

Luke 24

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- [0 : 00] Please turn in your Bibles with me to the passage we read together, Luke's Gospel, chapter 24. I'd like to consider with you the passage from verse 13 to verse 35, the encounter on the road to Emmaus.
- We all like a good story, don't we? The account of the encounter on the road to Emmaus has a number of the ingredients which make for a good story.
- There's emotional tension. There's hidden identity. There's an element of surprise.
- And there's a satisfactory outcome. All these things make for a good story. This is a good story. But it's obviously much more than just a good story.
- Luke crafted his Gospel with tremendous artistry. And I'd like to ask why it is that he chose to include this particular resurrection narrative in his Gospel.
- [1 : 26] I'd like to suggest five things that we can learn from this well-known passage of Scripture. The first thing we learn quite simply is that the resurrection is true.
- The resurrection is true. We're introduced to two followers of Jesus as they walk that first Easter Sunday from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus.
- The first thing is that Cleopas is true. The first thing is that Cleopas is true. Only one of them, Cleopas, is named. His companion may possibly have been his wife. We don't know.
- It isn't important. What is important is that Cleopas and his friend are depressed, disappointed and bewildered.
- Everything they have hoped for lies in ruins about their feet. As they walk, they're talking to each other about the things that have happened over recent days in Jerusalem.
- [2 : 36] Their conversation is about Jesus. When they're joined by a stranger who asks them what they're discussing, they share with him what's in their mind.
- They tell him that Jesus was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. Not only that, they hoped that Jesus was the one who was going to redeem Israel.
- Cleopas and his friend had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah. That he was the one who would deliver the Jewish people from bondage to Rome and restore their national independence.
- Cleopas and his friend had pinned all their hopes on Jesus. But two days before, all their hopes had come crashing down.
- Jesus' shameful death had put paid to their dreams. As they tell the stranger who joined them.
- [3 : 43] The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death. And they crucified him. The Jewish religious authorities and the Roman civil authorities had combined to put this man of whom they thought so much to death.
- And with his death died the hopes of Cleopas and his friend. They can still acknowledge that Jesus was a thoroughly impressive individual.

He didn't let them down because of anything he said or did. But the fact is that his untimely death, the shameful death he suffered at the hands of others, proves beyond doubt as far as they can see that he wasn't after all the long-awaited Messiah.

Yes, Jesus promised so much. His words and deeds were so powerful. But an ignominious death on a Roman cross has drawn a line under it all.

And the things that happened earlier that day haven't significantly lifted their spirits. In verse 22, Cleopas and his friend admit that they were amazed at what the women who visited the tomb said.

[5 : 10] They went to the tomb early this morning, they say, but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. And yes, the men who went to the tomb on hearing the women's story found things just as they had said.

There was no sign of Jesus' body. The tomb was empty. But Cleopas and his friend are still downcast. They probably accept that the body has gone.

But they're not prepared to accept that Jesus can be alive. After all, they know that Jesus died. And they see no reason to accept an apparently uncorroborated story that he is alive again.

No one has actually seen him. Cleopas and his friend are hard-headed enough not to clutch at straws and believe an unconfirmed report.

It's only a personal encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus which convinces this sceptical pair that Jesus has actually risen from the dead.

[6 : 24] This story has the ring of truth about it, hasn't it? Cleopas and his friend are not hoping against hope that they've got it wrong.

Instead, they're grappling with the painful implications of what they see as the realities of the situation. And yet, in the face of their disappointment and despite their scepticism they become convinced that the person who draws alongside them who talks with them who walks with them and later has supper with them is none other than Jesus a Jesus who is very much alive.

If a sceptical pair like Cleopas and his friend can meet with the risen Jesus and be persuaded that he has indeed been raised from the dead doesn't that underline the truth of the resurrection?

When they go back to Jerusalem to report to the disciples and Jesus' other followers that he is alive they are greeted with the same message in verse 34.

It is true The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon. The first thing we learn from this passage is that the resurrection is true.

[7 : 55] The fact of the resurrection is fundamental to the biblical gospel. Jesus actually rose from the dead. The tomb was empty and Jesus was raised to life again.

A few years ago the then Bishop of Durham described the resurrection as a conjuring trick with bones. Well that's not how it is.

The resurrection is true. Writing to the Christians in Rome the Apostle Paul describes the fact of the resurrection as of first importance.

It's a primary truth. And he goes on to say if Christ has not been raised our preaching is useless and so is your faith.

We might as well shut up shop because there is no good news. For Paul as for Luke the truth of the resurrection is absolutely non-negotiable.

[8 : 58] You see our faith is based on historical facts. supremely the life, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. Despite their emotional trauma and initial scepticism Cleopas and his friend become convinced of this fact.

And so must we. It's something we need to be clear about. The resurrection is true. The second thing I'd like you to note from this passage is that Jesus' death was no accident.

