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Scripture: Table Talk - Luke 24 - Salvation

If you have your bibles, I would invite you to turn with me to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 24 and as you are doing that, I just want to say again that I think I would have really liked Luke, the author of this text. His gospel contains a lot of stories and references to food. Of the 23 parables or stories in the book of Luke, 15 contained references to food.

As Robert Karris says in his book, *Eating Your Way Through Luke's Gospel*,

"Luke presents Jesus with a table napkin on his lap, thrusting himself into the lives of people to lead them away from sin and to God."

We will get another glimpse of that in our passage for today. This is a familiar section of scripture to many of us. Listen to the intro and try and place yourself into this scene.

Luke 24:13-14

13 That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened

Now context is so important here, That same day. What does that mean? Well, if you look back at the beginning of this chapter you will note that earlier on this same day, some of the women followers of Jesus, had returned to his tomb, three days after his crucifixion. Still mourning his death, they wanted to pay their respects and they discovered the tomb was empty. They frantically run to where the rest of Jesus followers had hidden themselves away, dazed and confused over the death of their leader, and the women tell them, the tomb is empty. But they don't believe them at first, would you?

And that is why we find two of them, walking away. They are literally walking away from Jesus.

Headed in the other direction, down the road, away from Jerusalem. They are on their way to Emmaus, a tiny town about twelve kilometres from Jerusalem. It would be like walking from downtown London to Kilworth.

These two disciples were part of the followers of Jesus. Presumably they had been with him as he taught, as he performed miracles, they had been privy to private conversations with Jesus. They had an up close and personal perspective of his life, and now we see them walking away.

While many of the other followers of Jesus are still in Jerusalem, trying to determine what has happened, these two are going in the opposite direction. They are leaving town. Away from Jesus.

Have you ever walked away from something? You just had enough and couldn't take it any longer. You saw no other option but to pull up stakes, and walked away? What was it for you? A job? Did you walk away from a school? Perhaps from a relationship or even a marriage? Have you ever walked away from the church? Or from Jesus?

Some of you sitting here in this room know exactly what these two men in this text must be feeling; disappointment, anger, hopelessness, bitterness. Those are the feelings that cause you to walk away from something, aren't they? It says in the text that as these men are walking away, they are talking about the events that occurred over the past three days.

In fact, in the original Greek, the words used to describe this exchange they were having on the road, was that it was actually more of an argument. They are arguing with each other about all that had transpired over the past few days, Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. It's a heated discussion, there is a lot of emotion. This is quite a picture.

Two people on a road, engaged in an animated conversation heading to Emmaus. We don't really know why Emmaus. Maybe that is where they were from and they are just headed home but, you get a sense that it is a road that they weren't anticipating taking at that time. It was an unexpected detour. When the week started they probably thought that they would still be in Jerusalem, finishing the celebrating of Passover with Jesus and the others. Looking forward to all that the future held as they continue to follow Jesus but that wasn't the way life turned out for them

There was this unexpected change of plans, and it was all like a terrible dream, a nightmare. One minute they were eating with Jesus and then, he starts talking this crazy talk of dying and then the authorities come and arrest him, put him on trial, beat him, mock him, crucify him. They killed him. It all happened so quickly.

Oh there were times when he did allude to the fact that something like this might happen but they didn't really take it seriously or probably more accurately, they never really understood what he meant when he said that one day, he would have to die. Those who followed Jesus for the past three years, their plans are now derailed, their journey has taken a detour and they find themselves on a different path of life. A road heading somewhere else, away from Jesus. Has that ever happened in your life?

All your hopes and dreams have you travelling in one direction. You have your sights set on a one-year plan or a five-year plan. You have goals and suddenly, a bump in the road and you turn and go the other way. You are rerouted, and it is unfamiliar and maybe lonely and disappointing. For you maybe it was a change in your career path, or perhaps a relationship fracture, or maybe you didn't get into that program at school. Maybe you were cut from a team, had an injury or an unexpected health concern and the road of life that you are on now is different than what you expected.

Do you ever think back on significant moments in your life, decisions you had to make and think, man if only this would have happened, or that would have happened, my life would have been so much different today?

You may know by now that milestone markers, like significant dates are important to me. Birthdays, anniversaries. I remember the day, I started working at North Park, January 29, 2013. It is an important marker in my life and every year when it comes around, I pause and reflect on the journey that brought me here.

Last Saturday, July 28 was also an important date for me. I took time to ponder the 21st anniversary of the day, God reoriented the trajectory of my life.

For ten years before July 28, 1997, I was a school teacher and I loved it. Carolyn and I planned our lives around being teachers, but our life path got rerouted. We never expected it and for the past 21 years, I have been a pastor in a church. Not a lot of people saw that one coming! Myself included!

The pathway has not always been easy but it has been so rewarding and filled with different opportunities and experiences I could have never imagined. Last week as Carolyn and I reflected on where God has brought us, we tried to picture what our lives would have been like if we hadn't followed Jesus' calling. We couldn't fathom it. We are so humbled by the way he has met us on this tangent he has taken us on.

Maybe you have had the same experience.

You meticulously plotted your future. You "GPS'ed" the road ahead and thought you planned for every pot hole, every fork in the road and yet, you have been rerouted. Recalculating....

Is that where you find yourself today? Rerouted on the path of life? Does that make you fearful or worried or are you anticipating that Jesus is going to meet you right where you are? Because that is what happens to these two sojourners in the text. Jesus comes and meets them where they are, on the road they weren't expecting to be on.

Luke 24:15-16

15 As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. 16 But God kept them from recognizing him.

Two guys on a road leading away from Jesus, talking about the events of the day and Jesus meets them on the road. But they didn't recognize him.

Perhaps, he looked a little different. Three days in a tomb can do that to a person. Or maybe he disguised himself as he didn't want to cause too much of a ruckus. Or maybe, just maybe they didn't recognize Jesus on the road because they just weren't expecting to see him there. Remember, they were walking away. Have you ever met someone in a mall or a store and you didn't recognize them because it was out of context? You are so used to seeing them somewhere else that it just didn't compute when you saw them in a different setting.

I get this a lot from you. I run into you at Masonville or Sobey's. You do a bit of a double take. It is Pastor Paul. You are not used to seeing me away from this setting. See to these followers, Jesus was dead and they weren't expecting to see him. Resurrections weren't a common occurrence in this culture. In the years before Jesus' life and death, there were many who came and claimed to be the Saviour of Israel, the Messiah but in every case, this person was eventually executed. The movement he began was squashed, his followers went home, that was it. Hopes dashed.

These guys on the road to Emmaus, they were disillusioned. They had thought Jesus was different. But in the end, he was just another leader of another movement snuffed out by the authorities. A hopeful situation turned hopeless. They weren't expecting a resurrection and they certainly weren't looking for Jesus on the road they were travelling. The men on the Road to Emmaus, they didn't recognize Jesus at first but the more they experienced him, the more they talked with him and engaged him on the journey, there was something oddly familiar about this stranger. Look at the probing question Jesus asked them in,

Luke 24:17

"What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?"

Notice Jesus doesn't barge in and dominate the discussion. He listens first. He gives them space to tell their story, to share their pain and to speak about their disappointment and Luke captures the drama of the moment. After Jesus asked the question, it says as Luke 24:17 continues,

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces.

They are walking but they have to stop to kind of compose themselves before they can begin and then it just all comes out. I am challenged by the example Jesus sets here because I think we, too, need to begin our interactions with people with more questions. What do you think? I think we talk too much about ourselves these days. Just observe some of the conversations around you. I think we need to listen more. It is only by entering into other's stories, their hopes, and disappointments does anything we have to say as Christians, have any credibility. Would you agree? Has that been your experience? When we engage with people in our world, we can't be afraid of their pain or even their questions about Jesus or faith. We need to invite Jesus to give us listening ears and compassionate hearts.

It is interesting in the text, Jesus listens intently to the heart break of these two travellers but when he finally speaks up, he doesn't hold back. Look at,

Luke 24:25-27

Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. 26 Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" 27 Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

"You foolish people! Oh Jesus listened first but when it came time to speak. He laid it on the line. How would you respond if a stranger saddled up beside you and called you foolish? But, Jesus calls them foolish not to provoke them but to emphasize their failure to understand what was written in the Old Testament, the scriptures that they would have known. Then he proceeds to take them on a crash course of the bible, reminding them of God's provision for his people all throughout history. Reminding them that God hasn't turned his back on his people.

That is the scene. That is the context. Three guys walking down the road away from Jerusalem on the day of Jesus' resurrection. Two friends, one stranger carrying on a spirited conversation. But now we get to the crux of the story. The pivotal point.

Luke 24:28

By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey.

Jesus acted as if he were going on, They come the fork in the road, where the two guys are turning into town presumably to their homes and the one, we the readers know is Jesus, is motioning as if to carry on the journey. But, these two men cannot let Jesus slip away. In fact, in the text it says that when Jesus was talking to them and explaining scripture to them, their hearts were burning.

Something deeper was going on here. So they can't let him go,

Luke 24: 29

but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.

Circle that verse in your bible. This is important. It is the extending of hospitality to Jesus. These men welcomed the stranger to travel and converse with them on the road, even when he called them foolish and now they almost force him to stay and eat with them in their home.

This relationship has now been taken to the next level. Remember, hospitality in this day and culture was deeply meaningful. Who you invited into your home and around a table was huge. To welcome and sit with a person around a meal was to extend friendship, intimacy, unity and acceptance.

As Luke 24:29 continues we see that Jesus accepts their gesture of hospitality. So he went home with them. And he joins them for a meal. What would be a very significant meal.

Luke 24:30-31

30 As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. 31 Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

Notice here at this meal, Jesus goes from being an invited guest of these two men, to taking on the role of being the host. Can you imagine doing that? You are in someone's home for the first time. Sitting around the dinner table and you decide to just take matters into your own hands. So you get up, carve the meat, give the serving instructions, say the grace

and then pass the food around. Try that sometime when you get invited to a stranger's home. See how that goes over. That is essentially what Jesus is doing here. It says, he took bread and blessed it, broke it and began to give it to them. Something more is going on! Suddenly the eyes of these followers are open. They now see what they were blind to on the road. They recognize that they are eating a meal with Jesus. He has risen. Everything he talked about, everything he said to them when he was alive has come true.

Christ is known around a table. Christ is recognized around the table. On the road, their hearts were burning as Jesus shared scripture but it is around the table that the two disciples immediately connect the word with the meal. Their eyes were open around the table because the scriptures were open to them on the road. The text goes on to say that the two disciples head back to Jerusalem, at once. That very night, wouldn't you! To be reunited with their friends, with other followers of Jesus and to share with them the good news and celebrate with them. They have seen the risen Saviour! Their eyes were opened at the table.

He took the break, blessed it, broke it and gave it ...does that phrase sound familiar? Have you heard that one before?

Luke 9:16

Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread and fish to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people.

It is the story of the feeding of the 5000 with two fish and five loaves of bread that Shane shared with us a few weeks ago. Do you remember?

Luke 22:19

He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

It was the Passover feast that Jesus ate with his disciples. His last earthly supper before he would be crucified. Matt Loveday shared it with us last week, do you remember?

He took the break, blessed it, broke it and gave it; This same sequence occurs at the feeding of the 5000, at the last supper and in the story of the road to Emmaus There are many similarities between these three scripture passages. This is why I love scripture so much. Luke is up to something here.

Jesus is made known at the breaking of bread at the meal table. In the sharing of food with friends and strangers and even enemies. Christ is made known in community. The Word, Jesus, is embodied in a meal that is what Luke is revealing in these passages. But we don't always see him because we aren't always looking for him or expecting him to show up.

That is why there is power in the grace that we say at the table. Have you ever thought about that? When we gather with friends, family or even strangers around a table, we model what Jesus did. We take the food just as Jesus took the bread. We prepare it and arrange it to be served just as Jesus broke the bread to serve and then we bless it, we say grace. In essence what we are doing is not only thanking Jesus for the provision of the food but we are inviting him to the table. We are inviting him to be the host all that happens through the meal.

By starting our meal with a blessing, we are welcoming and acknowledging Jesus around our table and inviting our eyes to be open to his activity in our midst. Grace goes beyond simply thanking Jesus for our daily bread. It is to acknowledge and invite his presence to be with us.

I want you to know something very important. I think I can speak for Matt, Shane, Trish. Our prayer as preachers at North Park is that we model what we preach. That is our heart's desire. When we plan a preaching series like we have this summer on Table Talk, and encourage you to take action and have meals with people and invite God to be present at your table, we are doing the same thing.

