

4.9.23 Easter at Fellowship Dallas

“Let’s Not Go to Emmaus” Luke 24: 13-35

Introduction: what happens when we live as if Jesus is not alive. . .

The traditional Easter call/response for Christian believers is “**Christos Anesti!**” (Christ is Risen). The response is, “**Alithos Anesti!**” (Truly, He is Risen). Fellowship Dallas let’s give it a go!

Why do you suppose our older brothers and sisters in the faith deemed it essential for us to annually remind ourselves of Jesus resurrection? Because the disappointments and defeats and difficulties that we encounter in this broken world have a way of distracting our attention from the fact He is alive!

It’s not like we no longer believe that Jesus rose from the dead. We do. It’s more like, little by little, Jesus’ resurrection becomes less and less front of mind, having been displaced by the distracting cares of this world. We wind up praying a little less and trusting a little less until, finally, we find ourselves not praying or trusting very much at all.

Dr. Luke (24) tells of a wonderful thing that happened to two distracted Jesus-followers walking hurriedly, fueled by the adrenaline that surges when life crumbles and survival is the order of the day! I pray that same wonderful thing will happen to us today!

A. The “Road to Emmaus”. . . Jesus’ resurrection doubtful

*Luke 24:13 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 . . . "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."

In other words, they killed our Messiah and we're not convinced by unsubstantiated reports that He came back to life. Hence Cleopas' and his companion's disillusioned cry: *"We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."*

With Jesus' death, their hope died. No Kingdom to come of justice and love and righteousness, that hope died with Jesus. No more prospect of life after death in eternity with the Good Shepherd, that hope died with Jesus. *"We HAD hoped."* So they literally got on "the road to Emmaus" which figuratively I think of as a state of mind where long-term hope is in short supply.

". . .they were so lost in their sad and tangled thoughts that they did not recognize him any more than you and I. . . because, like theirs, our eyes are too accustomed to darkness and our faith not strong enough to believe in the reality of light even if it were to blaze up before us" (Frederick Buechner).

Can any of you relate? Got any disappointments, doubts, disillusionment, discouragement, defeat, despair, or distrust weighing on your heart in these days? Are your eyes becoming too accustomed to darkness and your faith weakening to the point it couldn't see light if it blazed up before you?

I've been in danger of it myself for months now. Remember a month ago when I was here and told you about my wife Alice's pickleball accident? The smashed shoulder head and the rotator cuff surgery to repair it completely altered our lives as we tried day by day to learn the lessons God was teaching us.

Well, just as we were getting on our feet after the Pickleball fiasco, Alice's hematologist diagnosed her with CLL—Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia! I will tell you, this latest disappointment piling on to the earlier devastation has sorely tempted us to get on the Road to Emmaus!

B. The Hope of the Gospel. . . Jesus' Resurrection certain.

²⁵He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

The stranger--the yet unrecognized Jesus--does not respond by peppering them with homey advice ("It's always darkest before the dawn."). Nor does he indulge their self-pity ("Here, here, tell me all about it."). Instead, he draws them back to "Moses and the Prophets", the Scriptures, to prove to them that the recent death of "Jesus of Nazareth" in Jerusalem was not a human tragedy but actually the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. Perhaps one of the prophets Jesus quoted was Isaiah:

Isa. 53:10-12 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light [of life] and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The disciples' disillusionment was foolish because they counted as an accident what God had carefully planned from eternity past. Was Messiah's suffering an accident? No. It was all part of God's ultimate purpose in raising Jesus from the dead-- to bring glory from pain, encouragement from endurance, and salvation from suffering. Oh yes, and hope from despair!

“The biblical word “elpida”, translated as the weaker English word hope, means profound certainty. Christians view even the hardest circumstances as part of a history guided by God at every turn toward not merely some kind of afterlife but toward the resurrection of our bodies and souls into new, remade heavens and earth. And all this hope centers on one explosive event—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is what Christianity offers a world that has lost hope” (Tim Keller, Hope in Times of Fear: The Resurrection and the Meaning of Easter).

End: what happens when we realize that Jesus is ACTUALLY alive. . .

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."

Cleopus and his friend didn't know it, but on the road to Emmaus that day the Risen Christ walked beside them every step. In the same way, he's with you right here, right now, today, not promising that no suffering will ever enter your life but giving you hope that, with His help you will become the kind of person that can handle whatever comes!

"I believe that although the two disciples did not recognize Jesus on the road to Emmaus, Jesus recognized them, that he saw them as if they were the only two people in the world. . .and he also sees each of us like that. . . I believe that whether we recognize him or not, or believe in him or not, or even know his name, again and again he comes and walks a little way with us along whatever road we're following. And I believe that. . . he offers us a new hope, a new vision of light that not even the dark world can overcome" (Buechner, The Longing for Home, 149).

Will you accept on this Easter Sunday the same new hope Jesus offered Cleopus and his friend on that very first Easter Sunday? **The hope that, because Jesus is ALIVE from the dead. . .**

...no more sad road-trips to Emmaus!

...no more thinking God's plan for your salvation failed!

...no more doubting the power and efficacy of prayer!

...no more thinking that God has forgotten you!

...no more traveling the road of life alone!

...no more downcast faces and broken hearts!

...no more sad and tangled thoughts and eyes too accustomed to darkness!

...no more worries that Jesus' death on the cross was an accident!

...no more worries that the tomb is not empty!

...no more fears that he has given up on or abandoned us!

...no more assumptions that just because we can't always see him working, he's not working at all!

“Living in the awareness of the risen Jesus is. . .the key that unlocks the door to grasping the meaning of existence. .The miracle of the gospel is Christ, risen and glorified, who this very moment tracks us, pursues us, abides in us, and offers Himself to us as companion for the journey!” (Brennan Manning, Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging).

What about it my friends. Are you willing to accept the Risen Christ's offer to be your companion for the journey away from Emmaus and on toward Heaven?

If so, receive by faith the forgiveness of your sins which Jesus purchased by his death on the cross and symbolized by the bread that he blessed and broke for Cleopas and his friend.

And bow your heart to this Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world who is also the Risen Lord of Life by proclaiming again Easter's eternally profound message:

“Christos Anesti!” “Alithos Anesti!” AMEN