Jesus' death was no accident. Cleopas and his friend thought that Jesus' death was at best a pointless end to a promising life.

But Jesus says to them in verse 25 How foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And Jesus then expounds to them relevant Old Testament scriptures.

[10 : 15] No doubt he points them to passages which teach that sin can be atoned for only on the basis of sacrifice. And passages which speak of the suffering servant.

Jesus' death wasn't an unfortunate accident. It wasn't a rogue event that sadly cut off a potentially useful life. Yes the Roman authorities and the Jewish religious authorities were responsible for what they did.

but behind it all was the plan and purpose of God. What happened happened in fulfillment of the prophecies and predictions of the Old Testament.

More than that it happened in fulfillment of God's purpose to redeem a lost humanity to himself. There was no other way.

In the words of the well-known hymn there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.

[11 : 27] Christ came into our world to live the life which we ought to have lived and to die the death we deserve to die. It was only by dying for the sins of his people that the Messiah could fulfill the will of his Father and receive his reward.

Cleopas and his friend had thought that the Messiah would save his people from suffering. what they didn't appreciate was that the Messiah would save his people through suffering.

That Christ had to suffer and then enter his glory. listen to the familiar words of the Apostle Paul.

Christ Jesus being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on a cross.

therefore God highly exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

[13 : 05] No cross no crown. Jesus' death was no accident. Luke earlier recounts the crucifixion and the events which led up to it without providing much commentary on their meaning but here in the In Mayer's story he makes explicit the necessity of the cross in the plan and purpose of God.

Was it the nails my Saviour that bound thee to the tree? No it was thine everlasting love thy love for me for me by his resurrection Jesus claimed to be the Messiah was vindicated he was declared with power to be the Son of God and his sacrifice for sin was seen to be accepted that's why Paul can say he was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification Jesus' death was no accident Cleopas and his friend needed to see that and so must we the resurrection is true Jesus' death was no accident the third lesson we learn from this passage is that Jesus still makes himself known Jesus still makes himself known after he rose from the dead

Jesus appeared to his followers on a number of occasions over a period of forty days he had a real physical presence they were able to touch him and to converse with him but when the forty days were over he ascended to heaven no longer was he physically present on earth and yet Jesus still makes himself known to those who believe in him and in this passage Luke points to two ways in which he does that first of all note how Jesus explains to Cleopas and his friend the significance of his death we see in verse 27 that beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself Jesus effectively gives them an in-depth bible study as he highlights and explains passages of scripture that speak about himself and his mission

Cleopas and his friend find it exciting afterwards they say to each other in verse 32 were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us and I think Luke wants us to see that the risen and ascended Jesus still reveals himself through the scriptures the scriptures of the Old Testament have now been supplemented by those of the New Testament and together they are the principal means by which the risen Christ makes himself known to us by his spirit he still speaks to us today through the bible it is as we respond to his revelation of himself in scripture that we come to put our trust in him in the first place and it's as we keep on hearing and responding to scripture that we get to know him better

I wonder if we know what it's like for our hearts to burn within us as we read the scriptures and hear them explained the second thing to note is when the apostle and his friend actually recognized Jesus Jesus walked along the road with them for several miles it would seem but verse 16 tells us that they were kept from recognizing him it's not clear why exactly that was the gospel suggests that Jesus' resurrection body was in some respects different it was as we say the same but different no doubt it was important for Cleopas and his friend to have the opportunity to absorb from the scriptures the significance of the recent events involving Jesus whatever the precise reason for their not recognizing him it's interesting that it was when they reached their destination that they finally saw who he was

[17 : 54] Cleopas and his friend were told invited Jesus to lodge with them for the night night was about to fall and they persuaded him to stay with them and it was as they were having supper together that their eyes were opened and they recognized him look at what Luke says in verse 30 he says when he was at the table with them he took bread gave thanks broke it and began to give it to them then their eyes were opened and they recognized him do these words remind you of another meal held just a few days earlier in recounting the story of the last supper Luke writes he took bread gave thanks and broke it and gave it to them saying this is my body given for you do this in remembrance of me

Luke uses almost exactly the same form of words in both passages the language he uses in chapter 24 seems to be a deliberate echo of the language he uses in chapter 22 he seems to be reminding his readers that just as Cleopas and his friend recognize Jesus as they broke bread together so Jesus followers in every age may recognize him in a special way when in accordance with his command they break bread in remembrance of him Jesus still makes himself known as we celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper I wonder if we see the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in that light the free church hymn writer Horatius Bonner wrote in a well-known communion hymn here oh my

