

THE ROAD TO EMMAUS
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April 11, 2010

LK 24:13 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.

LK 24:17 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?"

LK 24:19 "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."

LK 24:25 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.

LK 24:28 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.

LK 24:30 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?"

LK 24:33 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.

God has laid the Emmaus Road story in Luke 24 on my heart for the last week. I spoke about it at our sunrise service on Jacob's Ridge, I preached about it on WKCB radio Thursday, and God willing, I will preach about the Emmaus Road today. It is a story

unique to Dr. Luke, and it is an amazing story of the Appearance of Jesus shortly after the Resurrection. Luke tells us that the little village of Emmaus was approximately 7 miles from Jerusalem. Two men were heading home from their pilgrimage to Jerusalem where they had celebrated Passover, and where they saw Jesus riding into the city on a donkey, and the people proclaiming Him Messiah. Their faces and their language reflected their disappointment as they spoke about Jesus, the Nazarene, whom they expected to declare Himself Messiah at that great Passover event, because there most of the Jews of the nation and surrounding nations had come to celebrate God's deliverance of Israel by their greatest hero, Moses. Surely the Messiah would make Himself known as Israel's Deliverer at that event celebrating the Exodus Deliverance. These two pilgrims--Cleophas and an unnamed man--were also perplexed! Earlier that morning they were present when the women rushed into the Upper Room saying that the tomb was empty and that they had seen a vision of angels who told them HE WAS RISEN! Now they walked along talking about what had happened. They walked along on the Emmaus Road.

For them THE EMMAUS ROAD WAS A ROAD OF FUTILITY. We find words in the Rubiyat of Omar Khyaam that reflected their feeling: The worldly hope men set their hearts upon

Turns ashes or it prospers and anon
Like snow upon the deserts dusty face
After a little hour or two - is gone.

These Emmaus disciples had set their hopes upon Jesus being the Messiah, and when Jesus mentions their disappointed aspect, they tell Him so:^{LK 24:19} "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."

These disciples did not mean that Jesus was going to spiritually redeem Israel, but they thought that He would save them from Roman oppression and restore the kingdom of Israel to and beyond the magnificent splendor of the United Kingdom under David and Solomon that ran from the Euphrates River Valley to Egypt and from the Arabian Desert to the Mediterranean Sea, a territory of 50,000 square miles. He would in this way *redeem Israel*. He would save Israel from the heathenish hordes that patrolled the streets and tortured their people. That was their hope; that was their dream.

Can you not hear in their words futility, hopelessness and despair..."We had hoped..." meaning, "Our hope is gone; our dreams are futile; the lifeblood of meaning has bled out of our lives."

It is interesting too that Emmaus was west of Jerusalem, and they were traveling toward the sunset. Darkness was coming upon them. Further they were traveling uphill, for all that was west of Jerusalem was into the mountainous region. How symbolic is that! Futility and hopelessness. Moving into the darkness. Tired from their upward climb to their beautiful little village.

We too are on the Emmaus Road. We too often feel the heaviness of the meaningless of our human days and ways. Solomon himself saw the futility and the vanity of life in Ecclesiastes, and cried out of the pain of his own hopelessness, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity!" Yet, it is better to have fellowship on the Emmaus Road, even if that

person is also experiencing futility.

On the Emmaus Road there is also FEAR. That is the probable reason they were on their way to Emmaus. They left Jerusalem after a short time with the disciples in the Upper Room where they were holed-up in fear and trembling themselves. They left Jerusalem because they feared the brutality of the Romans and the hostility of the Jewish leaders. They say what Paul later said, that the Jewish leaders had Jesus crucified. Jesus quizzed them about what they were discussing. Confounded by His question, they could not understand how anyone would not know what happened. They told Jesus what they were talking about--Lk. 24:19 "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;"

They had lost hope, to be sure, and that empty place was now full of fear, for Jesus had been crucified at the instigation of the very religious leaders in whom they had put their trust. Jesus had been crucified by the Romans because the Jewish religious leaders had handed him over to them. Betrayal of the rankest sort! When religious leaders betray the people, something in the soul of man is crushed.

Cleophas and his friend understood perfectly that people who would kill their leader would have no compunction about killing them. So they started home earlier enough to get there before dark. They might be slain in the darkness. As long as there was sunlight, even if it blinded your eyes, perhaps things would be well. Perhaps they looked over their shoulder to see if anyone was coming after them. They would be safe if they were home. Their Leader had charged into the very citadel of danger, but they were of lesser courage, they hightailed toward the safety of their little village and their peaceful homes.

We also walk the Emmaus Road. We too face the fear of living. Our fears may be different but our fears come from the same source. 1Tim 1:7 "For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but the Spirit of Power, and of Love and of a sound mind." Our fear comes from our own human weakness and from the 'enemy.' We walk the Emmaus Road, afraid of being rejected, afraid of dying, afraid of misunderstanding, afraid of the seen and the unseen. "But," say others, "it is a sin to fear." We know that but our nerves do not. And even if our fears are our sins, it is a greater sin on the part of self-righteous-snobs to cajole us with this truth. We do not need more guilt for our sin, whoever may point it out. We need rather forgiveness.

