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There are several resurrection stories in the gospels. We have already looked at two of them over the last two weeks. We have noticed that both of the ones we have looked at show that the people involved heard about the fact that Jesus was not in the tomb but they left with the message of resurrection in fear. That is not really surprising, I suppose, that the news was met with fear rather than joy because of many reasons. They had been there in the city when he was crucified. In fact, John's gospel tells us that when Jesus saw his mother nearby while he hung on the cross he said to his mother, "Woman here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "*Here is your mother.*" *And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.* Surely even Jesus seemed to be suggesting it was all over.

They had known he was placed in a borrowed tomb. They knew that death was final. And then to hear that it was not as final as they thought, was reason for fear, or at least, as in our gospel for this morning a time of confusion and discouragement and dashed hopes.

Then we have our text for this morning.

Jesus was crucified on Friday; Saturday—the Sabbath,—no one did anything because of the laws regarding what was permitted on the Sabbath--and so it was on what we know as Sunday, the day after the Sabbath, that the ladies were able to go to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus—something they did not have time to do on Friday because the Sabbath began at sun down and they had no time to claim the body and prepare it for burial before that time.

So, with a reminder of those details, let us take look at our gospel lesson for this morning. Of the various resurrection appearances Luke, the great story teller, tells one of my favorite stories of Jesus appearing to us.

Two of Jesus' followers were leaving Jerusalem on their way to the village of Emmaus, a place Luke says was about seven miles away. But biblical scholars say they were not sure where this village was exactly but that is where Luke says they were going. Emmaus and its location is a little bit of a mystery but that's okay because it is a very good description of where you and I go when we are confused, perplexed, and wondering what should we do next. You have been there when you go somewhere, not really knowing why but you go because you have to do something and this place is as good as any.

These two travelers, we only know the name of one Cleopas, were on the road on that Sunday, because even travel would have been forbidden on the Sabbath. This is the first day they would have been able to get out of town. But, after leaving the city they do not seem to be in any hurry as they shuffled along discussing the events that had taken place in Jerusalem. I would love if Luke would have been able to share the full content of their conversations. I would love to know what they thought would be next in their lives.

Still, without that information, we can almost feel the heaviness of their hearts as they were loaded down with disappointment, discouragement, and doubt. And, as they were walking along, they were suddenly joined by one who saw as a stranger and he wanted to know what they were talking

about. They stopped dead in their tracks as he asked this question. They seemed to assume that that the only thing people would be talking about all over the place would be the recent events in Jerusalem. And so, when asked, they replied, *"Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know what happened there?"* Have you been hiding under a rock or something?

So, the unrecognized Jesus, asks them, *"What things?"* And it was then the two of them laid open their hearts and souls and their disappointment.

What we were talking about, were the things *about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 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 took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."*

Notice Cleopas does not call Jesus *Messiah*, he says prophet.

And Cleopas does not say, *"The women saw angels who said that Jesus was alive."* But rather he said, *"they came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels... who said he was alive."*

Do you hear a difference?

Cleopas and the unnamed disciple are not walking along the road to Emmaus rejoicing that Jesus is the Messiah and that He is risen from the dead. Rather they are Disappointed, Discouraged, Doubting!

You can hear it in their words: *"We had hoped"*.

"We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel"

My friends what happens When God does something you weren't expecting? Or doesn't do something you wanted him to? Or when life just feels too unfair?

Some like these two disciples walk away from Jerusalem because that was the place of their hopes and they were dashed. For the same reason many walk away from Church.

Like some of us, they stop going to church regularly or at all.

But some of us are like that little boy who was so upset that he would not sit and instead kept walking around the classroom. (his way of walking to Emmaus.) The teacher finally managed to get him to sit down in his chair. And he scowls up at her and says, *"I may be sitting down on the outside but I'm standing up on the inside!"*

Some, although outwardly they still come to church, inwardly they have walked away from Jerusalem.

Some days life feels much like that Friday when Jesus died and was laid in the tomb. Discouragement, Doubt, and Disappointment. We had hinged our hopes and maybe even our faith on him. But you will recall me saying that Tony Compolo says: *"It may be Friday. You may feel like it is Friday on the inside, ... but Sunday's comin'!!!!"*

So how does Jesus respond to all of this? *"Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiahⁱ should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"*

Why didn't Jesus just say, *"It is me! Jesus! I have indeed risen from the dead."*

I think it could be for the same reason that the disciples were kept from recognizing Him at

first. Jesus has something very important to share with and to teach them. In fact, in my opinion, it is the most important Bible study that was ever given. What was the content of that Bible study?

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Again, I wish I would have been a part of this Bible Study. Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself! They heard how Jesus was to be ridiculed, rejected, and eventually be put to death.

