

When Jesus Shows Up... Confusion Becomes Clarity

Text: Gospel of Luke 24:13–35

Big Idea | Clarity comes when Jesus opens the Scriptures—and it changes not just what we know, but the direction we go.

Have you been absolutely sure you understood what was happening...only to find out later you totally misunderstood the moment? Not because you lacked information—but because you had the wrong framework.

The facts were there. The pieces were in front of you. But the way you interpreted them led you to the wrong conclusion. And nowhere is that more true than when it comes to suffering.

When life gets hard, we don't just feel pain; we start telling ourselves a story about that pain. "God must be distant." "This shouldn't be happening to me." "Something has gone wrong." And if the story is wrong, then everything that follows is going to be off. That's exactly where we find two disciples in Luke 24, they're not missing information, they are misreading the moment. Hear me out, **confusion is not from lack of data, but from a misinterpreted story.**

13 Now that same day two of them 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.

POINT 1 | JESUS MEETS US IN OUR CONFUSION (ON THE ROAD) vv.13-26

Core truth: Jesus meets them before they understand Him.

The disciples are walking away from Jerusalem (direction matters!).

They are...talking, processing, confused.

They have...information ("we had hoped..."), partial revelation (empty tomb, angels), but no interpretation. *They had the facts, but not the framework.*

So why does Jesus ask questions if He already knows? *Because he draws out their confusion before correcting it.* His question, "What things?" was because he didn't know what they were discussing—God knows and hears all things, in fact, Jesus knows what is hidden in the hearts of men. So it wasn't out of ignorance that he asked, but as an invitation to bring their confusion to God, not just keep it between them.

Confusion isn't the absence of information—it's misinterpretation of what God is doing. The disciples weren't lost because they lacked information; they were lost because they misunderstood the story. Their expectations were off!

The disciples had a category for glory... but not for suffering. They believed in a Messiah who would reign—but not one who would be rejected. They believed in victory—but didn't understand how the cross fit in.

And Jesus says something that reframes everything: ***“Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?”***

Had to. Suffering was not accidental. Not unfortunate. Not a detour. Necessary.

Which means their confusion wasn't just emotional— it was theological. They had edited suffering out of the story of God. They skipped that chapter.

And before we move on too quickly...we should admit—we often do the same.

This tension isn't new. In Psalm 73, one of the most honest psalms, the writer looks out at the world and says, “I almost fell over when I saw the wicked prospering. Why do the wicked prosper...while I suffer trying to follow God?”

It's the same confusion.

If God is good... why is life hard for His people? His struggle wasn't with whether God exists— it was with how God was writing the story.

He assumed righteousness would lead to an easy life filled with blessings but instead found hardship.

And then the New Testament removes all ambiguity. In Romans 8:17, we're told that we are heirs with Christ— *if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.*

That's not a side note. That's the pattern of Scripture. The pattern of Jesus' life and of anyone who seeks to follow in His footsteps.

Suffering... then glory.

The Cross... then resurrection.

Good Friday... then Resurrection Sunday.

And here's where this becomes personal. Some of us are disoriented— not because God is absent...but because we were never taught to expect suffering as part of following Him. We signed up for purpose. We didn't realize it would include pain.

We want the “Blessed and Highly Favored 2026” package, not the “Trials and Tribulations Bundle”.

And if you don’t have a theology of suffering...you will misinterpret your life.

You’ll call faithfulness failure.

You’ll call pruning punishment.

But Jesus doesn’t remove suffering from the story—He redeems it within the story. He says, “You’re not wrong that glory is coming...you’re just wrong about how we get there.”

Which is why Jesus doesn’t just comfort them...He corrects them. Because He wants them—and us— to get the story right!

LAX, FRIENDS & PANDA EXPRESS

And one of the main ways we get the story wrong is in how we interpret difficult, unclear, or uncomfortable moments. Sometimes that looks like suffering on a cross...and sometimes it looks like an ordinary moment you don’t fully understand. But the issue is the same: we misread what God is doing.

