HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Title: Part 1 – "The End Is the Beginning"
Date: November 8, 2026

While everyone here in the house is saying "Hi," as always we want to take a moment to say "Hi" to you if you're joining us online or on our app. No matter what you've got going on in your life right now, know that we are FOR you, so let us know how we can pray. You can always send a confidential request through the app or our website.

A couple of weeks ago I was in the mountains getting to preach for a friend of mine and the cabin we stayed in was in a 5,500-acre community (which is basically like 9 square miles)! It was beautiful, especially with the leaves starting to change, but navigating this place was a nightmare. On Sunday after church, Ella wanted to go fishing so we found a stocked pond in the neighborhood, the only problem was that it was on the opposite side of the community. Cheryl plugged it into the GPS but of course I thought I knew a better way! Long story short, after double the amount of time, lots of sketchy mountain roads—and across a one lane bridge that looked like it was built in the 40's—we finally pull up to the pond and it was like, **"How did we even get here?"**

You ever have those moments? "How did we get here?" Well, today are kicking off a new collection of messages around that idea AND if you have a Bible with you we are going to be in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 24. Luke 24, starting in verse 13. If you are new to studying the Bible we have four accounts of Jesus life, we call those the Gospels—which means Good News. Luke is the third Gospel, and it was written by Luke who was a first century physician and historian.

AND what we normally do, is I will read our main text straight though and then we will come back and unpack it. So, here we go. Luke 24, verse 13:

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. 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. 17 He asked them, "What are you discussing so
intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their
faces. 18 Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in
Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the
last few days." 19 "What things?" Jesus asked. "The things that happened to
Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful
miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. 20
But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be

condemned to death, and they crucified him. [21] We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago. [22] "Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. [23] They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! [24] Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said." [25] 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. [28] By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, [29] but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. [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! [32] They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" [33] And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, [34] who said, "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter." [35] Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.

Today we're starting a brand-new collection of messages that's going to take us all the way to Christmas Eve. AND yes, I'm aware I just read you an Easter story on the second Sunday of November. Don't email me, Target and Wal-Mart have had the Christmas aisle up since Labor Day, so I don't think we're the weird ones here.

BUT as I was thinking about the best way to paint a picture of where we are going, I thought way back to a movie called "The Sixth Sense." You remember this? Bruce Willis, the little kid, "I see dead people." Raise your hand if you've seen it. And if you haven't, I'm about to spoil it for you, but in my defense it came out in 1999, so that's on you.

The first time you watch it you're just watching a story about a kid who sees ghost. Then you get to the end and find out Bruce Willis has been dead the whole movie. The

whole movie! And your brain goes, “Wait… what?” So, what do you do? You rewind it (because that’s what you physically had to do in 1999) but you rewind it and watch it again. And the second time through it's a completely different movie. Now you see everything. It was all right there the first time, but you just didn't know what you were looking at.

That's what we're going to do with Christmas this year!

Because every holiday season we tell the same story. Angel shows up, Mary says yes, long donkey ride, no room at the inn, shepherds, baby boy in the manger. We know it so well we could recite it in our sleep, and honestly after 25 years of doing this, I’ve kind of run out of new angles! **So, this year we're starting at the end and watching it backwards.**

For the next 8 weeks we're going to walk through the Gospel of Luke—**in reverse**! In fact, we will give you a reading plan to follow along and by Christmas you can have the whole thing read in reverse too. Today, we start with an empty tomb and by Christmas Eve we land right where it all started, at a feeding trough in a little town called Bethlehem.

And every single week we will ask one question:

How did we get here?

Because I want us to get to that manger on Christmas Eve and see that baby the way you see Bruce Willis the second time through. Everything was right there the whole time. The cross was already in that crib and so was the empty tomb.

