



Week 2 – Emmaus

Check-in

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... in today's Stinger, Jesus pulls a little magic trick. So, have you ever seen a magician? What's the craziest trick you've ever seen performed? (Spoiler... the assistant wasn't really sawn in half.)

Opening Prayer

God of Turn-arounds, be patient with us as we so frequently lose hope and direction. Set our hearts on fire and turn us back toward the life you wish for us.

Introduction

"Post-credits Scenes," (or as we learned last week, "Stingers,") have become increasingly popular in modern movies, mostly *credited* to the Marvel Movie franchise. (Get it? Credited? Movie-ing on.) The idea behind these scenes is to either add one last joke for comedic effect or to pique your interest for the next film in the series. They relay what

the heroes have just gone through and get you excited for what's coming next. Thing is, this isn't new... even the authors of the Bible had "Stinger" scenes. And we continue this week, looking at the "post-credits scenes" to the Easter movie. Jesus conquers death and is raised to life, fade to black, roll the credits... but the story isn't quite over. There are a few "Stingers" that show us how Jesus's followers encountered the Risen Christ and went from mere students to the world-changing apostles that began the early church. Without these stories, we miss the impact of the Jesus's resurrection on his disciples... the same impact that the Risen Christ can have on us. We began last week with the first person to whom Jesus appeared immediately after his resurrection, Mary Magdalene, (credited as "The Worthy One" in our Easter film.) Jesus had changed her life, casting out her demons, and because of this, was one of his most devoted followers. That Easter morning, Jesus appeared to her to remind her that she was whole and worthy, that her life was changed and forever would be, even if he was no longer alive. She then became the first person to preach the good news of a risen Christ. (Yes, the first Christian preacher was a woman.) Our next "Stinger" happens later that afternoon. But first...

Warm-up Question: Today's "Stinger" involves two travelers on a road. So, what was the most scenic drive you've ever taken? Was it mountainous or oceanic? A prairie sunset or river-view road? Maybe it's the drive-thru at the Krispy Kreme... hey, the destination is worth the journey.

Scripture

Let's reset the scene... The day has dawned that first Easter morning, and the women find the tomb empty. They run back to tell the other disciples, but the men don't believe their story, (shocker, right?) Even when a few of them go to check it out, and sure enough, find the tomb empty, they still don't understand and go home. Mary Magdalene is left behind at the tomb and encounters the Risen Christ as we looked at last week. Again, she runs back to share the good news with the guys, (lots of running this Easter morning,) but even though this is now the 2nd miraculous experience that the women tell them, the boys *still* aren't convinced. Instead, they are together in a house where they are hiding from the Romans fearing they might meet the same fate as Jesus arguing over what this all means. Some stay, some go, all are confused... and two of them set off for a nearby town called Emmaus. And here is where we find our second stinger.

Read Luke, chapter 24, verses 13 to 35.

Two followers of Jesus, (not part of the official 11 disciples,) one named Cleopas and one unnamed, (perhaps Nicodemus, perhaps Cleopas's wife,) have left Jerusalem to go home. They are unsure of their future. They are unsure of what's next. If you've heard this story, this stinger, before, it's usually told as just 2 dudes on a road. But when we ask the question, "*why* were they on that road? *Why* were they leaving Jerusalem?" It gets a little more serious... a little more profound. We'll come back to that. First...

Question 1: Talk about this story. What stands out to you about the two travelers and their interaction with Jesus? Where do you think you'd have been on Easter... telling everyone like the women? Locked in the room with the disciples? Bailing and heading home with Cleopas? Discuss!

Reflection

So, *why* were these two followers of Jesus on this road heading home? *Why* were they leaving Jerusalem? Perhaps it was simply because they lived close enough to walk the few hours back to their house. But perhaps it was way more profound than that. See, the week of Jesus's death was the Passover Feast for the Hebrew people, and thousands of Jews would make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate it in their Holy City. And when the Passover was done that Sunday, the people would all head home. And so that's what these two are doing... Passover's done, they're going home. But, because we know who they are and who they were with, it's not that simple. They aren't just leaving Jerusalem and the Passover celebration... they're leaving their friends and the mission. If they still thought they had a ministry and a purpose, they wouldn't have been leaving Jerusalem, even if Passover was done. This isn't just two dudes on a road. It's two of Jesus's followers abandoning their friends, abandoning the mission. With Jesus's death, they have nothing left to stay for... their hope, their dreams, their expectations are shattered. And so, they bail.

These travelers, along with the rest of the disciples, had so badly misunderstood who Jesus was, they had given up. When Jesus asks what they are talking about, (as if he doesn't know,) they tell him about this "man from Nazareth." They call him "prophet," "teacher," even "Messiah who had come to rescue Israel," but never "Son of God." They still believed he was merely an earthly ruler whose only role would be to free the Hebrew people from the oppression of the Romans. You can almost feel their anger when they talk about him as yet another failed Messiah. They even dig their hole a little deeper when they admit *to Jesus* that the women found the empty tomb, but they don't believe what this means. They were on this road because they didn't understand who Jesus truly was, and because they had given up on the mission and life Jesus had intended for them.

Question 2: For these two followers of Christ, Emmaus represents a life left behind... Jesus had called them to something bold and exciting, though unknown and perhaps difficult, which they were now walking away from. What have you given up on? What is something you have abandoned because you've lost hope in it? What is your Emmaus?

Closing

At the end of our "Stinger," Jesus drops some truth on them. Where it says, "you foolish people!" the Greek literally says, "You who are *slow of heart* to believe." He goes through all the scriptures of prophecies that he fulfilled, and says, (in effect,) "didn't this man from Nazareth,

what did you say his name was? Jeff? George? Oh yeah, Jesus. Didn't he fulfill all these? You who are slow of heart to believe." He goes with them to their home, and during the meal, repeats the ritual he'd given them just a few days before. He breaks the bread, and their eyes are opened. What a powerful moment! And then he disappears, David Copperfield style. And what do they do? They go back. They walk 7 miles, hours through the dark, on dangerous roads, back to Jerusalem. They don't go back unless something powerful happened to them. They don't go back unless their minds and hearts were completely turned around. They don't go back... after they had bailed... unless they met the Risen Christ. They came back. Christ wants you to come back, too. Jesus is on that road with you, whispering in your ear. Will you let him open your eyes and set your heart on fire? Will you continue walking toward your Emmaus, having given up hope? Or will you turn around, heart ablaze, and walk back to the life Christ has in mind for you?

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.