One of Carolyn and my goals while we were on vacation at the cottage last month was to invite our neighbours around us for dinner. We have a good connection and have had them for dinner in the past. Most of them do not attend church but they all know I am a pastor and I get a lot of good natured joking about this direct connection they seem to think I have with God. If we need some rain or a

good day for boating, they nudge me to get on the hot line to God and work things out.

One of our neighbours is an 89 year-old widower named Fred. Fred is amazing. He is still out cutting his lawn, gardening and tinkering around his property. He is a handyman so on one occasion I invited him over to help me with a problem I was having starting my lawnmower. He just shook his head at my general ineptitude but was pleased to solve the problem.

Last summer some friends of ours from North Park, bought a cottage on our street, and moved in right beside Fred. In one of their initial conversations with him, knowing that they knew me, he was joking about my limited mechanical skills and our friend said, Paul may not be able to fix a lawn mower but he is not a bad preacher. That is when the tone of the conversation changed. Fred said to our friend, let's agree not to talk about anything to do with politics or religion. I want nothing to do with that.

Fast forward to two weeks ago in our cottage, nine neighbours gather around our table for a meal. We started as we always do with a meal in our home, holding hands with everyone and saying grace. No one seemed to have a problem with that and we had a wonderful meal, enjoyable conversation but as we moved to dessert, Fred reached for a folder he had brought and ask if it was okay if he shared something with everyone.

Absolutely, we all agreed and he proceeded to pass out three pages to each person. At the top of the first page was Fred's name, his year of birth with a dash and blank representing the year of his death. Then the word- Thoughts. As we perused the papers, we realized these were some of Fred's ponderings and thoughts accumulated over 89 years of life experience. This was gold and we asked Fred if we could go around the table and read then out, one by one. He liked that idea.

Some were profound, Experience is what one learns from their mistakes, Wisdom is what one learns from the other person's mistakes.

Some were funny, When you are in a freefall without a parachute, the falling is not the most important aspect. The anticipation of the sudden stopping becomes very problematic!

Some were a little risqué, I won't read those.

But some, some were biblical. Fred, who didn't want anything to do with religion had quoted Proverbs 10:18, mentioned God and referred to two other biblical proverbs in his list of Thoughts of his life. But here is the even more amazing thing. God used Fred and his list to prompt some of the other neighbours around the table to share some deep stories of their lives, of pain and loss. It was an incredible conversation that night around the table. Jesus was present in a tangible way and has opened up possibilities for future discussions. Never underestimate what God can do when you invite him around the table.

We seem to live in a culture where more and more people are on the Emmaus road, walking away from Jesus. More and more people feel the biblical story is out of place. Christianity seems passe and archaic. As German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche famously declared, "God is dead" for many people. We no longer seem to need God. We are on the Emmaus Road. But this story in Luke 24 gives us hope that Jesus has not left us. He meets us, even on the road walking away from him and he meets us at the table.

Our eyes can be open to see him at the breaking of the bread. At a meal. He is present at the table as we invite him to be with us and invite him to be with those we extend hospitality to.

I want to encourage you over the next five weeks of summer. If you have not invited someone around your table, or picnic or BBQ, why not give it a try?

You never know where and how Jesus will show up at the table and you never know where and how Jesus will show up in the table talk.

Amen? Amen

Points to Ponder

Table Talk ~ Luke 24 ~ Promise

1. Take some time to share with your group any experiences you have had around your table this summer. Where have you seen God's presence around a meal? Have you extended hospitality to a friend or neighbour? How did things go?
2. Have you ever walked away from something? What was it that caused you to step away? Have you ever walked away from the church or from Jesus? What were the factors that lead to that decision? Did you get a sense that Jesus pursued you? How did that look?
3. Discuss the direction that your life has taken you to this point. Is it different than you imagined ten years ago? What have been the factors that have caused your life to be "rerouted". Can you see God's hand in it?
4. Do you make it a habit to say "grace" at your meals? Why or why not? What have been some of the rituals around "grace" in your household? What are the words you use and how are they meaningful for inviting Jesus around your table?
5. Share with your group, some of the people that God is laying on your heart to invite around your table (or to take out for a meal). Discuss the role each of these people play in your life and the reason for the desire to know them in a deeper way.

Prayer and Action Item

Pray for one another out of the key points that were discussed. Pray specifically for the people that you have each mentioned as those you would like to invite around your table. Pray to God for boldness and opportunity to extend an invitation. Pray in advance that He would be present around your table with them.