

Encounter Jesus

Luke 24:13-35

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We're all on a journey, aren't we? Easter can be a time when unfulfilled expectations rise to the surface. My guess is some of you have experienced doubt, disappointment, depression, disillusionment, defeat, despair, and perhaps the death of someone close to you.

I can relate. My name is Cleopas. I made an appearance in the last chapter of the Gospel of Luke if you'd like to follow along. Here's the main thing I learned: *Jesus meets us where we are so He can send us where He wants us.*

My friend and I had journeyed to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and got caught up in the crowd when Jesus entered the capital riding on a donkey. We had been waiting a long time for a king to free us from Roman oppression and set up His righteous reign.

Things didn't work out as we had hoped. A week later our expectations were dashed on the day you know as Easter. We were headed home to Emmaus, located about seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. That distance is like walking from here to the Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds in Davenport.

As we walked, we talked back and forth about everything that happened. We recounted the excitement of palm branches waving at the beginning of the week only to be followed by soldiers whipping Jesus at the end of the week. We were trying to figure out how Jesus could go from the victor to the victim so quickly.

And then, while we were talking, we heard footsteps behind us and a man suddenly started walking with us. We didn't recognize Him but it might have been because our heads and hearts were filled with hopelessness.

Then He turned and asked a question that made us stop in our tracks: ***“What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?”*** I'm sure He could tell we were bummed out by the gloomy looks on our faces. As our feet faltered, our faces fell. We were sad and cynical, unsettled and unsatisfied.

I finally blurted out with exasperation, ***“Are you the only Visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”*** We assumed He was a Passover pilgrim like us, just visiting for a short while. But I couldn’t believe He didn’t know all that had happened. Everyone was talking about the betrayal by Judas, the arrest, the scourging, the trial and the crucifixion of the One called Christ. Later, the Apostle Paul put it like this in Acts 26:26: ***“For this has not been done in a corner.”***

I guess this traveler was trying to get us to talk because he asked another question, ***“What things?”*** I decided to lay it out for him: ***“Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before all the people.”*** I knew where Jesus was from and who He was...or I thought I did. I told him Jesus *was* a prophet because it was all in the past tense. He was gone now. But when He was alive, He was mighty in His walk and in His talk.

Then my voice dropped as I explained how the religious leaders condemned and crucified Him. We thought He was the Promised One who would release us from bondage but our hopes were hammered to the cross. Our dreams died when He died. And since this was now the third day since all this happened, we decided just to head home.

I told him, ***“but we had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel.”*** Because our hope had evaporated, our hearts were shattered. As we trudged home as if leaving a funeral, we were living proof of Proverbs 13:12: ***“Hope deferred makes the heart sick...”*** Honestly, we felt like God had let us down. Some of you can relate.

Then I remembered hearing about some events that happened earlier that day so I told the Visitor: ***“Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.”*** I found their account amazing but I discounted it, thinking they were just making it up.

Shortly after the women went to the cemetery, Peter and John ran to the tomb and also found it empty. That may sound like more evidence He was alive but the fact is, ***“Him they did not see.”*** I made this point emphatically to the Visitor. The rumors of the resurrection were not credible as far as we were concerned...and that’s why we were headed home.

I didn't expect what happened next. Instead of commiserating with us, the Visitor confronted us: ***“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”*** He essentially told us we weren't using our minds or engaging our wills to believe.

Then He asked a question that really rattled me: ***“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”*** Frankly I had forgotten all the passages that speak of the suffering servant and had only focused on the conquering Christ.

Unbelievably, for the rest of the day the Visitor preached a sermon that started in Genesis and ended in Malachi (you thought your pastor was long-winded!): ***“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”*** I was struck by how he found Christ on every page of the Old Testament.

I won't take the time to share everything but here are some highlights.

- While we were walking, the Visitor reminded us of how God walked with Adam and Eve in Eden. When they sinned, they hid from God because they found themselves to be naked. Because sin had caused them shame and guilt, Genesis 3:21 says God covered them with the skin of animals, showing that a substitute sacrifice was necessary to cover sin: ***“And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”*** This was a precursor to what Jesus did for us as He gave His life to take away our sins.
- The Tabernacle and Temple prefigured Jesus coming to “tabernacle” among us when He took on flesh and blood as stated in John 1:14: ***“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”***
- The Visitor smiled when making the connection between the Passover Lamb of Exodus 12:21-23 and the Savior being sacrificed during that week's Passover celebration: ***“Go...and kill the Passover lamb...and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you.”*** Jesus is linked to this event in 1 Corinthians 5:7: ***“For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”*** Those who apply the blood of Jesus to their lives will pass over from death to life.

Then He moved to the Book of Psalms. Here are just a few selections.

- Psalm 2:7 says, ***“You are my Son; today I have begotten you.”*** The Visitor reminded us what the Father declared in Matthew 3:17 when Jesus was baptized: ***“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”***
- As His sermon continued, He described how Psalm 16:10 points to the resurrection: ***“For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”***
- In Psalm 22:1, we heard the very words Jesus spoke from the cross: ***“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*** Later in this same Psalm, we heard of people shaking their heads in scorn, the piercing of His hands and feet, and the casting of lots for His clothing (verses 6-8, 16, 18).
- The Visitor almost chuckled at the thought of kings bowing before Jesus after He was born as predicted in Psalm 72:10-11: ***“May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!”*** That’s exactly what the wise men did!

The Visitor was deeply moved as He preached from the prophets.

- Written 700 years before Christ, Isaiah 7:14 clearly states the Messiah would be born of a virgin: ***“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”*** This is quoted verbatim in Matthew 1:23.
- Isaiah 53 is filled with precise prophecies of both the death and resurrection of Christ. As you may know, Jesus remained silent during His trial. This is foretold in Isaiah 53:7: ***“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth...”***
- The Visitor made a big deal of Micah 5:2, also written 700 years before Christ, because it describes the exact location of His birth. He actually laughed with joy as He recounted how a Roman census moved Mary and Joseph to this little town: ***“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel...”***
- The Visitor jolted our memories when He told us to think about what happened a week ago when Jesus rode a donkey and quoted Zechariah 9:9: ***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having***

salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

- Then He quoted Zechariah 12:10 which points to the response of people, including us, when Jesus was crucified: “...*When they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*”

After hearing the most mesmerizing message ever preached, we craved more so we asked the Visitor to spend additional time with us. When it looked like he was going to continue walking to the next town, we “*urged him strongly*” to stay with us for a simple supper. Actually, we pleaded and persuaded with great urgency because we didn’t want to lose this opportunity.

Next, He did something totally countercultural – instead of being our guest; He took on the role of host, almost like He owned the home! He had an air of authority about Him, coupled with great affection.

He picked up the bread, gave thanks for it, broke it and then distributed it to us. We immediately thought of the feeding of the 5,000 when Jesus did something similar. Even though we weren’t at the Last Supper, the disciples told us how Jesus broke bread in the upper room. As His hands tore the bread apart we saw the nail scars in His hands and gasped. It was Jesus! He was alive!

Before we could stand up and rejoice, He vanished! It’s as if He just went invisible. I turned to my buddy and asked, “*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?*” The fire of our faith that died at Calvary came back to life and burned within us.

We spent an entire day walking and talking with Jesus and now realized we had a commission to fulfill. *Jesus meets us where we are so He can send us where He wants us.*

We didn’t finish our meal. Even though it was dark and dangerous, we sprinted back to Jerusalem. As we ran we remembered other things Jesus said before He died, like Luke 9:22: “*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.*”

There was no way we could keep quiet after having an encounter with Jesus. When we arrived, we found the eleven behind locked doors (Judas had already offered himself) and before we could say anything, they shouted in unison, ***“The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”*** This was huge because Peter was the one who had bailed on Christ.

We told them at length what happened on our ‘walk to remember’ and how we recognized Jesus when He broke the bread. We were all jumping up and down with joy!

I’m going to stop there and allow your pastor to pull out some applications from this passage but if you were to keep reading you would discover that Jesus appeared to all of us in that room!

Encountering Jesus

Jesus meets us where we are so He can send us where He wants us.

1. Jesus walks with us when we’re wiped out, wounded, and worried. This week I read through all the Resurrection accounts in the four gospels and wrote down the raw emotions people expressed – *startled, afraid, troubled, alarmed, perplexed, trembling* and *weeping*. Then I made note of the emotions which were exhibited when they realized Jesus was alive – *burning hearts, great joy, marveled, astonishment* and *gladness*.

Jesus made this promise in John 14:18: ***“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”*** The two travelers did not recognize Jesus, but He was there. Likewise, He is with us, even when we think He is far away. He can meet you right here, in your car, at work or school, in your house, dorm room or apartment.

