## Luke 24:13-35

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles\* from Jerusalem, 14and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad.\* 18Then 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?’ 19He 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, 20and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21But 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. 22Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23and 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. 24Some 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.’ 25Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26Was it not necessary that the Messiah\* should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ 27Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29But 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. 30When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32They 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?’ 33That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ 35Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

## Sermonic interrogation:

Last week we explored the idea that our expectations of Jesus can interfere with our ability to recognize him.

Today’s scripture has a similar theme: two followers of Jesus, who had hoped that Jesus would be the one to redeem (i.e. *save*) Israel, are walking sadly walking from Jerusalem presumably to their home in Emmaus, and Jesus comes along and starts a conversation with them. And note that the appearance of Jesus does nothing to restore their hope: these men don’t even recognize this man to be Jesus.

Now we should never accuse the Bible of not having any humor; it’s intended to be comical that one of the men, Cleopas, chides Jesus for not knowing what has been happening concerning Jesus over the last few days, and it’s also a little funny that Jesus plays into this instead of announcing, “You fool; I AM Jesus.” No, he keeps the charade going, and allows the two men to explain exactly what they witnessed, what they heard, and what they believed before he informs them of how foolish they are.

Your first obstacle in your relationship with Jesus may land here; we don’t like it when someone calls us foolish. Jesus doesn’t mince words here – he doesn’t do the diplomatic dance and say, “well perhaps you should consider this from a different perspective. He speaks with authority – “You’re foolish!” Step one in your relationship with Christ is ACCEPT THAT YOU ARE NOT THAT SMART. Paul says that God’s foolishness is greater than human wisdom. Accept that you might not be seeing things the way you should be seeing them. Accept that Jesus might have something to teach you, and don’t be offended when he tells you that you’re foolish. How many women recklessly fall for a handsome man only to find that he has no heart? How many men fall for a pretty face without ever considering if there is beauty within? I could write volumes of the foolish things I’ve done or thought or said. I killed my electric lawnmower last fall…changed many headlights on my car…halogen lamp.

Even Einstein burnt the biscuits from time to time. And you will, too.

These two men, who were followers of Jesus. Why does Jesus call them foolish? Not because they don’t believe that Jesus rose from the dead – they have heard the testimony of the women who found Jesus’ tomb empty. And these two men have not called into question the resurrection of Jesus – they consider it a possibility that he HAD risen from the grave, as the angels had told them. These men allow for the possibility that Jesus indeed rose from the grave, but they are disappointed because they had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel (past perfect tense), meaning that the hope was something in the past; they had lost hope in Jesus as the one to redeem Israel. That’s what they wanted Jesus to do, and they had their own idea of how and when that would play out:

1. Jesus would enter Jerusalem.
2. He would discredit the corrupt priesthood with its burdensome taxes and corruption.
3. He would raise us support and drive out the Roman invaders
4. He would take charge of the government and bring peace and prosperity to Israel.

And he the credentials to carry this out:

1. He was a descendent of King David, a rightful heir to the throne.
2. He was popular.
3. He was a man of God, showing amazing powers of healing.
4. He spoke with authority and displayed great wisdom.

It seemed like it should have been a slam dunk. But instead he was arrested and executed, and even if he did rise from the grave, they hadn’t seen him. Perhaps they had waited in Jerusalem for the resurrection that he had promised, in hopes that then he might redeem Israel. But it was evening, and despite the rumors, it didn’t look like their messiah had performed to their expectations.

There’s a tension that always exists between divine action and human expectation. And so Jesus graciously starts to change their expectations, *expand them* as a matter of fact. “27Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.” What a Bible study! Imagine God Incarnate leading a Bible study, walking along with you and explaining how

1. He’s not merely the God of Israel, but the God of all creation.
2. He’s not just out to redeem Israel, but all of humanity.
3. He accomplishes this not by swords but by the cross, by the suffering and death of his own beloved Son.
4. The redemption of the world begins in our own hearts.
5. How God’s kingdom is built by sacrificial love, not by political force.

I’m sure there was so much more Jesus taught them on that road.

Yet even then, the two men did not recognize who he was until he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

This is something that Jesus had done at least twice before

1. Once when he fed the multitudes.
2. Once when he fed his disciples at the Last Supper.

In feeding the multitudes, Jesus shows how God graciously and miraculously gives us life by physically nurturing us.

At the Last Supper, Jesus shows how God graciously and miraculously gives us eternal life through Jesus himself, who is the bread of life, by spiritually nurturing us.

In essence, this gesture by the risen Christ communicates the divine love of God to these men. They know that this man sitting in front of them is not the man that they had expected, not some warrior king who would restore economic well-being and security throughout Israel. This man is none other than God incarnate, the one who provides and who sacrifices and who loves us beyond measure.

The two men in an instant recognize that this man is Jesus, at in the same instant he vanishes!

What a moment! All of us have similar moments in our lives. A moment of special closeness to someone. Being Mother’s Day, perhaps you can recall such a moment of closeness with your mother. Or perhaps with your husband or wife. A time that you feel so connected, so united. Perhaps you have had such an experience during the Lord’s Supper, a moment when you inexplicably feel and know Christ’s presence, but as quickly that presence is gone. Something interrupts; a thought , a sound, a doubt, a reminder that we have to leave the moment and move on with life. And you cannot retrieve these moments, these experiences at will. They just happen, and they’re gone.

Do we mourn the loss of such moments? Not at all. But we do remember and cherish such moments. Such moments remind us

*Loving Jesus*, by Mark Allan Powell, called "Presence and Absence." He first writes about experiencing the presence of Jesus: "Authentic Christianity is always a reality to be experienced, not just a collection of facts or doctrines to be learned and believed" (p. 52). Living with the ambiguity of recognizing this "absence of Jesus" even when appreciating his continuing presence holds an important key for spiritual formation. (p. 54)

1. The meal both brings Jesus to us and leaves us longing for Jesus.