On our way to the Guatemala mission, our team was delayed because someone decided to check a bag. Rule #1 of traveling with Pastor Joel: if it’s a short trip, don’t check a bag! It slows everything down! Carry-ons only people!

LAX IMMIGRANTS. *Have you ever misread a moment because you didn't know what God was doing?* LAX. I had partial information, I was suspicious. But as I leaned in, clarity came. Jesus was present in: the stranger, the need (family reunification), the opportunity to love. And over a meal, Panda Express, to be exact, I saw Christ in the moment. We prayed for them and said our goodbyes. Strangers becoming friends.

“Do you wish that Jesus should come to you? Receive the stranger, for in receiving him you receive Christ.”

-Origen, 3rd century.

On the road to Emmaus, they didn't recognize Jesus...and at LAX, I almost didn't either. Sometimes confusion isn't about what's in front of you, it's about Who is hidden within it. *Don't rush past confusing moments. Don't dismiss people too quickly. Jesus often shows up disguised in interruption.*

POINT 2 | JESUS BRINGS CLARITY THROUGH THE WORD v.27

Clarity comes when Jesus shows how all Scripture points to Him.

They had a partial revelation. They knew Jesus was a prophet. They knew about the crucifixion. They even knew about the empty tomb. But what they understood in their heads had not yet reached their hearts—because they could not understand, or accept, that suffering was a necessary part of Jesus' story.

And right in the middle of their confusion, Jesus rebukes them. At first glance, it feels harsh. Don't they need comfort? Encouragement? Yet He says, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”

As John Chrysostom put it,

“He rebukes them, not to wound, but to awaken.”

This is a defining moment. Their clarity—and the clarity they will later bring to others—is hinging on this awakening. Jesus calls them foolish not because they lack intelligence, but because they are slow to believe.

And that might not sound dangerous at first... but being slow to believe will keep you stuck in places God is trying to move you out of. It will keep you walking in the wrong direction while truth is right in front of you. It will keep you interpreting your life through disappointment instead of through God's promises.

Slow belief doesn't just delay clarity—it distorts reality.

And what Jesus awakens them to is this core truth:

All Scripture points to Him.

Without Jesus, Scripture feels confusing, fragmented—even disappointing. Try reading Ecclesiastes without Jesus—you’ll need a second cup of coffee and wonder if anything really matters.

But with Jesus, Scripture becomes unified, purposeful, and Christ-centered.

Take, for example, just a few prophecies through the Old Testament:

Christ in the Old Testament

- Born of a woman (Genesis 3:15)
- From Abraham’s line (Genesis 12)
- Suffering servant brings atonement (Isaiah 53)
- Pierced hands and feet (Psalm 22)
- Betrayed for silver (Zechariah 11)
- Raised again (Psalm 16)

Now, this isn’t a sermon proving all the prophecies Jesus fulfilled, though he fulfilled over 300; what this story reveals is that **Jesus is the lens that makes sense of everything.**

The problem wasn’t that the disciples didn’t know the Bible—they did. The problem was that they didn’t understand how the Bible pointed to Jesus. As Jesus Himself says in John 5, *“These are the Scriptures that testify about Me.”* Not every verse mentions Him, but every story moves toward Him.

As Augustine said,

“The Lord walked with them and opened the Scriptures, that they might understand that all things written were fulfilled in Him.” This moment is teaching us not just what to believe—but how to read the Bible. Christ at the center.

And later, the disciples reflect on that moment and say, “Were not our hearts burning within us...?”

Because when Jesus opens the Word, it doesn’t just inform your mind—it ignites your heart. There is an experiential side to following Jesus. When He opens our minds, our hearts feel it. We come alive. We are deeply moved.

But hear me clearly—**the burning heart is not the source of truth... it's the response to truth.**

There are people from different beliefs who can say, “My heart was moved.” Emotion alone is not the measure of what is true.

The difference here is not just that their hearts were burning...

it's that their hearts were burning because Jesus had just opened the Scriptures.

Their experience was not leading them—it was confirming what Jesus had revealed.

“A burning heart without truth can mislead you...but truth revealed by Jesus will set your heart on fire in the right direction. So yes—our faith is more than intellectual. But it is never less than truth.

