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Series: *A First Century Physician Introduces the Cure*

Title: *Walking With Them...Talking With Them*

Text: Luke 24:13-36

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King Abdullah II has been the ruler of Jordan since 1999. Since he began his reign he has frequently slipped out of the palace dressed as a commoner, mingling incognito with his subjects, so as to give him a better perspective on the problems in his troubled realm.

King Abdullah takes great care about his disguises---because with his boyish face he is very recognizable. Plus, posters of him and his father are on the wall in pretty much every office and shop in Jordan. He once posed as a cameraman doing a story in Jordan's state-run trade zone---where he got an earful from merchants about red tape and inefficiency. Another time he posed as a custodian in a hospital to see how his nation's healthcare system was working. He even drove a cab once to listen to the input of his customers as to how, in their opinion, the country was doing.

Abdullah is not the first king to use this incognito technique. It is said that Henry the VIII did this---as did King Charles 11th of Sweden---and many others. And whether they know it or not---the first king to do this was not A king---but THE King---the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I say that because as we will see in today's text, the King of Kings disguised Himself two-thousand years earlier---on the first Easter Sunday. Take your Bibles and turn to Luke 19. Follow along as I read verses 13-35. And if able, I would ask that you stand in respect for God's Word as it is written.

Luke 24:13-36

13 - Now that same day two of them [referring to Jesus' followers] 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 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.

36 - While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Okay, let's back up and take a closer look at what these two travelers' encounter with our incognito Lord.

First, who were they? Well, verse 18 says that one of them was Cleopas. Many believe---me included---that the other person was Cleopas' wife, Mary. Here's why. John 19:25 says, **"Now there stood at the cross of Jesus, His mother, and His mother's sister, [and with them] Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Madgalene."** So---with THIS Mary---at the cross identified as Clopas' wife (same name different spelling) it's not a stretch to believe that these two disciples leaving Jerusalem that Easter Sunday afternoon were this particular married couple---Cleopas and his wife, Mary.

They were apparently heading to their lodging in Emmaus which was about seven miles outside of the city. Remember---it was Passover so the city would have been packed, which means lodging IN the city proper would have been impossible to find. In any case they were overcome with grief after Jesus' crucifixion as they made this journey---a journey that turned out to be the most amazing walk of their lives.

And please understand---they were not just grief-stricken. They were devastated. As verse 21 says, they had hoped that Jesus, **"...was the one Who was going to redeem Israel."** But now their hopes had been dashed to pieces---and they ached with grief and confusion. They were deeply discouraged and desperately needed a Word from God---which is what they got! Isn't it wonderful how God meets us at our point of need!?

Well, as this couple walked along, they found themselves reviewing the events of the past three days and they probably slipped into "iffing." We all do that when bad things happen. I imagine they said things to each other like:

- *If only Jesus had RUN from the garden when He had the chance, what a different day this would have been.*
- *If only Jesus had not admitted to Pilate that He was their king.*
- *If only the secret disciples among the Pharisees---men like Joseph and Nicodemus---had been there and spoken out on Jesus' behalf---*

IF ONLY---IF ONLY---IF ONLY. Then---while they were "IF-ING"---Jesus Himself approached from behind and began walking with them. But they didn't recognize Him. Why? Well---there are several theories.

- Some say this is because they were walking west and the setting sun blinded their eyes.
- Others say they were too preoccupied with their sorrow to identify Jesus and that their tears blurred their vision.
- Some say they didn't recognize Jesus because the last time they had seen Him He was beaten, marred, and bleeding---almost beyond human recognition.

Then, they had seen Him crucified---they had seen Him run through with that Roman spear. In short, they didn't recognize Jesus because they were convinced that He was dead and, in their minds, when someone died like He did He stayed that way.

By the way, there are many in our day and age who deny the resurrection of Jesus by saying He didn't really die on the cross in the first place. They say He just sort of swooned and if someone says that to you---with gentleness and respect, point them to the four gospels. Show them that the unified testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John underscore the fact that Jesus' first followers---witnesses of His crucifixion---were convinced He was dead. So were the Roman soldiers who ran Him through with a spear. And remember these Roman executioners were experts at knowing when they had done their job. The fact is, Jesus DIED on that cross---no doubt about it.

But I digress. Jesus may have used all the things I have mentioned to hide His identity from these two---I don't know---but as verse 16 says they **"were kept from recognizing Him."** So---Jesus was intentionally incognito that Easter afternoon. The Great Teacher went "undercover boss" on these two to allow them to verbalize their true feelings so He could then LEAD them to solve their problems---by DISCOVERING the truth on their own. It is as the old teaching tip

goes, *“Never tell a student something you can lead them to discover for themselves.”* This is what our Lord was doing in verse 17 when He asked, ***“What are you discussing together as you walk along?”***

Verse 18 says that when Jesus asked them this question, they stood still, their faces downcast as if they were about to cry---as if re-calling and verbalizing the memories of the seeming defeats of that weekend was just too much for them to bear. Then after this brief hesitation, Cleopas got control of his emotions and responded to Jesus’ question, but he did so with a question of his own, saying, ***“[Stranger], are You the only One visiting Jerusalem unaware of the things that have happened here in these last days?”***

Note that Jesus didn’t really answer Cleopas. Instead, He continued to guide their learning by saying, ***“What things?”*** In this way Jesus led them to review Who these two thought He had BEEN—before He led them to discover Who He really IS. You see, at this moment these two were living in the PAST and Jesus wanted to show them that He was living in the PRESENT—and by the way, He still is!

Now—I want you to note that their shock at Jesus’ lack of knowledge of the happenings in Jerusalem shows how much Jesus was in the center of the news of that weekend. I mean everyone—even visitors for the Passover—knew about the events that had transpired in the previous days. Jesus’ trial and execution was top news. So, for Jesus to ask, ***“What things?”***—would be like someone coming to you asking why everyone was wearing face masks and where’s the choir and why all the restaurants and movie theaters are closed. Everyone in Jerusalem knew about the things had happened during that first Holy Week.

Well, Cleopas DID answer Jesus’ question---but in his answer, he showed that at this point he was indeed living in the PAST, for in his explanation in verses 19-21---he listed all the things Jesus WAS.

- He WAS Jesus the Nazarene.
- He WAS a prophet.
- He WAS mighty in deeds.
- He WAS mighty in word.
- He WAS loved by and the common people.
- He WAS crucified.
- Then he topped it all off by saying, ***“We were hoping that HE WAS the person to redeem Israel.”*** (Vs 21)

Did you count all those *“was-es?”* You see, for Cleopas and his wife—and apparently for the rest of the disciples at that time—Jesus was now limited to the PAST. *“Oh---He WAS wonderful! We LOVED Him! He TAUGHT us so much! We HAD such high hopes. But He was crucified and now it is all over.”* For them, Jesus’ death WAS irreversible.

Of course, it was NOT all over and as they talked and listened for the rest of their journey, Jesus led them to discover this wonderful truth. They learned that not only WAS HE—He is! Jesus explained to them how they were wrong in their messianic expectations by showing them that the Scriptures had prophesied that the Christ would have to suffer---- exactly as Jesus had suffered that weekend. As verse 27 says, ***“...beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.”***

Now—think about how wonderful that must have been. As they journeyed together that afternoon, their hearts burned within them as the same God Who inspired the writings of the Old Testament prophecies---guided them through an understanding of those prophecies to help them get back on the road of faith. You see, centuries before His birth the Old Testament described Jesus perfectly. In passages from Genesis to Malachi, the Messiah was portrayed as One Who would:

- be born of a virgin in the town of Bethlehem,
- perform miracles,
- enter Jerusalem on a donkey,
- enter the temple with authority,
- be betrayed by a friend,
- forsaken by His disciples,
- beaten, crucified, pierced,

- ---and rise from the dead!

All this was there on paper. It had been for hundreds of years---for Cleopas and others to see—but they missed it. They were lost to this truth, because they based their expectations of the Messiah on something other than Scripture.

Well, when these three finally arrived at Emmaus after all this “*on-the-road God-led Bible study*” Cleopas and his wife, Mary, didn’t want their time together to end---so, they invited this wise Stranger to stay and share a meal with them. He agreed and they asked Him to say the blessing. As He took the bread and began to give thanks, it suddenly hit them that this Stranger was Jesus Himself! Maybe they noticed the nail-scars on His hands or perhaps the way He handled the bread reminded them of Jesus’ breaking the bread at the Last Supper----or maybe Jesus just opened their eyes—but they realized their Guest was the Lord! The instant they did, Jesus disappeared. I think He vanished while still holding the broken bread up in midair—leaving it to fall to the table.

Okay, what can WE learn from the experience of this couple with whom Jesus walked and talked that first Easter Sunday afternoon?

1.) Jesus really did RISE FROM THE DEAD.

The amazing event we celebrate this morning---really happened.

This week a google search led me to a list of strange but true stories. Here’s a sampling:

- One man was rear-ended by another car. He had a cervical sprain and was hospitalized. He recovered and on the way home from the hospital he stopped for gas. As he walked to the clerk to pay---he was run over by the same driver who had rear-ended him.

Did that really happen? Yes!

- A bride shared that she got her directions wrong and walked down the aisle at the wrong church---where there just happened to be another wedding taking place.

Did that really happen? Yes!

- A guy went out to breakfast on June 6, 2006—6/6/06---and his bill was \$6.66.

Did that really happen? Yes!

- A young woman entered a writing contest and won. The prize was a date with Tom Cruise. The date was arranged---it was all set---and she forgot about it. So, she stood up Tom Cruise.

Did that really happen? Yes! Smart girl in my opinion!

I could go on---listing unbelievable things that really happened---but none of them could hold a candle to the most amazing thing EVER---when Jesus Christ died on Friday and walked out of His own tomb on Sunday! Jesus really did rise from the dead. I mean, Easter isn’t just a holiday about egg-delivering Bunnies and the arrival of Spring. No! It’s an annual reminder of the fact that two thousand years ago, on the third day Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, really did RISE BODILY from the grave!

And lest you think, “*We know that Mark. That’s why we got all dressed up!*” Well, not everyone does---not everyone who goes to church believes Jesus really did rise from the dead on that first Easter morning. R. Kent Hughes refers to this and says,

“All Resurrection-denying churches look for Jesus ‘among the dead.’ They love the example of the dead Jesus. They preach His courage, His conviction, even His faith. Sentimentality fills their sermons with language about recurrent spring making hope eternal, about a butterfly discarding its chrysalis. But the ‘R’ word is never used, except metaphorically.”

Tim Keller refers to this as well. He says that as a religion major at a secular university he was told that after Jesus’ death His disciples, “*experienced His presence.*” They had this powerful FEELING that He was still with them somehow—not bodily—but just with them.

John Dominic Crossan who was a prominent member of the ultra-liberal Jesus Seminar, put it like this: *“Emmaus never happened; Emmaus always happens.”*

So, according to this viewpoint Luke’s account of these two walking to Emmaus meeting our Risen Lord is a made-up story written to express the higher truths of forgiveness and hope. But—if you read through texts like Luke 24 your first response to all this is going to be, *“Really? I don’t see that. This chapter doesn’t seem to be made-up to me!”* As we just read, when Cleopas and Mary return to Jerusalem and meet with the rest of the disciples to share their news Jesus suddenly appears among them and says,

“Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself. Touch Me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones. Do you have something to eat? Give me something to eat.” (Luke 24:39-40)

They gave Him a piece of broiled fish and He took it and ate it and there Jesus is eating fish and chips with the disciples.

So, was this just a higher truth that was being symbolically represented there? No! In fact, Jesus is plainly saying, *“I’m not a symbol, I’m really here. I am not just an impression in your mind; I am not just a kind of spiritual presence. I’m not a feeling. I’m REALLY here, flesh and bones, touch Me. Give Me something to eat.”*

The fact is the Gospel accounts of the events surrounding Jesus’ resurrection all have the earmarks of eyewitness accounts---not made-up feeling stories---and our text from Luke is no exception. For example, if you read through this chapter you’ll see that it is full of NAMES—like Cleopas and the women, Joanna, and Mary the Mother of James. Why? Why all these names? Well in ancient times very often when you were giving a historical account based on eyewitness testimony, these names were like footnotes. It was your way of saying if you want to check out what I’m telling you, go talk to these people. And you could have done that because the Gospels were not written by second generation disciples. No—they came out while these eyewitnesses were still alive so you could go to Cleopas and say, *“Hey Cleo—I just got a copy of Luke’s new book on my Kindle. Did Jesus really rise from the dead like Luke said?”* All that would have had to happen for Luke’s gospel and the others to disappear from the pages of history would be for witnesses like Cleopas and the others to stand up and say, *“No---of course not. This is all made up!”* But they didn’t do that! No—they affirmed what they witnessed on that first Easter Sunday. I could cite a long list of other proofs of Jesus’ resurrection:

- Like the first witnesses were women in a time when the testimony of a woman was not admissible in court. So, if you were making something up that you wanted people to believe---you wouldn’t cite a female.
- I could point to the change in Jesus’ male followers---who ran in fear when Jesus was arrested---but went on to spend their lives boldly telling others about Jesus’ death and resurrection---even if doing that led to their martyrdom.

There are lots of proofs like that---but the most powerful proof is our own marble-moving faith stories---as we tell people about our PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS. How do we know Him personally? Because He is RISEN! He is risen indeed. As the hymnwriter put it, *“He walks with us and talks with us and tells us we are His own...and the joy we share as we tarry there, none other has ever known.”*

Here’s a second thing we can learn from the first disciples’ experience of Jesus’ resurrection.

2.) The resurrection of Jesus really is the key to understanding the Bible.

Without Easter Sunday—the Bible makes no sense—and this makes sense because Jesus is the focus of the Bible. His birth, life, ministry, atoning death and victorious resurrection is what the Bible is all about. As Paul puts it, ***“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”*** (2nd Corinthians 1:20) Let me put it this way—the key to understanding the WRITTEN Word is the WORD MADE FLESH!

Well, in Luke 24 we see these Emmaus travelers being reminded of this truth. In verses 25-27 Jesus lovingly chided them, saying, ***“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?”*** ***And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.”*** After Jesus revealed Himself and then disappeared, they

said, ***“Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*** (vs 32)

Let me ask—has your heart ever burned in you as God’s Spirit guided you to understand its truth? I know mine has—That’s why Bible study is so fulfilling. Thanks to Jesus’ indwelling Spirit we can have *“Emmaus Road Experiences”* all the time!

Cleopas and Mary’s experience didn’t end on that road. When they returned to Jerusalem, as they were sharing their story, Jesus appeared to them all and said, ***“This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.’ Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.’”*** (vs 44-46)

Listen—the Bible only makes sense if Easter is true. Easter really is that important. It is the key to understanding it all.

- The Jewish sacrificial system only makes sense if it points to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.
- The Jewish Passover meal only makes sense when paired with the Resurrection.
- The promise of Abraham’s descendants blessing the whole world only makes sense if you realize this happens through Christians sharing the good news of our Risen Lord.

Okay, there’s one more lesson we can learn from the Easter Sunday experiences of the first disciples.

3.) The resurrection of Jesus is a message that really MUST share with the world.

In verse 47 Jesus tells the disciples, ***“Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in My name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”*** He was telling them that His resurrection gave them a message to take to the world—a message the world was desperate to hear and it is this:

- Because of Jesus’ sacrifice our SINS really can be forgiven!
- Because of our faith in our RISEN Lord, death really is not the end!
- Because of Easter we really don’t have to lose our loved ones—someday we can all be together again!
- Because of Easter and the promise of Heaven—we really can endure suffering, knowing it is temporary and Heaven is forever.
- Because of Easter when we die we really do get new bodies—ininitely better than the ones we have now. Jesus was walking first-fruit proof of that.

As all these implications of Jesus’ resurrection began to dawn on these Emmaus travelers, they felt compelled to communicate that wonderful knowledge with others.

The fact that Jesus was alive was too good to keep to themselves—even for a moment. They couldn’t possibly sleep knowing that their friends back in Jerusalem were still grieving. So, even though the sun had already set, they decided to backtrack and return to Jerusalem immediately. In fact, I don’t think they walked—they RAN—and that’s not easy in sandals! Well, that’s the way it is with everyone who meets Jesus. They just naturally want to share Him with others. They want everyone to meet Him. Jesus is “news” too good to keep to yourself!

As those Emmaus road disciples learned, that’s the way it is—When we meet Jesus, when we come to know the Risen Lord, we just have to tell someone. We have to share Him with others!

We cannot be INCOGNITO Christians.

This week I came across a story about a young man named Michael Nnadi. Michael was from Nigeria and people who knew him said he was a Christian whose face projected a nearly supernatural joy. Michael was a student at the Good Shepherd Seminary in Nigeria when on January 8, 2002 an armed gang disguised in military fatigues, breached the gate of the school. They kidnapped four seminarians, including Michael. By the end of the month, three of the four boys had been freed, but not Michael. A few days later he was found dead, his body dumped on the side of a road. No one knew why he had been killed until April 30 when Michael’s murderer, Mustapha Mohammed was interviewed in prison by Nigeria’s newspaper. So why did Mustapha kill Michael? He openly and even brazenly told the press,

“He did not allow me any peace; he just kept preaching to me the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I did not like the confidence he displayed [in his faith], and I decided to send him to an early grave.”

Why would Michael share his faith so boldly? Why would he risk his life to tell his captors about our Risen Lord? Because Michael knew it is a story that really must be told.

LET US PRAY