Now I am not a person to talk to anyone about time management especially to Jesus. But it seems to me that Jesus could have done a lot of things in the hours immediately after his resurrection. If we were to look at this from a practical, time managing, point of view. He could have appeared in Rome to Caesar. He could have appeared to the Jewish leaders of the Sanhedrin. He could have appeared in the Temple and showed all the priesthood and Levites that He was indeed who he said he was. But interestingly enough, Jesus spent, a great portion of his first day as the Resurrected King, simply walking down a road to Emmaus with two disciples. What is interesting is that we don't know hardly anything about these two disciples. One had the name of Cleopas. It is the only time he is mentioned in scripture. The other, we don't even know his or her name.

My question is why? Why would Jesus chose to spend his first day being resurrected, with two seemingly non-important followers, walking down the road to Emmaus, a place that scholars find hard to pinpoint on a map?

I thought about that and have concluded that possibly the reason is that Jesus was modeling for us what he would continue to do throughout the years in the Church.

You see all of us are on a road. We are all in a sense on that road to Emmaus. We are on the journey of life. And there are many of us, who while we have heard about Jesus, we need more to fully comprehend who He is.

And that is the heart of Jesus. He wants to know us personally. He wants us to know him personally. Jesus has always been the one who came to seek people on their journey. Jesus is a personal Jesus, in this respect. As I said a moment ago, He could have appeared in powerful form in front of large gatherings of people. He could have shown the scars on his hands and feet, and the place where the sword had pierced his side to multitudes all at once. And the multitudes would have known, this is King Jesus, conqueror of death, hell, and the grave. But instead, Jesus chose to reveal himself in a personal way to two individuals walking down a road.

On your journey of life, on your road to Emmaus, as you walk are you sad? Have you ever met someone and in just a moment or two of talking to them, you know, you perceive, that they are sad?

There are so many things in life that can make us sad. We suffer loss. Family and friends die. At times, jobs are lost. Your dog dies. You have quarrels. Divorce touches your life. Your children get involved in things they shouldn't. Or maybe it is abuse, addictions, or pain that touches your life. I want you to consider how many this morning got up and drank their coffee, sat out on the patio of their home or apartment with a heavy heart. Why? They are walking to Emmaus.

That phrase...we were hoping...speaks volumes. People still use that phrase.

We were hoping that our marriage would get better...but we are losing that hope.

We were hoping that our daughter would go on to college...but we are losing that hope.

We were hoping that the CT scan wouldn't show what it did...but hope seems gone now.

We were hoping that our finances would be better.

We were hoping that our kids wouldn't be rebellious.

We were hoping that she could overcome her addiction.

I was hoping that this would be a job I would really enjoy. And on and on the list goes.

I have good news today. Hope does not have to die! Because there is one by the name of Jesus. He is alive today. He can walk into your life and he can bring Hope. His name is Hope. His name brings Hope. His presence brings Hope. And it is not just hope for this life. Jesus brings hope for the next life. I can't promise anyone that if Jesus joins you on the journey of life that there won't be ups and downs. Every road has its difficulties. But the one thing I can promise is that he brings hope.

If Jesus is alive, then heaven is more than a dream.

If Jesus is alive, then our sins are really forgiven.

If Jesus is alive, then all his promises are true.

If Jesus is alive, then we can never truly be alone again.

There is a powerful lesson in here for us. Sometimes an explanation of the scriptures is not as powerful as experiencing his power and grace for yourself. Don't get me wrong. When I read the word, like those disciples, my heart burns within me. But when I think of the moments when I have had fellowship with him. That is when my eyes are opened, and I know he is real.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So, he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

Notice something else important here. They had arrived at their destination, Jesus appeared to be ready to move on, so they urged him to stay at their place for the night. It was their place and Jesus was their guest, but who is it that breaks the bread. It would normally have been the host who did this. But in this case it was Jesus who blesses the bread and breaks it and gives it to them. This is what happens when we are trying to be the Christ to someone who is discouraged, disappointed and doubting, We take charge and in our actions reveal the Christ, one willing to sit with us, break bread for us and help restore our hope.

After this meal, what happened? *They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up (the two who had walked to Emmaus with a stranger) and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

So, what happened to the two of them as they heard Jesus take his time explaining all thing to them? They asked each other, *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

What do those words mean to you? *"Were not our hearts burning within us?"*

Before Jesus met with them on the road their fire was going out now it burned again.

Through the actions of the risen Christ hope was restored. Through the actions of the risen Christ our hope too can be restored. He walks with us and talks with us and explains that life is not always as we had hoped. But there is hope to be had for those who believe that He indeed is risen from the dead to be our HOPE.