So, today I want to preach a message I am calling:

The End Is the Beginning

AND let me say this. If it’s been a while since you came to church, or maybe you are still on the fence about all this God and Jesus stuff, maybe you’re here because you had hoped your marriage would turn around or that God would finally answer that one prayer, and it didn’t happen, and now you’re not even sure you feel anything anymore. Listen to me, that’s exactly where these two guys we met in Luke 24 were when Jesus started walking with them! So, stick with me today, because we’re going to look at how He finds you right where you are and how you can start to see Him again.

Others of you today grew up in the church like I did. You have read the Easter and Christmas stories so many times you can probably get up and preach them. You have sang the songs, prayed the prayers, done enough Bible studies that sometimes, if you

were honest, your faith kind of runs on autopilot. You sometimes find yourself just going through the motions.

AND I don't say that to shame anyone, I'll be honest, after being a pastor for 25 years there are times when I catch myself going into autopilot too. In fact, I almost have to fight against this harder than anything else because by this point I can preach a message, pray some prayers, shake some hands, lift my voice in worship of Jesus AND then not spend time with Him until the following week and nobody would even know it... at least not at first, right? It is possible for me to tell you anything you want to know about Jesus but still miss Him if He pulled up a chair next to me.

AND that is exactly where these two men are on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. In fact, if you read through verses 19 – 24 it's basically a summary of the Gospels! Miracles, check. Teaching, check. Trial, crucifixion, empty tomb, angels, check, check, check. They could pass the quiz! They could teach the class!

BUT who are they explaining all of this to? Jesus! They are explaining Jesus... to Jesus!

Cleopas looks right at Him and goes, "Dude, are you the only person in Jerusalem who doesn't know what happened this weekend?" That's like walking up to Truett Cathy and explaining to him that Chick-fil-A is closed on Sundays. And Jesus, who I'm pretty sure is biting His lip at this point, just goes, "What things?" I love Jesus so much. Come on, He has a sense of humor!

But here's what should bother us about this story. These two had every fact right, and they still didn't know who was walking right next to them. Meaning this:

You can know all about Jesus and still miss Jesus.

Familiarity can become its own kind of blindness. Amen? That's the danger for Christians in the West. Not that we'd reject Jesus but that we'd walk past Him on the way to something we were sure was more important.

And if you're sitting there thinking, "You are right, but how does that even happen to us?" It happens subtly, not all at once. A few days without praying here, one disappointment you never took to God there, until one day you look up and you're seven miles down the road like our guys in Luke 24 asking, "How did we get here?"

BUT come on, most of us don't ask "How did we get here?" about theology. We ask it about the drift in our lives.

- You open the credit card statement, and the number doesn't make sense. You never sat down one night and decided to be this far underwater. It was a dinner

here, a “treat yourself” there, a card for emergencies that became a card just to make it to the next payday… How did we get here?

- Or it's the kid who used to crawl into your bed during thunderstorms and snuggle, and now you get maybe four words a day and two of them are “I'm fine.” There was no big fight, just a door that’s closed a little more every month. How did we get here?

- Or maybe it’s this one, the one that’s a little closer to home this morning. You still show up, you still sing, you’d still check the “Christian” box on a form without blinking. But somewhere the fire went out, and you could not tell me the day it happened. No big rebellion. But spiritually you’re just… numb. And if you’re honest, you think—how did I get here?

Here's what every one of those has in common. Nobody chose it. Nobody called a family meeting and voted on it. It just accumulated while we weren't looking. **That's drift.** And drift doesn't send you a text before it happens.

AND this is the foundation everything we are going to talk about builds on. When WE ask, “how did we get here,” we mean we’re lost and confused and we can’t retrace our steps. But when GOD asks, “how did we get here” … He is not confused. Not for one second! He knew exactly how we got here. Every wrong turn, every slow inch of distance, every fire that quietly went out. And He knew exactly how to come and get us!

Our “how did we get here” is an accident. But God’s is a rescue! Our version is ***drift***. His version is ***design***. Hold onto those two words—drift and design—because I’m going to drag you back to them all morning.

