

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[a] from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

19 "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 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?"

33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Where were you at when...?

What events in your lifetime do you have the strongest memories of? As a child I remember gathering around a TV at school, though not exactly sure why, but a space shuttle broke apart after take off. I remember watching news about the Berlin Wall that fell over and a friend whose father was there. And even more recently there was the attack on the World Trade Center. I remember all of those events but there are only a handful that I remember where I was at and what I was doing. In fact everyone has a

story about where they were when certain events happened and if they don't you'd assume they are a foreigner, out of touch with reality living under a rock.

That's the same assumption Cleopas and his companion had of Jesus as they discussed a life altering event. Maybe they were even discussing along the way, "Where were you at when they crucified Jesus?" In spite of the assumption that everyone knows and has a story about where they were at, Jesus asks about these things as if he doesn't know. Cleopas asks, "How could you not know?" The resurrection rocked the world. It shook things up. Jesus knew. He also knew what kind of condition this had left Cleopas and his companion. Jesus really wanted them to understand it doesn't matter where you are at but where Jesus is at.

There are any number of life changing events that will stop us in our tracks and yet many of them fail to make nightly news. People probably won't be discussing, "Where were you when Paul had surgery, when Michael was hit by a car, when ..." But we may have the same reaction as Cleopas as he heads toward "Wehadhoped," But Jesus shows up and directs us back to "Heisrisen." The great part is that it doesn't matter where you were at Jesus meets you along the way. He is always with us even if we are stuck in "Wehadhoped."

That's where the Emmaus disciples were. They were disappointed and upset with God. It was nearing the end of the first day. It was nearing the end of Easter day when they had already given up hope, walked away, and left everything behind. But they are headed in the wrong direction. The angel said them, "Go to Galilee," not Emmaus. Not only are they headed in the wrong direction but they are carrying on a heated discussion that looks like theological combat. The words Luke uses to describe this discussion suggest intense talk as they speak of an emotional topic. The word brings to mind a tennis match in which one argument is served after another.

They thought they knew the whole story. They thought they had God's plan mapped out and were ready to follow but they only became disappointed and upset because they didn't understand how God was working to save the world. They expected a God of power, a warrior, a king but instead they received a suffering servant who gave his life. Their Palm Sunday dreams were broken and they left without hope when Jesus interrupts.

"What are you discussing together as you walk along?" Instead of resolving the issue for them he wants them to state what it is that is bothering them. He wants them to think about why they are so upset. Jesus' question stops them in their tracks. Cleopas responds with a rhetorical question, *"Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"* Where have you been? Living under a rock? Cleopas can't believe that Jesus doesn't know. They are downcast, sullen, and even sarcastic but Jesus keeps prodding, *"What things?"* Jesus knows *where he was at* during the last three days but Jesus wants Cleopas to know. Jesus also wants us to know.

Sometimes life doesn't go as expected and that's to be expected. We may set out with a road map of where we want to go and what we want to do only to be disappointed on a regular basis. That doesn't mean we give up and walk away from it all but on occasion we have and do. Maybe even with a heated discussion lobing arguments back and forth along the way. But the sad part is that just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus we might not go back to God's Word and see what he says.

The reason we may be disappointed is because we don't understand God's Will for this world or what he has in mind for us. Sometimes we just don't like what God has to say because we've allowed our

culture to condition the words we hear and even change our expectations. We may fall into a theology of glory expecting America to never fall simply because we are a nation of Christians but when life doesn't work out - even though we've been faithful to God - we may walk away. Turn away from the church and choose to go it alone.

Because the situation is hopeless. The cancer is just getting worse. Life isn't any easier. But if we aren't listening to God and what he says in his Word - who are we listening too? The voice of culture? Are we expecting our government to bottle feed us a watered down cultural Christianity? Are we looking to a sign in the heavens, an appearance, or even a dream from God? If we aren't listening to his Word - why would he bother to send something else?

Besides what we have is better than those headed to Emmaus. What we have is better than a sign in a dream or a physical appearance. They didn't recognize Jesus even though he was standing right there in front of them. They didn't recognize Jesus until he pointed them back to the Word of God, the one place where God promised they could find him. That's where Jesus is at.

But then Jesus also met them where they were at. Just as in the Garden of Eden after the fall into sin God came to Adam and Eve. Here again Jesus comes to those who have abandoned all hope and walked away from his church, his disciples, his word, and then angrily accuse him of being a foreigner out of touch with reality. But Jesus took time to direct them through the Old testament. Jesus listened to what they had to say. He listened to their complaint and had them point out their problem.

We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. That's the problem. Jesus listened and even wanted them to realize where he was at. *25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! You are acting without thinking or without all the information. Look at the problem. He died three days ago, the women said they saw him resurrected, and Peter and John found the tomb empty. All of this was spoken about before hand by the prophets. "Was it not necessary for him to suffer and die and then enter into his glory?"*

He gave direction to those who weren't listening to him. Who weren't in the inner circle of disciples. Two unimportant people and Jesus spent the afternoon listening to them as they trudged along to "Wehadhopped" and he redirects them to "Heisrisen." You're going the wrong way. They didn't recognize Jesus standing before them but he revealed himself in his word and opened their eyes to see him. Then they rushed back to Jerusalem to encourage others.

In the same way Jesus gives direction to us. We aren't among the inner circle but we are still important. God still speaks to us in his Word. He still listens to us. We aren't hopeless. The disciples doubted. They couldn't believe it was true. We too may doubt but Jesus points us to the truth. He comes to us with just the facts. The empty tomb, the eyewitness accounts of the apostles, the account of the women, the evangelists, and even doubters like those on their way to Emmaus. It was all written for them, and for us.

We may run away from the solution and find doubt and despair along the way to "Wehadhoped." Jesus comes to us in his Word. He takes care of our doubts. He comforts us with his Word. He opens scripture for us that, *"We may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that by believing we might have life in his name" (John 20:31)* He points us to the facts that he had to suffer die and rise to forgive our every sin and doubt.

Spend time in God's Word. See him clearly revealed to us in Word and Sacrament where he makes his promise to us once again. The Emmaus disciples recognize Jesus as he is breaking bread and then he disappears. Theologians lob this lesson back and forth as to whether they are celebrating Lord's Supper. But in Communion Jesus doesn't disappear. He remains with us and forgives us. Reminding us that although we may suffer and die, we will also rise. With that same hope of the resurrection we rush out to those on the road to, "Wehadhopped," and point them to another city. The city of Zion found at the foot of "Heisrisen."

Where were you? You may not remember exactly where you were when Jesus first came to you. For me it was 35 years ago when God claimed me as his own. I have a plaque on the wall and even an old VHS to remind me that it happened. Jesus has found me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me not with gold or silver but his holy, precious blood his innocent suffering and death. So even if you are clueless about world events Jesus still lives. Where was he during the Emmaus journey out of Jerusalem that day? He was alive and no longer living under a rock. Amen.