

Sunday, April 17, 2022 | The Road to Easter

Luke 24:1-35 | “The Road to Emmaus”

The story of Jesus's path to the cross is vital for all people to consider—especially followers of Christ. This series is framed around roads Jesus took en route to Calvary. Each road points to the essential purpose of Jesus's journey and what we must learn from it to fully appreciate the significance of the cross and the resurrection.

In week 1, we began our series with Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, often referred to as “The Triumphal Entry.” And unlike the Roman version, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was marked by controversy and sadness. Instead of it being one of overwhelming joy for everyone, we found Jesus weeping for his city because they would instead choose war over peace. Thus, we learned that while **joy is assured for those who hail Christ as King, sorrow is just as guaranteed for those who dismiss the Lord altogether.**

In week 2, we looked at the path Jesus took through the Garden of Gethsemane. In that scene, we found the Son of God in great distress because he was coming to grips with God's will for his life. God's will might be something we have to grapple with. And that's okay. **Confronting God's will in prayer prepares us to face into trials when our hour comes.** But God's will should never be something we actively avoid. Eventually, with whatever God has told us to do, may we say, as Jesus said while leaving Gethsemane, “Rise, let us go.”

Last week, we forward to the crucifixion and the Way of Grief, known traditionally as the Via Delarosa. In doing so, we discovered that there are two great ironies at the heart of Jesus' trials. The first was that the Jews chose a failed revolutionary over their faithful redeemer. And second, they decided on a Roman king instead of their royal Christ. And the takeaway was that **anyone who aligns themselves with the Son of God must walk the Via Dolorosa—the way of sorrow—that Jesus walked.** Like Jesus, Christians will be misunderstood and even mistreated. We must not be surprised at this. If anyone is to be Jesus' disciple, they must take up their cross and follow him.

Today, we close out our Road to Easter series by looking at the Road to Emmaus in Luke 24. This scene shows how Jesus meets us in our despair and leads us back to the road of confidence. What's more, this passage reminds believers to look for the Lord to move even when it doesn't appear he is going to do so. Jesus' walk with the two from Emmaus speaks to the heart of every disciple who has lost all semblance of hope, reminding us that in Christ, all

God's plans will be accomplished. Just trust the Lord, know his book, and be a part of a faith community, and you will end up right where God wants you to be.

READ: Luke 24:1-35 (ESV)

¹ But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ² And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵ And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." ⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹ but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ 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. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ 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. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and

slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

In a scene charged with dramatic irony, the road to Emmaus teaches us that a growing relationship with Jesus is accomplished in two very important ways:

i. Through an in-depth knowledge of the Scriptures.

The problem with these two disciples was that their understanding of Jesus' identity was incomplete because their knowledge of the Scriptures was incomplete. And they became disillusioned with a Messiah who, instead of reigning, died. This broke their faith. The scandal of the cross made them turn their backs on Jerusalem and their fellow followers. In Luke 24, they were, quite literally, heading back to the life they had before.

And we know their knowledge was incomplete by how they described the events of passion week:

READ: Luke 24:19-21 (ESV)

"Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Admittedly, it is true that Jesus was "mighty in deed and word." But he was so much more than a "prophet." Jesus was the Son of God. And while, yes, it was true that the chief priest and

rules delivered Jesus over to the Romans to be crucified, he was so much more than Israel's redeemer. **Jesus was humanity's redeemer.**

After they recounted to Jesus what happened from their perspective, Jesus chided them and then explained what happened from the Bible's perspective.

READ: Luke 24:25-27 (ESV)

²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

This is what Jesus had to teach these disciples. He was not just Israel's redeemer but the Savior of all humanity. And Jesus did not come to overthrow Rome; instead, Jesus came to throw off the shackles of death itself. And these two things would not be accomplished through force but through sacrifice. The very issue that caused them to turn their back on Jerusalem (i.e., Christ's suffering) was the exact characteristic that defined Jesus' mission. But because they did not know Jesus could be found throughout the O.T., mainly as it related to Jesus' suffering (cf. Isa. 53), their knowledge of who Jesus was and why he came was incomplete. They had fallen in love with a false Jesus. And, sad to say, the story of these disciples happens all too often today.