2. Find a friend who will faithfully field your questions. Are you distancing yourself from people because you’re discouraged? If you unplug, you will unravel. It’s time to find a companion who will walk the road of life with you, someone who can hold you accountable. If you already have someone like that, look around, is there anyone God wants you to reach out to? Proverbs 27:17: ***“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”***

3. Read the Bible on a regular basis. These two guys almost missed the message of Easter because they didn't understand the Bible. If you want your faith to grow, it's essential to read the Bible. Romans 10:17: ***“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.”*** From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures point to the Savior.

4. Embrace the evidence for the resurrection. The travelers heard about the empty tomb but didn't stick around to investigate. Sadly, they were blinded when the evidence was right in front of them. Their problem wasn't with their heads; it was with their hearts.

1 Corinthians 15:3-6 says, ***“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.”***

- The tomb was obviously empty as reported by the women and then by Peter and John.
- The testimony of multiple eyewitnesses is indisputable. Jesus makes three appearances alone in Luke 24 and 8 other appearances are recorded in the New Testament.
- The fulfillment of hundreds of Old Testament prophecies with pinpoint precision is profound.
- The accumulation of changed lives down through today is impossible to argue with. Just consider the two travelers who went from fear and discouragement to bold witnesses.

5. Come back to Edgewood each weekend to learn more about Christ from the Scriptures. We give primacy to preaching and teaching here. We believe the Bible needs to be taught so that we can apply it to our lives through our creative children's ministry all the way up to senior adults. If Jesus took time to explain, interpret and apply Scripture, then so must we.

The Bible says it's important to gather for worship and the Word. Listen to Hebrews 10:24-25: ***“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”***

You could make today the start of a new habit! Our spring and summer series is called, “Glad You Asked.” We’ll be giving biblical answers to common questions. Our topic next week will be, “*If God is so good, why do I hurt so badly?*”

6. Invite Jesus into your life today. Jesus won’t force Himself on you if He’s not really wanted but He always comes into the heart and home where He is invited. But He won’t come into your life without an invitation. Listen to John 1:12: “***But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.***”

Have you ever wondered why the Lord didn’t stay longer that first Easter night? It’s because He wanted His followers to walk with Him without His bodily presence...just like we must learn to do. I like what Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29: “***Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.***” 2 Corinthians 5:7 urges us to “***walk by faith, not by sight.***”

Remember this: *He might be invisible, but He is not absent.*

Jesus *did* come to redeem Israel and to redeem everyone. But redemption and renewal is only available through the new birth. The Visitor has come to make His home in your heart.

Plead with Him right now not to pass you by. Do it with fervency and urgency. This could be your only opportunity. It’s imperative for you to have a personal encounter with Jesus. Acts 10:43 says, “***To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.***”

Are you ready right now to begin a walk with Jesus? The best way to start is by simply taking the step of inviting Him into your life. I’m going to lead in prayer and I urge you to pray along. But first I’d like you to take out your connection card. When I’m finished I’m going to ask you to raise your hand if you invited Jesus Christ into your life and then I’d like you to indicate that decision on your card.

“Lord Jesus, thank you that you have been my companion even when I’ve gone down the wrong road. I confess that I’m a sinner and I repent from the way I’ve been living. My dreams and hopes have been shattered but I now recognize that

my heart will stay broken until I ask you for a new one. Thank you for dying on the cross as my substitute and for rising from the dead proving that you have conquered death, the devil and sin itself. I believe and now I receive you. I don't want you to just visit my life but to take control as my Lord and Owner. Give me hope that lives forever. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer, would you raise your hand so we can rejoice with you?

Closing Song: "Living Hope"

In 1930, an atheist named Nicholai Ivanovich went to Kiev to address a huge assembly on atheism. He spoke for one hour and did all he could to dismantle Christianity. When he finished, he looked out at the crowd, and asked if anyone had any questions. Silence filled the auditorium.

One man got out of his chair, came up to the platform, and stood right next to the communist leader. He looked at the crowd and then shouted out an ancient greeting that was well known to many Russians: "*Christ is risen!*" The people immediately rose to their feet and responded thunderously: "*He is risen indeed!*"

Jesus meets us where we are so He can send us where He wants us. As you leave today, please take your connection card to the lobby and exchange it for a gift bag.

Let's end our service by proclaiming that Christ *is* risen!

I'll say, "Christ is risen!" and you respond with, "He is risen indeed!"

He is risen!

He is risen indeed!