



Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his Sermon – The Road

Luke 24:13-35

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Now on that same day two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "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." 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 Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

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. 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 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.

I was listening to a speaker online the week before Easter. During the talk, the speaker went off on a tangent and spoke about favorite Easter movies. There were three of them and one near the top was the movie *Cool Hand Luke*.

Yeah, that was my reaction, too. But I listened on. I figured that a case was going to be made and I wanted to hear this one. After all, I like Paul Newman and I liked *Cool Hand Luke*.

The case that the speaker made had to do with how Luke got his name. He was playing poker and he was bluffing. When he won with his bluff, they were all laughing, saying that he had nothing, and he won with nothing. And in the end Luke turns to them and says, “Sometimes nothing is a pretty cool hand.” Thus, Cool Hand Luke.

Then the speaker tried to stretch a favorite movie into an Easter movie by making the case that there was no need for fear because Jesus had overcome death when it appeared to the world that he had nothing. Sorry, but that didn’t work for me. The thing was and is, is that Jesus wasn’t and isn’t bluffing. I was so hoping that I could use *Cool Hand Luke* as an illustration for Easter. Oh well.

But then we arrived at Easter 3. Two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were confused over the events of the previous three days. They were trying to make sense of what had just taken place in Jerusalem. They were discouraged and depressed. But, as I re-read the Emmaus story, *Cool Hand Luke* jumped back into my mind. But it wasn’t the card game scene. It wasn’t the bluff or the cool hand. What came back to me was the catchline that survives the movie to this very day. You know it. “What we have here, is the failure to communicate.”

On that road, as they walked on the first Easter afternoon, they talked to this stranger that had joined them about the events of the past three days. They talked about an unjust arrest, an unfair trial, and their dashed hopes and a brutal execution. They also described the women and their astounding story of an empty tomb, and the verification of that empty tomb by other believers. And this stranger bears witness not just to their confusion, but also to their foolishness and their unwillingness to hear the words of the prophets. What we seem to have here, my friends, is a failure in communication. Brothers, what we appear to have here is the failure over centuries to understand.

And then, on that road, in the midst of their heartbreak, this new companion opens the Scripture to them as they walked. “Let me be more clear,” he says to them. “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and including all the prophets, he interpreted for them, he revealed to them, the things about himself in all the scriptures.

He started with Moses. He told them about their captivity. He told them about how God heard their cry in the wilderness from their slavery and oppression. He acknowledged their separation from God and God’s mission within them. He explained again how God sent Moses to re-introduce their God, “I am,” and tell them again of God’s mission to them and through them to the world. He remembered with them how God brought them out, how God worked the Passover gift, how God divided the sea for their safe passage, and how God stopped the Egyptian army as they tried to prevent their re-engagement of the mission. He described how Moses went up on the mountain and met with God, who gave him the structure of healthy and authentic life, carved on stone. And he also invited them to recall their turning aside, in their fear, to a calf of gold.

He spoke the words of the Spirit spoken through the prophets. He reminded them of Israel’s choice, again and again, to turn away from God to their own way, and of the repercussions of those self-centered choices and misguided decisions brought... the repercussion of exile, and heartache, and division.

And then he turned them to Isaiah and his prophetic voice about the Messiah, and how the Messiah, although in the line of David, was not going to be another David. He would re-acquaint them with Isaiah and how the Messiah he described would be beaten and spat upon. About how

the leaders of Israel would not believe. About how the Messiah would carry our grief, how the sins and iniquities of the world would be placed upon him, how he would be put to death, and how through that death humanity would find the salvation path to healing. Finally, on that road on the way to Emmaus, Jesus unlocked the truth of resurrection held within the Psalms and within the Jewish Scriptures. And their hearts burned with excitement and joy as he did.

And then that night, during what was arguably the first, post-resurrection Eucharist, God fully opened their hearts and their minds to see God's mission in Christ from a Heavens perspective. The truth of salvation was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. The failure of earthly communication over the many years became the success of Heavenly communication for all of time.

The road to Emmaus may seem like just another post-resurrection story, but the truth is that in so many ways it is our story. We are on the road. We are on the road discussing reality from our perspective, as if we didn't know. We have seen Jesus at work within the world. If we slow down enough, we will see him at work within our own lives. We know what a difference he can make. And so, we walk and discuss, as if we weren't sure. Is he really God's Son or is that just interesting church talk. Someone said recently that he died on the cross and in that death he took our separation from God onto himself so that our separation could die also.

Well, at least, that is what they say. But the powers in our world tell a different story. They tell a different story about life and where we came from and what lies ahead for us when this physical life ends. And so, we walk and discuss.

We pull out the Bible on the road. It tells us that there is a God, and that God has created things to work perfectly for life, if we will just embrace it. But others teach us that we should embrace whatever it is that makes us feel good. We are told that we shouldn't get too carried away with the Jesus stuff, or the Christian stuff, or the religious stuff. We have been told that the tomb is empty, you know, that kind of stuff. We have been told that the death and resurrection were predicted hundreds, even thousands, of years earlier. Well, that is interesting. So, we walk, and we talk.

The people that knew Jesus in the flesh wrote about what he did and what he taught. He said that he and the Father are one. He actually forgave sins. They tell of him healing people. Well, we weren't actually present, but that kind of thing is worth a discussion. So, we walk, and we talk.

And as we walk, trying to make sense of some of this stuff, Jesus walks with us. He keeps telling us of a truth and a reality that seems to fit all that we have heard, all that has been faithfully passed down, and he does so in a way that stirs something in us. It takes us beyond the loud voice of the world around us with its disfunction, and division, and self-serving desires. He moves our hearts so much so that we ask him to share a meal with us so that we can know him better, so that we can understand better. And he blesses bread and wine and, in that act, the true Christ, and the true mission, is made known.

Each Sunday we should come to communion with the words, "Be known to us in the breaking of the bread." ringing in our ears. "Show us truth in the breaking of the bread." "Overcome the confusion of the world in the breaking of the bread." "Make us your heart for the world in the breaking of the bread."

Thank you, Lord, for taking the road of our struggle and transforming it to the one that leads only to you.

Amen.