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Series: Resurrection Sunday
Message: Hope in the Midst of Despair

Transcribed Message
April 12, 2020
Luke 24

The Peanuts cartoon is a familiar one. It shows Dr. Lucy sitting at the psychiatrist booth and the unsuspecting patient Linus is there. He says, "I'm in sad shape. My life is full of fear and anxiety. The only thing that keeps me going is this blanket. I need help."

Lucy says, "As they say on TV, the mere fact that you realize that you need help is the way that we're going to be able to give you that help. You're not too far gone." She says to him, "I think we better try and pinpoint your fear. If we can find out what you're afraid of, then we can label it. Are you afraid of responsibility? If you are, then you have hypengyophobia."

He says, "No, I don't think that's it."

"How about cats? Are you afraid of cats? If you are then you have ailurophobia."

He says, "No, I don't think I'm afraid of cats."

"Are you afraid of staircases? If you're afraid of staircases, you have climacophobia."

"No, I'm not afraid of stairs."

"Or maybe you have thalassophobia, which is a fear of the oceans. Or maybe you have a fear of bridges which is gephyrophobia."

He says, "No, I don't have any of those."

She says, "I wonder then if maybe you have panphobia."

He says, "What is panphobia?"

She says, "That's the fear of everything."

He shouts back at her, "Yes! That's what it is. I have panphobia. I'm afraid of everything."

Hopefully this morning we don't have anybody that is dealing with panphobia, a fear of everything. But I'm pretty sure that in this current climate and in this present day, there are a lot of people who are dealing with fear, who are dealing with anxiety, and

who are dealing with the emotion of discouragement. It is felt by so many in our current circumstance. Fear and that discouragement can easily lead to a sense of despair. It was the late Dr. Carl Henry who made this very insightful statement about Jesus. He said, "Jesus planted the only durable rumor of hope amid the widespread despair of a hopeless world." Listen to that. He planted the only durable rumor of hope amid the widespread despair of a hopeless world. That message 2000 years ago still rings true today. This is the message of resurrection Easter Sunday. This is the unchanging message that God has given to us in His Word. That message comes to us and it says to us today God is always bigger than our need. His Word offers the unfailing remedy to a world in desperate need of hope.

I want us to turn to Luke's Gospel the 24th chapter this morning. In this 24th chapter, we have this a fascinating story that is told about Jesus and the two that are on the way to Emmaus. It breaks forward for us in four different movements. Let's begin by noticing that every one of these movements centers around the unfailing Word. The unfailing Word of God is the focus of this story. We began by noting that we go from doubt to confession. From doubt to confession.

The setting is given to us in verses 13 and 14 that that very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus about 7 miles from Jerusalem. They were talking to each other about all these things that had happened. So we note first of all the setting of this story. That setting given to us in those verses tells us that there are two disciples who are on their way to Emmaus. One of them we're going to learn is named Cleopas in verse 18. We have two Christ-followers. We have two of those who are disciples of Jesus. The other one is unnamed which has led some people to suggest that maybe it was his wife. Others have said maybe it was Luke because he's the one who gives us all of the detail of this occurrence. We know that they're not a part of the 11 because at the end of the story they're going to go and join the other 11 as this unfolds.

We know it's Sunday morning. It's Sunday morning and Jesus had been crucified on Friday. They had stayed in Jerusalem long enough to hear the astonishing news and this amazing report that Jesus was alive, that an angel that actually appeared to some women at the tomb and made this announcement. They had heard this message but they hadn't believed it. They had heard this message but they hadn't believed. So now

they're suffering from the worst kind of discouragement possible. The worst kind of discouragement possible is disappointment with Jesus. What had happened, what He had said would happen from their perspective hadn't come true at all. The things that He had talked about were not happening the way that they had expected. In verse 14 we get an idea of what they were saying because it says that they were talking with each other about all of these things that had happened, and I think we can listen in on that conversation and it probably went something like this. Weren't you hopeful? Didn't you think that maybe He was the Messiah? They probably reflected back on things that they remembered Jesus talking about and the things that Jesus said and the things that He was teaching to them. I don't have any doubt that they were marveling about those things and no doubt they were talking about the things that He had done, the miracles that maybe they themselves had seen or others that they had heard reported.

So they're thinking about all of these things and as they're in this conversation they don't even realize that a person has come alongside them and joined them. This stranger that is alongside them we read beginning at verse 15: "While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. And He said to them, 'What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?' And they stood still, looking sad. Then 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?' And 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, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But 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. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find His body, they came back saying that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. Some 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.'

There is so much going on in these verses. We're only going to hit on a couple of the high points. Would you notice again in verses 15 and 16 that Jesus has joined them.

He's walking beside them. He is literally with them but they don't recognize Him. They see Him obviously but they don't recognize Him for who He is. This is clearly a divine blindness for this moment. But God does not want them to know that this is Jesus who has come alongside. I'm wondering if it isn't because Jesus wants to have this interaction with them and He doesn't want them to know. He wants to hear some things from them first before He makes Himself known. He wants probably to teach them some things that they need to hear from Him. It reminds me that there are times in our life when maybe we're going through something and we're not even that aware perhaps of the presence of God. We may even be wondering where is God at that moment. It may very well be that God is doing in our life the same thing He's doing in their life. He wants to hear from us. He wants to teach us in those circumstances very similar to this one.

In verse 17 there is this question: "And He said to them, 'What is this conversation that you're having?'" As you go through the rest of that verse, it speaks of their countenance. They just stop and they look at Him. They look sad. They look discouraged. They look despairing. There are sometimes when we're with people, especially people that we know, and we can just look at them. We can just tell how they're feeling. Well, that certainly was the case here. Jesus is interacting with them and He knows exactly how they feel because they look at Him and they're so very sad.