Now Jesus can point out our fears, for He is perfect. He pointed out the folly of fear and the sin of fear and unbelief to the men who were in the storm. He cried out, "O ye of little faith." Here, He very nearly says the same thing: ^{LK 24:25} He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Jesus pointedly taught us that fear is the opposite of faith! Yet we walk the Emmaus Road sometimes with 'fear and trembling.' But we know that throughout the Bible we are told to fear not! ^{ISA 43:1} But now, this is what the LORD says--

he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have summoned you by name; you are mine.

⁶ Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD

your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

DT 31:7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. ⁸ The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

These and a hundred other verses remind us that we should always be courageous, but those of us on the Emmaus Road know that we are often afraid. Let us not commit another sin by denying the sin of fear. Fear always accompanies us on our Emmaus Road, but it is good to have the fellowship of another traveler to help allay our fears.

On the Emmaus Road the two pilgrims also faced FAILURE. But the interesting thing is, it was not their failure they faced particularly, but the failure of Jesus. Listen to what they are saying: "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; "

They crucified Him. We thought He would redeem Israel, but He failed, He wound up dead. The expositor of Luke in the Interpreter's Bible writes: "To them it the Cross spelled failure. It may spell that for us. Or it may spell triumph. In it is power to cleanse every human life that will report itself there." He then tells the story of Russell Conwell, founder of Temple University. Russell Conwell enlisted in the Civil War from Yale University and became a captain in the Northern Army. One day he was leading his army in retreat across a burning bridge, and discovered he had left his sword behind. A young lad from Vermont dashed through the flames and recovered Conwell's sword, dashed back across the burning bridge and presented Conwell's sword. As a result of his burns this young soldier died. Conwell tried to live for himself and this young soldier, Johnny Ring. He became a lawyer, a lecturer, an orator, and finally a preacher and founder of Temple University. The sacrifice of this young man made Conwell the man he laater became.

Jesus was a failure to the Jewish leaders, a failure to the Romans, and, to the disciples, in their darkness and despair, a failure also. But their minds would change and they would see that His Sacrifice did not make Him a failure, but the Savior of the World. The devil also considered Him a failure. But the Resurrection proved that God Himself deemed the sacrifice of His Only Begotten Son, the highest, holiest, and greatest success in Eternity.

Finally on the Emmaus Road these two pilgrims found the Future--Jesus entered their lives. Barclay quotes this poem by Fay Inchfawn:

Sometimes, when everything goes wrong;
When days are short and nights are long;
When wash-day brings so dull a sky
That not a single thing will dry.
And when the kitchen chimney smokes,
And when there's naught so "queer" as folks!
When friends deplore my faded youth,
And when the baby cuts a tooth.

While John, the baby last but one,
Clings round my skirts till day is done;
And fat, good-tempered Jane is glum,
And butcher's man forgets to come.
Sometimes I say on days like these,
I get a sudden gleam of bliss.
Not on some sunny day of ease,
He'll come...but on a day like this!"

You see, on the Emmaus Road they found their future--or should I say, Jesus, the Future, found them. He was the future in what He taught them. He taught them the very word of God. He taught them what the Bible is all about--it is about Him. He was the Greatest Teacher who ever walked upon the earth. And He taught them all that Moses and all the others in the Old Testament said about Him. And the good news was that the Old Testament taught them that Jesus' death was no failure. The prophets had told how He would suffer and die for the sins of others. The Scriptures told how that He would arise from the dead and reign at God's right hand. The Old Testament told how that He would send back the Holy Spirit to glorify His people, and to testify of Him. He became their pedagogue, walking with them and telling them that the future was theirs if they believed in Him. The Zondervan Reference Bible says, "The future glory of the Christ (v. 26) was mentioned in the context of the passion prediction, ascribed there to the "Son of Man"

LK 24:25 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."

He taught by the Law and the Prophets the redeeming death He would die, the glorious resurrection that would follow, and the entry into Glory as the Son of Man.

You see, human fellowship is good, but not redemptive. Someone said that when you share your sadness with another you will be only half as sad. I believe that when we share our discouragement with another we make the other discouraged too. Human fellowship is not redemptive. These two were simply reinforcing one another in their sadness. They were simply mourning together. There was nothing redemptive in what the two of them were doing. But when Jesus entered the picture the promise became true, "When two or three are gathered together in my Name there am I in the midst of them." If we gather for any other purpose we simply reinforce one another. But when Christ enters the fellowship, He gives us the Future..

Let a husband and wife journey in life together. They may stick together, or they may easily break apart. However, if Christ is truly with them, He gives them a future.

But His Presence is essential also for the individual, for the individual has no future apart from Christ. We need Christ for salvation. We need Christ to enter into our glory when we die. We need the Lord always in our lives.

Their futility was turned into a living hope! They turned their faces toward Jerusalem and fairly ran back those 7 miles as downhill they went, going toward the rising sun. The Emmaus Road became a Road of Hope.

Moreover their fear turned into boldness as they ran into the Upper Room and cried out, "He is risen indeed!" They were no longer worried about their safety. They had a

message to preach! They had a song to sing! “He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!” When they reached that Upper Room they rejoiced with Peter who had also had a vision of the Risen Lord. Their fear had been defeated by their faith.

The failure of Jesus had been an illusion. The death of Jesus was essential for salvation. The entire human race was sinful. History, as Thieliicke said, is the Judgment of God. But to those who accept Jesus sacrifice, their personal history is the forgiveness of sin.

If you do not know Jesus, you need to meet Him. He is here today, and this is your Emmaus Road.