Lord I see thee face to face here would I touch and handle things unseen here grasp with firmer hand the eternal grace and all my weariness upon thee lean the resurrection is true Jesus death was no accident Jesus still makes himself known the fourth thing we learn from this passage is that the resurrection puts a new perspective on things the resurrection puts a new perspective on things when we're introduced to Cleopas and his friend they're sad and disconsolate their faces are downcast the bottom has fallen out of their world but when they discover that Jesus is alive their mood changes their mood is transformed they see everything totally differently even though it's dark they go back to

Jerusalem straight away because they have wonderful news for the disciples and Jesus other followers they thought that Jesus had been defeated but now they know that far from being defeated Jesus has secured a glorious victory they only got part of the message Wellington defeated but it took the resurrection for them to see things in their true perspective Now are they all beyond right Raising a man who experienced death but who now lives by the power of an endless life and that has all sorts of implications an obvious implication is that for the Christian there's hope even in the face of death because he lives we shall live also.

That's why Paul urged the Christians in Thessalonica not to grieve for their dead like other people who have no hope. We believe, he tells them, that Jesus died and rose again.

[22 : 25] And so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. So we will be with the Lord forever.

For the Christian, death is not the end. Instead, it's the gateway into life in all its fullness. Ours is our resurrection faith. The resurrection changes everything.

But I think it's true to say that Christians see the pattern of death and resurrection not just in the face of death, but also in the pattern of their lives.

The Apostle Paul found his life and ministry tough in many ways. But he had a positive perspective on his sufferings.

He tells the Christians in Corinth, In J.B. Phillips' well-known paraphrase, We are knocked down, But not knocked out.

[23 : 45] Now how could Paul say these things? Well, he goes on, We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, So that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, So that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.

Now I know that Paul was speaking as an apostle, But I think his words of application to all Christians, Paul is saying that the trials and difficulties he faces in his life and ministry, Are the means God uses to enable him to experience and demonstrate the resurrection life of Christ.

As he copes with the problems that come his way by Christ's grace and in his strength, He finds himself becoming more like a saviour, More useful to him, And more fitted for the life of the world to come.

I wonder if that's how you and I see our trials and difficulties, As means God uses to work the resurrection life of Christ in us.

[25 : 10] The resurrection is the great reality that gives us hope, Not only in the face of death, But also in the face of the pressures and difficulties that come our way, As we face life in a fallen world.

The resurrection puts a new perspective on things. The fifth and last thing I'd like to highlight from this passage, Is that the Lord Jesus walks with us.

The Lord Jesus walks with us. This story begins with a journey. Cleopas and his friend are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

And it's as they're walking along, That the risen Jesus draws alongside them, And strikes up a conversation with them. The Jesus who Cleopas and his friend thought had abandoned them, Joins them on their journey, And accompanies them on their way.

I don't think it's being too fanciful to see here, An illustration of the fact that Jesus walks with his people, Along the road of life.

[26 : 25] Cleopas and his friend felt abandoned and bereft, But they were not alone. Jesus himself drew near, And he still accompanies his people on their journey through life.

Didn't he say to his disciples shortly before his death, I will ask the Father, And he will give you another counsellor to be with you forever, The spirit of truth.

You know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Before long the world will not see me anymore, But you will see me, Because I live, you also will live.

On that day you will realise that I am in my Father, And you are in me, And I am in you. Jesus lives in his people by his spirit.

The Lord's people are not on their own, They are not left to their own devices. The Lord is with them on their journey, Whatever stage of journey they are at.

[27 : 26] And each stage has its own problems, And difficulties and challenges. Having Christ walk with us, On the road of life, Provides us with the ultimate subjective evidence, That the resurrection is true.

Yes, the resurrection is objectively true. It happened in history. We believe that. But we also need the subjective, Personal evidence, That Jesus lives with us, And in us.

There is a chorus that puts it like this, He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today, He walks with me, And he talks with me, A long life's narrow way, He lives, He lives, Salvation to impart, You ask me how I know he lives, He lives, He lives, Within my heart.

That's the point, To which the Easter message, Ought to bring all of us. Jesus rose from the dead, Two thousand years ago, His was a physical resurrection, The resurrection is true.

His death was not in vain, It fulfilled the plan, And purposes of God, For our salvation. Jesus still makes himself known, Through his word, And through the sacrament.

[28 : 59] The resurrection puts a new perspective, On things. All these things, Can be gloriously true, And yet not true, In experience, For me.

And that's the question, For each one of us. Are these things true, For you? Have they been made real to you? May our testimony be, You ask me, How I know he lives, He lives, Within my heart.

Shall we pray? O Lord, We thank you for the story, We have been considering together, We thank you for the way, In which, The risen Jesus, Met, Cleopas and his friend, And eventually, Revealed himself to them.

We thank you for the way, In which their mood was transformed, As they got the whole picture, And we pray, That we too, May see things, In the light of the resurrection, May that give us hope, And may we be able to say, That the life we now live, We live by faith, In the son of God, Who loved us, And gave himself for us, We ask it in his name, Amen.