In fact, watch what happened to our two guys from Luke 24. They’ve drifted from hope in three days flat. Walking the wrong direction, out of Jerusalem, away from the empty tomb, with the risen Lord right beside them and invisible to them. And over seven miles, Jesus is going to do four things to them. Four things that moved them from drifted to found, from “we had hoped” all the way to hearts on fire.

So, let’s walk with them. If you are taking notes write this down:

1. Name where you've gone numb.

So, these two guys are walking away from Jerusalem, they think it’s all over, Jesus is dead, but really He is walking next to them and verse 16 says:

16 But God kept them from recognizing him. [We don't know exactly why. Maybe it was grief. Maybe it was God's timing, because He wanted them to hear the Scriptures before they saw His face. Luke doesn't say. But look at what Jesus does first. He doesn't say, "Surprise! It's Me!" He doesn't preach a sermon. He asks a question, v.17] 17 He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their faces.

They stopped walking and were sad. That's the first honest moment in the whole story. Before anything gets fixed, somebody has to stop and admit where they actually are.

You ever seen those Febreze commercials? They literally invented a word for it, "noseblind." You've been living in your house for so long you can't smell your own house anymore. Your dog, your trash can, your teenager's gym bag. Everybody who walks in your front door can smell it, but you can't.

And here's the thing, that's not just an ad campaign, that's actually how your brain works. Scientists call it habituation. When your brain gets the same input over and over, it starts turning the volume down. AND that's not a defect; that's an amazing gift from our Creator. If your brain didn't do that you'd lose your mind listening to the hum of your refrigerator all day.

BUT the same thing that keeps you sane about the refrigerator can make you numb about your marriage. Or your kids. Or the cross hanging around your neck. Or the Bible beside your bed. Some of us have gone noseblind to Jesus!

A. W. Tozer saw this coming almost eighty years ago. He said:

"We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him we need no more seek Him."

In other words, "I already know that. I've already prayed the prayer. I know who Jesus is." But friend in love, the moment you think you've got Him figured out is usually right about the moment you stop seeing Him. Amen?

So, the first takeaway today is simple, but it's not easy. Answer His question. Stop walking for a minute and name where you've gone numb. You didn't choose to go numb. Nobody signs up for a flat heart. It drifted on you, BUT the fact that He's asking you the question right now? That's design! He came out onto your road on purpose and here you are in this moment.

So, I'm gonna do something our culture hates... I am going to give you a few moments of still and silence to actually answer Jesus' question. Don't make it weird. Just answer

Him. Where have I gone numb? Name it, just to yourself and to Him. So, close your eyes, settle your heart, and ask Him...

Now, before we move on. I want to reassure some of you. You can say the truth to Jesus and He won't walk off. Some of you wanted to tell Jesus one thing but censored yourself, don't do that! These two guys said the saddest sentence in the whole chapter, "we had hoped" meaning hoped He was the Messiah, BUT Jesus didn't take offense to that.

You can tell Him you don't feel anything! He's heard worse! He's not shocked, He's not offended, and He is not going anywhere! He came out onto your road on purpose.

Number 2:

2. Walk and talk with Jesus before you feel anything.

So, they've stopped, and they've said the honest thing. And then what happens? They keep walking. Seven miles. That's roughly two and a half hours on foot! Two and a half hours of conversation with the risen Savior of the world, and for the entire walk, they don't know it's Him.

Look at verse 32 again, after it's all over, they look at each other and say:

"Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?"

Notice when they figured that out, it was AFTER! Their hearts were burning the whole time, and they didn't notice it until they looked back.

That's the second takeaway; you walk and talk with Him before you feel anything. We get this backwards almost every time. We think the feeling has to come first, and then we'll show up. "When the fire comes back, then I'll come back to church. When I actually feel something, then I'll open my Bible." And so, we sit there waiting to feel like it, and we never feel like it, so we never move. BUT that's not how this road works. These two put one foot in front of the other, mid-grief, feeling nothing, talking to a Jesus they couldn't even recognize—and somewhere in those ordinary, dusty miles the fire was already being lit. They just couldn't feel it yet.

AND trust me, I've lived this too. There have been stretches where I prayed like I was reading a grocery list to an empty room. And everything in me said, stop, this is fake, you don't feel a thing, why bother. But a wise old saint told me once, "You don't pray because you feel like it, you pray until you feel like it." Amen?

My point is: the feelings almost always come after the walking.

AND psychology actually backs this up. One of the most effective approaches to treating depression is something therapists call behavioral activation. Simple idea: you don't wait until you feel motivated to do the thing, you do the small things, and the motivation tends to follow. Action first then the feeling later. The Emmaus road worked the same way two thousand years before anybody wrote a textbook on it!

AND I know some of you are sitting their thinking, "Brian, isn't that just faking it? Going through the motions? Isn't that what got me numb in the first place?" Fair question! Right? Dallas Willard had this line I love. He said:

"Grace is not opposed to effort; it is opposed to earning."

Walking with Jesus when you don't feel anything isn't you earning His attention. You already have it. He started walking with them before they asked. It's just you staying on the road long enough for Him to do what He does.

So, I'm not telling you to try harder. I'm telling you to stay on the road!

And here's drift / design part again. The two of them were walking away from Jerusalem, the wrong direction, but Jesus didn't wait for them to turn around before He showed up. He walked their direction, in fact, seven miles the wrong way! That's who He is. He'll walk your wrong direction with you just to keep the conversation going.

So, church hear me, just keep walking the walk—even with nothing in the tank, even when the prayers feel like they're bouncing off the ceiling—one day you're going to look back and say, "My heart was burning that whole time, and I didn't even know it!"

Don't quit walking! Don't quit talking! He's closer than your feelings say He is!

And that takes us to this:

3. Let Jesus reframe your story through the Truth, not your mood.

So, what does Jesus actually talk about for seven miles with these guys? Look at verse 27:

27 Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

He gives them a Bible study! They're grieving and Jesus is like, "Let's open to Genesis..." I would give my life's savings for a recording of that conversation! I mean, I'm a pastor, so it's not a huge bid, but still.

Luke doesn't tell us what passages He used. My guess is He started in Genesis 3, where God promises that someone is going to crush the serpent's head. Then maybe the Passover lamb. Then Isaiah 53, where the servant is "pierced for our transgressions." Maybe Psalm 22, which starts with the exact words Jesus cried out from the cross.

Charles Spurgeon put it like this. He said:

"Just as from every town and every village and every little hamlet in England there is a road to London, so from every text of Scripture there is a road to Christ."

That's exactly what Jesus is doing on the road to Emmaus. He's showing them all the roads. BUT before He does any of that, notice the story they've been telling themselves. Verse 21. Say it with me:

21 We **HAD** hoped he was the Messiah...

Those might be the three saddest words in the whole Bible. You can hear the drift right there in the grammar, "had" meaning past tense. In their version of the story, the cross was where everything fell apart. Proof they'd put their hope in the wrong guy.

Their mood was writing the story, and honestly, their mood had evidence! There was a body. There was a tomb. There was the next day when nothing happened! Then Jesus says something in the rest of verse 26 that changes the narrative, He says:

26 Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would **HAVE TO** suffer all these things before entering his glory?"

That phrase "have to" is one little Greek word that means "it is necessary." It's the "must" of God's redemption plan. And Luke uses it over and over and over. Jesus **must** be in His Father's house. He **must** go to Jerusalem. The Son of Man **must** suffer.

BUT do you see what Jesus is doing? He takes the exact same facts they just recited—trial, cross, tomb—and He retells them as design. Same events but a completely different story. They told it like a tragedy, but Jesus tells it like a rescue that had to happen exactly the way it happened.

And that's why the big takeaway is to let Jesus reframe your story through the Truth and not your mood.

