

Sunday Sermon April 30, 2017

Sermon Theme: Jesus Changes Everything: He Brings Hope

Sermon Text: Luke 24:13-35

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles 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 only a visitor to Jerusalem and do 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 him they did not see."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Christ 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 acted 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.

Shabbat Shalom. The Peace of God be with you on this, the new Sabbath day of Jesus. My name is Cleopas and I would like to talk to you about the day that changed my life forever. Really, that day changes all of our lives forever. We had followed Jesus for years. We had followed him into Jerusalem amidst shouts and praises, but now, he was dead, they had hung him on a cross.

It wasn't safe for the followers like the 11 and me. Even though we hid, my wife and some of the other women, even Jesus' mother Mary, were stronger than we were. They went to watch as Jesus suffered his last agonizing moments on earth. They saw the brutality first hand. They told us his words, "It is finished" and how he had committed his soul to his Father and then died.

They told us how Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had rushed to take the body down and place it in the tomb before evening came. Joseph and Nicodemus did what they could, but there was no time for preparation. The woman had to wait until the Passover was over to go and make preparations.

Our hope was gone. We didn't know where to go and what to do.

Then Sunday came. Early that morning when the women came back to us we were even more confused than before. What should we believe? When my friend came to me and asked if it was a good time to leave, leaving seemed the right thing to do.

My friend and I had a lot to talk about on the way to Emmaus. There was so much to talk about when it came to Jesus. But as we talked, our conversation turned into discussion and discussion turned into debate. We both had very strong opinions about all the things that had happened with Jesus over the last few days. But we could not figure out what it all meant. For every good point I brought up, my friend brought up another. For

every question we seemed to answer, more questions began. How did his death fit with all the times he had taught he was the Messiah? How can you save all people if you are dead? How did death go together with all the promises Jesus made? We were frustrated that we couldn't put the pieces together.

If you had been with us that day, maybe you would have had some answers for us. Maybe you would have joined us and tried to help us figure this out. But you probably would have done what most people did when they saw two men loudly discussing something. You would have probably walked on the other side of the road just as most of the people did that day.

There was one man who took a particular interest in our conversation. He started by walking close to us, then he joined us but he just listened. Then he asked us who this Jesus was we were discussing and what things had gotten us so upset.

Who is this guy? Is he serious? Who hasn't heard about Jesus? Who isn't talking about what happened to Jesus? My friend and I are so shocked we literally stop and just stare at the guy. I can't believe that he would not have at least heard something about Jesus. He must be a visitor from far outside of Jerusalem to not know what we are talking about. But he seems sincere, he seems like he genuinely wants to know.

What should we explain to him? What things should we tell him about Jesus? There was so much about Jesus that we centered our lives on over the last few years. Things that had changed our lives and the lives of many others, that had brought us hope. But that was the hope that Jesus' death had taken away. As we thought about it, it seems like the wound of Jesus' death was drawn open again.

We started at the beginning. Jesus was different from the other religious leaders we had followed. While those men had power, it was clear that they cared about themselves and their rules than Scripture. But when Jesus came, his power was completely different. He loved everyone and showed a love for Scripture and himself over others.

Everyone recognized the power that he had in his preaching and teaching. Everyone recognized his power to perform miracle and heal the sick. We stood in awe many times when we saw these signs and wonder that could only be from God.

But even with all of his power, he would not stand up to all of the religious leaders. They accused him falsely, arrested him and handed him over to be executed. Even to the very end we waited for that power to show itself, we waited for a miracle as he was being led away. But no miracle came. No power was seen. There was only death.

A king? A Messiah? A Savior? I don't know what we were really looking for. We had hoped and believed that Jesus would be the one promised by the Scriptures to come and save Israel. We thought he was the one.....but he's dead. Now what are we supposed to do?

What's worse his body was gone. I'm not sure what the women saw or didn't see, but they came with stories of the body being gone. They said angels and even Jesus, himself, had appeared to them. Peter and John ran to investigate, they too saw no body there. What did these women mean, what does it all mean that his body is not there?