Many honest and church-going people have become disillusioned with Christianity. Perhaps some trial breaks them. Or, maybe, some critic attacks their beliefs, and they don't know what to say. Of late, many people seem to be saying that their "church hurt" because some person of faith—whom they trusted—made a mistake, abused them in some way, or simply didn't seem to care about them. Whatever the reason, these once faithful followers of Christ, like these disciples on the road to Emmaus, leave Christianity by the wayside.

Does this mean that there are trials too great for our belief system to handle? No. Are the questions of critics enough to destroy our faith? No. When we have been wronged by a group of flawed Jesus followers, should we abandon Jesus altogether? No. Isn't our faith supposed to survive such trials? Yes.

So, if our faith is far more robust than these trials, why do people fall away from their faith? Because, like these disciples on the road to Emmaus, their knowledge of Jesus in the Scriptures is incomplete. Whether through lousy Bible teaching, or sheer laziness, they have not translated the Jesus they find in the Scriptures to the Jesus they find on Monday morning.

The risen Lord is most easily found in the written Word. And if you're not constantly searching for Jesus on every page of Scripture, eventually, the trials of life will pull you away from Jesus.

ii. Through a meaningful communion with the Saints.

While fellowshiping with Christ over a meal, they realized this stranger was actually Jesus.

READ: Luke 24:30-32 (ESV)

³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Now, to be sure, this wasn't a communion-like meal for two reasons: First, there was no wine. And second, these two disciples weren't one of the twelve disciples. So, they wouldn't have seen the correlation even if Jesus had intended to do something resembling the Lord's supper.

Instead, what these disciples on the road to Emmaus were reminded of when they saw Jesus breaking the bread was the feeding of the 5k in Luke 9. While no one other than the 12 disciples is mentioned there, we can surely assume there were more as 12 men to 5k ppl would've been an impossible task otherwise. They surely had help. What's more, Jesus follows the same pattern here, in Luke 24, that he does in 9:16, "And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them." But, more importantly, right after the feeding of the five thousand, Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah, just as these disciples will come to realize who it is they're eating with.

Why am I bringing this up? Because, often, **the most significant spiritual growth happens over a meal.** Going back to our passage, did you notice that once these disciples on the road to Emmaus had a communal experience with Jesus over a bible study and a meal, they returned to Jerusalem? They had fled Jerusalem not only because their hopes were dashed but because there was danger in that city. If they had crucified Jesus, what plans might they have had for Jesus' followers? But rather than stay in Emmaus that night, Luke tells us they brave the night and some 7 miles on the road to get back to their faith community. And while in fellowship with other believers in Jerusalem, they realized that they weren't the only ones with fantastic news. Jesus had been at work in the lives of their friends in Jerusalem as much as he had with them on the road to Emmaus.

READ: Luke 24:33-35 (ESV)

³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Don’t miss the point I’m trying to make: while knowledge of the Scriptures is essential, the Christian faith is not just an individual faith; it is a communal faith. Meaning that you cannot grow in your walk with Jesus Christ if you try to do so all on your own. **A person who is serious about their relationship with Jesus will be an active member of a community of like-minded people.** A shared weekly worship experience does wonders to strengthen the mind and spirit.

After all, this is why the writer of Hebrews says...

READ: Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ 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.

It is impossible to grow in your relationship with Christ outside the church. Christianity is meant as a family meal, not a dinner date.

So, what’s the takeaway?

Bible study and the **Church community** are the tent poles that **strengthen** a Christian life.

The road to Emmaus teaches us that you can know the tomb is empty, but if you don’t have a personal relationship with the risen Savior through knowledge of the Scriptures and the fellowship of the Saints, you will turn your back on God.

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Video Description

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Pastor’s manuscript can be found here: