

Greetings in the Name of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is risen. He has risen indeed, Alleluia.

Today we meet up with a couple followers of Jesus who are currently walking on a road leaving Jerusalem going to Emmaus. I don't normally ask this of Jesus, but this morning I ask that the Lord would do for us what he did for them. In the midst of their struggles, uncertainties, trauma... in the midst of their disappointments, their worries, anxieties, and disruptions, Jesus encountered them and He opened their eyes to see and understand and trust Him. May He do just that for us.

Leslie Newbiggin was a missionary to India. One time he was asked if he ever got pessimistic about the hardships he faced as a missionary and about the future of the Gospel in our world. He responded, "The resurrection puts away the question." "Because Jesus is Lord and this is His world. I'm just a servant in it."

I admit I look around at the condition of our times, and sometimes I get a little pessimistic... I have no doubt Jesus would say me, "O foolish one, how slow are you to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"

Similarly, let me ask you, what are your feelings? What have you been discussing amongst yourselves? What are on your thoughts and minds this morning? What would Jesus think of what you have been thinking and or discussing? The text says Jesus' simple question stopped them in their tracks. "They stood still and their faces were downcast."

It is almost unimaginable to us that that they could say to the Jesus who only days earlier hung on a cross for them, "are you only a visitor to Jerusalem? Do you not know the things that have happened there?"

Jesus was standing right in front of them and they not recognize it. You know what we learn here? Hopelessness is blinding. Like PTSD it can blind you of something standing right in front of you.

These disciples even said, “we had hope... we had hoped He was the One to redeem Israel.” This text gives us a glimpse of their hopelessness, their sorrow, their despair, their loss... worse yet, it was the third day... what was supposed to happen on the third day? They were left to walk away with hopes not met. Now, they knew the tomb was empty... but as of yet, Him they did not see. I would say the Irony is obvious, but is it? The Tomb is empty. Are we acting, thinking, feeling, like Jesus is the resurrected Lord?

How does God enliven the hopeless? How does God bring life into our tragic blindness, job loss, sickness, loneliness, despair? How does God intervene? Believe it or not, it begins “With Moses and all the Prophets”.

Jesus said to them, “How foolish you are and how slow of heart you are to believe all that the prophets had said.” Please, notice what He does not say. He does not say, you do not know what the prophets have said... let me tell you. He said how foolish you are that you do not believe what the prophets have said.

He goes on to say, ‘Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?’

Don’t miss this. The first thing Jesus said to them was not a platitude or an anecdote or even a statement of sympathy. He goes straight into giving them and interpreting for them the Word of God.

All things considered, in the midst of their hopelessness He goes to the one place that can actually restore their hope and bring life from nothing... the Word of God.

I think the troubling thing about this text is that they were not hoping to get a new job, or hoping to keep their job. They were not hoping to sell their house or move into a bigger one. They were not hoping to get a loan, or even hoping their mother would get out of the hospital. Their

previous hope was in Jesus. Notice their words “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” “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 We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”

Yes it is true; they hoped in Jesus... but here’s the problem... their hope did not include the cross... and perhaps their cross. For this reason, the cross proved to be a hope dasher rather than a hope builder. They had hope, but their hope was simply too shallow.

In other words, the problem was not a lack of hope, but hope in the wrong thing. They hoped Jesus would send Rome packing, they hoped Jesus would fix Israel’s hypocritical leaders, and change their circumstances. And although none of that would have been a bad thing, although I’m sure many people in this very church pray for similar divine interventions all the time, just understand, if you have come to Christ merely as a sufferer needing help rather than a sinner in need of salvation than your hope is too shallow.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are getting into vacation season and have you ever come back from the beach and someone said to you “it looks like you got some sun.” How cool would it be if we spent enough time in God’s Word that people began to notice and say “Wow, I can tell you got some Son in you.”

Last week I said the Thomas story was my favorite text. That is true, but this one is also pretty amazing. I just love the fact that Jesus sat at their table, and all of a sudden, he became the host not the guest. Do you realize how striking this is?

Just imagine you invited someone to your home and they stand up give a speech, announce the menu, and then proceed to hand out the bread?

This was that striking, and in fact it was at that very moment when “their eyes were opened and they realized who was standing in their midst.”

This is such a revealing text because the phrase “and their eyes were opened” refers back to Genesis chapter 3. And if you recall Adam and Eve has said “we want to choose the menu” and “we want to choose what we want to take in.” At that moment “their eyes were opened” and all we have been able to see ever since is sin. Luckily for us, the resurrection changes that.

What Jesus did for them, and us, reminds me of a book used to like as a kid called the “Monster at the end of the Book”. The entire Book is Grover is telling you not to turn the page... for the Love of all that is good, do not turn the page... do not get to the end of the story because at the end of your Book is a stone rolled over your grave. But what did Jesus do? He took on death itself. He turned the page to reverse the curse, counteract the Fall, and He positioned himself as the ultimate source of nourishment. And a steady diet on Him will restore hope and life.

Can you see it? Can you see that Jesus has come to reverse the curse, to stop your fall, and most importantly, to be your host?

On that occasion Jesus gave them the Word of God and also the Lord Supper “Take Eat. Take Drink”. Unsurprisingly, it opened their eyes.

Ultimately, the message of this text is Jesus telling you “if you want to know me, if you want to see me, if you want to have hope: dig into my Word and receive my supper.”

Hopelessness is dashed when the author of the Bible shows you He is also the subject of the Bible and that He has written you into His story. Thanks be to God.

In the words of Leslie Newbiggin, “Jesus is Lord and this is His world.” Have hope.

May the grace of God, which surpasses all understanding, trust your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, Amen.