The man had listened this whole time. He hadn't asked many questions or interrupted us. I was wondering what he thought about all these things.

After listening this whole time he said, "You have all the answers you need, why don't you believe what the prophets have said? "

As we traveled he opened the Scriptures to us. He reminded us of the promise made to Abraham and showed us how Jesus was that blessing that extended to the whole world. He asked us where Micah said the Messiah would be born. He opened the Psalms to us, especially Psalm 22, and showed us that those words pointed to Jesus. He showed us how the Passover Lamb was Jesus himself. His sacrifice was so much like the Passover lamb that was sacrificed for the Jewish people. Only the blood of Jesus did not just save the Jews, it saves all who believe in him.

Not only did he explain the prophecies and how they pointed to Jesus, he taught us what the fulfillment of the prophecies meant for us. He shared with us Isaiah's words that this suffering and death, this sacrifice that we thought took our hope away, actually brought us the hope of forgiveness and the comfort of eternal life because he took this punishment for us. He even talked about the resurrection and pointed out a passage from the Psalms that said that God would not let his holy one see decay, that the Messiah would rise again.

This man knew his Scripture better than we did. Things were falling into place. We had been trying to figure all of this out on our own, but the answers to Jesus had always been in the Scripture. All we needed to do was to look there and believe what God had told us.

The mystery was not a mystery anymore. It was beginning to make sense to us. Jesus had to suffer and die, just as the Scriptures said he would. He had to shed his blood, like the Passover lamb, so that his blood could wash away the sins of all people. He had to defeat sin, death and the devil, so that he could take away death that evil brings. And then he would rise again to show that his victory was complete and that we would rise too. This man led us to understand all of this with his words.

We could feel the hope returning to us as we neared the village. The man said he had to travel on, but we could not let him go. We had to talk with him more. We invited him to stay the evening with us and he accepted.

We reclined at our table to eat supper and to talk more about the Scriptures. Then he did it. It was small, but it was so familiar to us, it was something we had seen our loving master do many times. He said a prayer and broke the bread. Such a small thing opened our eyes to see that this was not just anyone, this was our master and friend Jesus..... he is alive. This day changed everything for us. Our hope had returned.

Then he was gone. He has his taught our hopeless, saddened hearts to believe. He had searched us out when our doubts and fears and worries had led us to lose our hope. He had brought hope and comfort, he did not need to stay with us any longer. We now had hope in the resurrection.

Don't you see? Even though we had seen Jesus for so long, we hadn't really been looking at him as our Savior. Even though we have heard him, hadn't really been listening as he taught us. Our lack of faith led us to lose hope in the promises that Jesus had made. When the time came to believe and trust in God, our faith and trust was gone.

Do you see Jesus? Are you listening when he speaks through his Word? Are you searching the Scriptures as we should have been? You have a blessing that we never had. You have Jesus' words and teaching at your fingertips with your Bibles and your technology, is this access to the Word bringing you closer to Jesus, or do you take it for granted?

My fellow friends in the risen Christ, don't be afraid as I was. Don't be afraid to hear God's promises in the Word and to cling to them, to live them in your life. Don't be afraid to search the Scriptures and to believe the message of the Messiah, the message of Jesus, that is found there.

This day with Jesus changed our lives. Jesus gives hope even when we have lost it. Just like he searched us out, he searches you out in the times when your faith seems weak, when problems trouble your hearts so that he can bring his hope of eternal life back to you in your life.

We had to go back and share this hope with our friends. We didn't care if it was night, we rushed back to Jerusalem. When we got back to the room, we weren't the only ones who had new hope. Jesus had changed all of our lives that day. He had appeared to them as well and had given them hope. Jesus brings hope of new life through the resurrection. Hope that we lived in because it was a hope of a life to come. Shalom, Peace to you from God. God Bless You, Amen.