Head. Heart. Hands.

When your head is opened to truth, your heart is stirred with conviction, and your life begins to move in obedience.

Because when Jesus opens the Word, He doesn't just give you information—He gives you transformation.

POINT 3 | JESUS IS REVEALED IN PRACTICE vv. 28-35

Clarity deepens when we live what we've heard. Sometimes we don't fully understand Scripture until we practice it. We had just finished church in Guatemala City and went out into the streets to put into practice what we had just talked about—sharing the love of Jesus in simple ways. We were giving out water, offering prayer, just being present. We approached a plaza where some of our team was already working, and I felt a quiet nudge—go left. We found a woman sitting alone, offered her water, told her Jesus loved her... but something in me said, don't move on. Stay. Sometimes clarity comes when you stay in a moment you could have walked away from. So I asked her, “Can we pray for you?” She said, “Today marks one year since I lost my baby.”

We embraced her, we cried with her, we prayed over her. And I felt prompted to go further, so I asked, “Why did you come here today?” She said, “I didn't want people to see me like this.” And in that moment, the revelation came: “Even if you didn't want people to see you... God sees you.” Jehovah El Roi—the God who sees. She was trying to hide her pain and confusion, but Jesus met her in it. And in that moment, I realized—I wasn't just doing outreach... I was standing in a moment where Jesus was already at work. My heart was burning within me.

On the road to Emmaus, they didn't recognize Him... but at the table, their eyes were opened. The disciples urged Him to stay, they welcomed Him in, they served Him—they were living out the heart of God's Word even while their minds were still confused. And it's in that moment, as Jesus breaks the bread, that their eyes are opened. They understood the Scriptures on the road... but they recognized Jesus when they lived them. Sometimes we want a new word from God, but we haven't obeyed the last one He gave us. We want revelation without application. But clarity doesn't come to spectators of the Word—it comes to those who practice it. Jesus is most tangible when we love the stranger, when we stay, when we pray, when we move toward people instead of past them.

And when their eyes were opened, they didn't stay there—they got up and walked seven miles back to Jerusalem in the dark. Why? Because when confusion turns to clarity, there is an urgency to move. You don't stay where you were. When Jesus shows up, clarity doesn't just change what you see—it changes where you go. Clarity moves your feet.

And notice where their feet take them. Not just *anywhere*... but back to people. Back to the Eleven. Back to those still confused.

Clarity in the Kingdom of God is never private. It is always directional—and it is always missional.

They didn't say, "Let's stay in this moment." They said, "Others need to know what we've seen."

Because when Jesus becomes clear to you...you begin to feel responsible for those He is not yet clear to.

Clarity doesn't just move your feet—it aims your life toward others. They walked seven miles... not because they had to... but because clarity creates urgency.

CLOSING

Jesus meets you in confusion. Jesus speaks through His Word. Jesus reveals Himself when you live it. But when confusion turns to clarity, it's not just for you to hold onto—it's something you're called to carry to others. The disciples didn't stay at the table. They got up, in the dark, and walked seven miles back to Jerusalem. Why? Because there were others still trying to make sense of it all. The Eleven were still sitting in uncertainty—and these two disciples had just encountered something that could change everything for them.

What if the clarity God gives you isn't just for you—but for someone else who is still on their road? What if the very season that felt confusing, painful, even disorienting... is the very thing God wants to use so you can help someone else recognize Jesus? What if you're meant to be the conduit through which someone else's eyes are opened?

Some of us are waiting for clarity before we move... but clarity often comes as you move. As you go. As you speak. As you share what Jesus has already shown you.

Clarity doesn't just change what you see—it changes where you go.

So where are you right now? Are you walking away from something God already spoke? Have you settled for partial understanding? Has your heart grown cold to His Word?

LIVING THE WORD

1. Invite Jesus into your confusion.
2. Open the Scriptures with a Jesus-lens.
3. And practice what you already know.

Big Idea | Clarity comes when Jesus opens the Scriptures—and it changes not just what we know, but the direction we go.

Because when Jesus shows up, confusion turns to clarity... and clarity will always move you toward others.