.⁶ (#13 Blank) Again, they were hoping Jesus was the one who would redeem Israel from the oppression and misery they were suffering at the hands of Rome. They were hoping he was the Messiah, the one spoken of old who would usher in a new era of prosperity and flourishing in Israel. They're describing an event that should bring joy and thankfulness but instead it brings them sadness and despair because they're not putting things together. The very one they're longing for is walking right beside them but in their grief, they don't recognize him.

We read this story and it's easy to identify the stranger as Jesus because Luke helps us! But what happens when we're the characters in the story of life? And all of this dramatic irony becomes our reality? When that happens our perspective shifts. And if we lose sight of the resurrection, we'll just point our skis straight downhill and crash headlong into the wall of despair. That's the danger of spiritual blindness; it grants us a narrow-minded view of our circumstances; preventing us from opening our eyes to see what our Savior is doing in our hearts and lives (#14) in midst of it all. We read Psalm 34 together where the Psalmist declares in v.18, "*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.*" This is one of those verses that you have to meditate, ponder and chew on in allowing the truth of it to work deeply into our hearts and serve as an anchor for our souls. The Christian journey will get rough and rugged because despair is always lurking around the corner of life. And when we find ourselves in that estate, it can't be "show me a sign." It must be trust in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and how it applies to our lives. That our Savior is risen from the dead and he's still very near to us in all of life, interceding for us and drawing us out of the darkness of despair into the marvelous light of resurrection hope.

(#15 Blank) He does this in ways that are ordinary but beautiful: sunshine, a cool breeze, a kind word, a listening ear and a constant presence. Things we often take for granted...the sun is supposed to shine the breeze is supposed to blow...no it's not; none of it happens apart from God's grace. That's so and so...they're supposed to call, they're supposed to show up. No, they're not...that's also an out working of God's grace. See, when your sisters and brothers in Christ show up or pick up the phone in your time of need...that's the ministry of the Spirit of God working in tangible ways that are meaningful and profound. And in all of these moments, our Lord inquires of us and draws us out with surgical precision. In doing so... he uncovers layer by layer what lies at the deepest core of our hearts. Our Savior is at work, he hasn't pressed pause because he's not dead. He's alive and he's fulfilling his divine plan in our lives in conforming us more and more into his image. This is the truth of the gospel that escaped Cleopas and his companion; but by God's grace it must reside deeply in our hearts by faith.

The Reality of the Resurrection: *Living out the hope of the resurrection*

(#16) Australian Theologian Leon Morris once wrote, *“The same power that brought Christ back from the dead is operative within those who are Christ’s. The resurrection is an ongoing thing.”*⁷ That’s so true because if we remove the resurrection from the gospel story, we’re left with another account of a good man who died a martyr’s death for a noble cause. And like countless others in history, that’s where the story ends. (#17 Blank) Therefore, the resurrection isn’t just an event we merely remember and celebrate once a year; it’s a reality we’re called to live out by faith. The very fact that we are worshiping together again this Lord’s Day is evidence that the risen life of our Savior continues in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. By God’s grace, we’ve been brought into the family of God and given new life. And Christ’s resurrection shows us that discipleship isn’t just for a season of life; it’s for all of life and into eternity. And as we journey to eternity, we don’t rest on our gumption to hang in there through the ups and downs of life; we live in full dependence on the enabling power of the Spirit.

Morris is simply echoing the (#18) Apostle Paul’s words in Rom 8, *“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”* Through the Spirit’s dwelling in our hearts, we experience and live out the power and presence of our risen Lord. Not only that, the Spirit has marked us as belonging to Christ, making us citizens of a heavenly kingdom. (#19 Blank) Reminding us that through the resurrection of Christ, the kingdom of God has already come and will come in its fullness when our Lord returns. Until then, we must live with Spirit filled, resurrection hope in this world. And this hope is not a wish or a desire for things to get better. It’s confidence in the fact that the Lord is at work right now redeeming this world (as far as the curse is found) and he’s using us.

As God’s redeemed on earth, we’re not called to huddle together and wait around for that great and glorious day. No, we’ve been sent into respective mission fields requiring laborers and heralds who declare and demonstrate the good news of the gospel and the power of Christ’s resurrection. And the best place to start is where we’ve been planted. We engage our neighborhoods, work places, social groups and affirm what is good and beautiful according to God’s perfect design. We find ways to do life with those who are in desperate need of resurrection hope. Show hospitality; accept hospitality. Extend mercy and kindness. Act with justice and fairness. Mourn with those who mourn; weep with those who weep.

Conclusion:

And we don’t live this way to earn merit badges in the Kingdom of God. No, we live this way because we are a people who’ve been transformed by the glorious resurrection of our Savior. And by his Spirit we’ve been empowered to live out the hope of his resurrection, knowing with certainty that everything broken in this world will one day be made whole. And every wrong will be made right according to his good and perfect will. And as we endeavor to do his will, may he grant us the grace to be faithful in our witness, patient in our waiting and thankful for the hope that fills our hearts through his glorious victory over the grave.

¹ <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-dramatic-irony-309689>

² ἐπιγνῶναι (*epignonai*) is a passive construct denoting the “spiritual blindness” of the disciples was concealment by God; not of their own doing or the work of Satan.

³ See Luke 9:22 and 18:33-34

⁴ Philip Ryken, Luke, Volume 2: Chapters 13-24, Reformed Expository Commentary, (Philipsburg, NJ: R&R Publishing), 644.

⁵ According to some, Cleopas’ companion was Luke himself, who was too modest to include his own name. Other proposed possibilities include Cleopas’ wife or son, but there is not enough evidence to support any specific identification.

Major Contributors and Editors. (2016). Cleopas In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁶ Ryken, 647.

⁷ John Blanchard, *The Complete Gathered Gold, A treasury of quotations for Christians*, (New York, NY: Evangelical Press, 1984), Logos Software.