

I can be unrecognizable

Mr. Ringer was unrecognizable

"It was reported that upon returning home from a bridge party, Mrs. D. D. Ringer walked into her bedroom and saw a man asleep on the bed. She ran out of the house and called the police, saying that a strange man was sleeping in the house and that he must be a burglar. The police arrived and laid violent hands on the man sleeping on the bed. The man jumped up roaring with indignation:

"What's the idea? Can't a man take a nap in his own home?"

Immediately, Mrs. Ringer recognized him.

It was Mr. Ringer, who had just been to a barber shop where he had his mustache shaved off. Its absence had left Mr. Ringer unrecognizable even to his own wife."

But did you know that Jesus was unrecognizable?

Luke 24

1But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. 2And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. 5And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? 6He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." 8And they remembered his words, 9and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. 10Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, 11but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

So, that is the story we typically read on Easter, but I want to look at another event that Luke records that happened on Easter Sunday. I believe that what we are about to read could have great implications...on your life...immediately.

13That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. **16But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.** 17And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up 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 happened. 22Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 23and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even 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 him they did not see."

How in the world did these guys not recognize Jesus? I mean you get the picture that they are pretty familiar with him, may have followed him for a while. They definitely knew where to go afterward.

Some argue it is because his physical appearance had changed. That the resurrected Jesus in his resurrection body just looked different.

We have one instance in the NT where Jesus' facial appearance changed. It happens during what we call the transfiguration of Jesus. You can find it in Luke 9. Peter, James and John saw the transfiguration and heard God call Jesus His son so there was little doubt that Jesus was Jesus. But the resurrection had no witnesses. So, it's possible that he just didn't look himself.

There's also the fact that the last time they may have seen him was when he had the stuffing beaten out of him. So, with that image burned into their memory they may have failed to recognize him.

However, I would like to argue that a far more significant, a far more profound explanation is most likely.

Jesus wasn't recognized because He did not empower their sight and it wasn't until He empowered them to recognize that they were able to recognize Him.

v. 16 really has made an impression on me.

This has a few implications.

For me. Jesus saves. You could be the best preacher to ever live, but if Jesus doesn't unleash the power to move people from blindness to sight in my preaching it's just information. **Jesus' unmistakable presence is necessary in order for my preaching to lead to your transformation.**

For us. Jesus saves. If we are going to be a community that seeks to save the lost, then we need to cry out to God that He would undeniably be present in our gatherings and in our scatterings. We may know all of the right information, and be able to make reasonable arguments in defense of the Word of God, but unless the undeniable presence of Jesus is with us the lost will remain lost. **In order for your information to lead to the transformation of others the undeniable presence of Jesus must be a shared with each other and with those who have yet to meet Him.** So, I have prayed over and over again this week that today you would feel something different about our coming together.

For you. Jesus saves. v. 16 means that Jesus remains unrecognizable to billions of people. And some of them may be sitting in here this morning or watching or listening online. I can make Jesus known. I can proclaim Him and His character and His purpose and His plan, but only He can give you sight. Only He can heal your broken heart. Only He can give you understanding. Only Jesus can lead you to confession and repentance. Only Jesus can transform your life. **No matter how much information you have Jesus' unquestionable presence is necessary in order for that information to lead to your transformation.** I have just been incredibly overwhelmed by this truth this week. These Emmaeus guys had all of the information. They knew about the crucifixion and they knew about the empty tomb and the testimony of the women but, "... their eyes were kept from recognizing him."

I don't know whether to laugh at Jesus' response or ponder it. I mean it's hilarious. You know how it is when you are talking about someone and they just happen to be standing right behind you. It's a funny moment. A little awkward and embarrassing, but funny.

Jesus isn't just in the room but actually in a conversation with these guys. I mean I know it's dark, no street lights, maybe everyone has their heads covered because it's a cool night, but still. I mean these guys are giving Jesus a hard time for not knowing what had happened in Jerusalem and they become the punchline.

25And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So, they already have plenty of information in order to identify Jesus, right? And yet Jesus still gives them even more information and yet they still have no idea who this guy is.

28So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 29but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. 30When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. 31And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 32They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" 33And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Here's the reality. You, most likely, have plenty of knowledge when it comes to making a decision about whether Jesus is who Jesus claimed to be. The Emmaeus dudes had plenty of knowledge. I think I'm pretty good about presenting with you knowledge, but what I have often failed to do is to recognize that you need more than that. **You need to be plunged into the unmistakable, undeniable, unquestionable presence of Jesus.**

There is no formula for this. It is not something I can manufacture. I can only pray in faith and hope.

When I was trying to figure out how to explain this I thought about the presence of Jesus being a pool and you plunge into a pool, but the reality is that it implies that the pool is just sitting there waiting for you to experience it. It's not actively seeking you out.

And then it hit me. The presence of Jesus is like a big wave. It will actively seek to cover you, but you have to be willing to engage the Ocean. Once you step in the Holy Spirit is just going to crash into you. For some it can be violent. For some it can be refreshing. For some it can both.

My prayer for this day and for every day that follows here at regeneration Church is that God would bless us with the unmistakable, undeniable, unquestionable presence of Jesus so that our eyes are opened and our hearts burn like they are on fire so that the unrecognizable Jesus becomes the resurrected Jesus who is resurrecting you and me.

It says that their eyes were opened when bread was broken. It sends chills down my spine when I think about what that means for communion.

Communion

Jesus, open my eyes and light a fire in my heart.