Because your mood is a terrible narrator. Amen? It's not that your feelings are lying about what happened to you—the diagnosis is real, the divorce is real, the debt is real—BUT your mood (and the devil) will take facts and tell you a story about them that says, "This is the end, you drifted too far, God has moved on…" You don't fix that by trying to be in a better mood. You open the Bible, and you let the Word of God retell it.

Read verse 26 again with me…

Did you catch the last part? "Before entering his glory." That's the part their mood left out! That's why we evaluate everything by the Truth!

Because listen to me, there's a version of your life where the hard chapters are just random damage. And then there's the version the Scriptures tell, where the God who knew exactly how you got here has been writing your rescue the whole time!

The cross looked like the end of the story, but in fact, it was the hinge of the story!

AND whatever looks like the end of your story right now, I want you to know, He is not done writing! He did not lose the plot on that Friday, and He has not lost the plot on yours either! Give Him a shout of praise if you believe that today!

One more:

4. Break bread, put yourself where He gets known.

So, they finally get to Emmaus on this 7-mile journey and verse 28 has one of my favorite little details in the whole Bible:

They were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on…

He was gonna keep walking! He wasn't gonna barge into their house, they had to ask Him in. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says, ***"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together."*** Jesus wants a seat at your table, but you have to invite Him in, so they do, verse 30:

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.

Took. Blessed. Broke. Gave. Those are the exact same four verbs Luke uses back in chapter 9 when Jesus feeds the five thousand. And the same ones at the Last Supper in chapter 22. We don't know if they were present for any of these but there was something in that act that opened their eyes!

That word "opened" literally means to throw something wide open. And here's what's cool, Luke uses that same word in verse 45 when Jesus opens the disciples' minds. He opened the Scriptures. He opened their eyes. He opened their minds. And it all came together at a dinner table.

And that's the takeaway, put yourself where Jesus gets known. Because you won't think your way out of a numb season. You'll walk your way out, and then you'll sit down at the table with God's people. Meaning, get back in a seat every Sunday, in a room with a few people who know your actual name, with your hands around the bread and the cup, and a heart exposed to His presence. Not because these practices are magic but because it's the exact spot He promised to show up and be recognized.

Church, if you'll just keep walking, and open God's Word, and get yourself to the table—eventually the lights come back on! Maybe not this morning. Maybe not in the song you were hoping would wreck you. But that fire you thought went out for good? He is not done with it. Those eyes that went dim and tired? He opens eyes! That's what He does for a living. He opened theirs over a torn-off piece of bread on an ordinary Sunday night, and He can open yours right here, on an ordinary Sunday morning, in a rented warehouse!

Because here is the truth, verse 31:

31 Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

He appeared and then He disappeared. You can't grab Jesus and pin Him down. You can't make a feeling stay. All you can do is keep showing up, hands open, to the places He promised to meet you, and trust Him to open your eyes in His time!

And then, look at verse 33:

33 And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem.

An hour ago, these same two guys were like, “Stay with us, it's getting late.” And now suddenly it's not too late at all! They get up from the table and walk seven miles back in the dark!

Do you see it? This story ends with two people walking backwards. Back down the same road. Back toward the place they'd given up on. Back to the people they'd walked away from.

That's what recognition does! It turns you around! Drift walked them out of town, and design walked them home! And I'm telling you, Jesus can turn your whole life around and send you running back up the road you thought you were done with too!

So, sermon in a sentence:

Jesus is closer than your numbness says He is.

Amen?

Before we pray, here is your assignment this week. Their walk was seven miles, so let’s make yours seven minutes. Every day, literally walk with no earbuds, no podcast, just you and Jesus talking like He’s right there next to you because He is. Don’t wait to feel like it, just walk and talk and let Him catch up the way He always does.

{QR CODE}

Then if you want to go on this journey with us, we have created a backwards through Luke reading guide for the next 8 weeks. If you scan that QR code we have broken the entire Gospel up into bite sized chunks that cover what we covered today, plus the places we just won’t have time for before Christmas Eve as we continue to ask, “How Did We Get Here?”

Let’s pray.