The response in verse 18 is just filled with irony. "Then 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?'" It's almost as if Cleopas just stops. They've stopped walking already. They're looking incredibly sad and with this question that Jesus asked about what was going on and what you talking about these things for, it is as if Cleopas just stops and says are you kidding me. Are you serious? You don't know what is going on? Are you the only one, he says, in all of this region who does not know what has happened? I suppose it would be like today if somebody would come up to you and say, "Can you tell me why when I go by restaurants and stores and businesses there doesn't seem to be anybody around?" We would look at them and go, "Are you serious? Are you kidding. You haven't heard?" Of course, unless they go to Walmart or Lowe's and there are all kinds of people there, but that's another point. But here is their question. Are you the only one who hasn't heard anything about this? Here

He is. Jesus, the central figure of all of the events. He is the Passover lamb. He is the very reason that everybody had even come to Jerusalem. As they would come annually to celebrate the Passover, He Himself is the Passover lamb. He's the reason that everybody else is even gathered in Jerusalem. And here He is. He's being asked if He's the only one who doesn't have any idea about what's going on.

Verse 19. He wants them to explain to Him what it is that they're feeling, what they're dealing with, what they're thinking about. And you can see in their answer this sense of absolute despair. Look again at verse 19: "And 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. And our chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. We had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all of this, it is now the third day since these things happened.'" So you look at verses 19 to 21 and you can just see what's going on. The way that they answer Him. He was a prophet. This man called Jesus. We thought He was a prophet. Not the prophet anymore. Certainly not the Messiah that they had thought perhaps that He was. He is not the God-man Jesus Christ. He is not the Redeemer, the Savior that they had looked forward to. He is now just a prophet, one of many prophets.

They had been rudely awakened by His death and their confidence has vanquished in light of all that has happened. We had hoped, they said. Past tense. All of these terminologies are in the past tense. We had trusted. Their disillusionment is obvious. Their disappointment is on full display. Philip Yancey is a writer who has written a lot of great books. I think one of his best is a book called *Disappointment with God*. It really brings into focus how it is that we often want God to work in our lives, how we think life should go, and how it should unfold. Yancy writes this classic work and tries to help us see that our perspective, just like the perspective of these two disciples on the road to Emmaus, needs to be re-aligned with God's Word and God's truth. All that has happened here, all these things that are going on, remind us that it's easy for us at times to be in the same place, to be disappointed with God. Maybe that's where you are right now. Maybe you thought God was going to do ... and you just fill in the

blank. God, I thought You were going to ... and whatever that looks like in your life today. That's very similar to what they're dealing with here.

Next, notice we move from confession to exposition. It begins with a gentle rebuke. This gentle rebuke in verses 25 and 26: "And He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?'" Do you know what's interesting to me? When Jesus brings this gentle rebuke, He doesn't rebuke them because they didn't listen to the women and to the report that they brought from the empty tomb. He doesn't rebuke them because they didn't listen to the other disciples who had also confirmed that message. He doesn't even rebuke them because they didn't listen to the angels and the word that they had brought. His rebuke is because they did not believe the Word of God. It's almost as if Jesus says to them – how can you miss it? Don't you know what your Bible says about these things? That's really the focus that He is bringing here. Everything you need is right here. Everything you need to walk with God, to walk through this life is right here in the Word of God. Here's why you're discouraged – because you're paying so little attention to the Word of God.

It is much the same today. We're told how to have the best life now. We're told how to make the wildest dreams that we could ever think of come true. Most of them have to do with prosperity and wealth and health and all of the things that frankly the world offers just as much as unfortunately sometimes the church is putting out there. But we don't hear a lot about the things that Jesus says. We don't hear about the fact that in this world we're going to have trouble, about James's word to us that the trials and tribulations are a part of life. We don't hear a lot of the teaching with regard to what Paul said in Philippians that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection and yes, the fellowship of His sufferings.

Listen to what Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 1. This is the Word that Jesus is going to point them to "Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories." The sufferings come first and then comes the glory is what the prophet said.

Here is Jesus and He brings to them in verse 27 the greatest sermon ever preached. If you look at verse 27: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Now I don't know about you, but if I had to pick one sermon in all of the Bible that I would have wanted to hear, it would be this one. This is the one sermon in all of Scripture that I would've loved to have heard and to have been a part of. Here is Jesus. He takes the Old Testament Scriptures that He has clearly memorized. That was His Bible. He takes those Old Testament Scriptures and He literally just brings them to life. He is the text of this message. He is the sermon. He's the preacher. He is the teacher. He is giving it all to them and He's bringing all of this into focus for them in this moment.

He surely went back to Genesis chapter 3 and verse 15 where the promise was given that through the seed of the woman was going to come one who would crush the head of Satan and would bring victory over death and sin. He must've gone to Genesis 12 and stopped for a moment in His exposition to talk about the promise to Abraham and how that Abraham and through Abraham's seed was going to come one who would be a blessing to the world. He no doubt went into Exodus and Leviticus for an extended period of time teaching about the tabernacle and all of the different aspects of the tabernacle, all of them pointing to Christ, to the Messiah. He no doubt spent time on the sacrifices and the priesthood and those things that point ultimately to the Messiah. He stopped in the Psalms. Maybe Psalm 22 where the psalmist in predictive language that nobody could perhaps even understand at that moment talking about a crucifixion of one who would come. Probably looking at many of the Psalms that speak of a Messiah, a deliverer. And then you know He was in the prophets for an extended period of time. Isaiah. For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given. The government will be upon His shoulders and His name will be called wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. And He is that one standing before them! He went into the 53rd chapter where He reminded them that all of us have sinned, all of us are gone astray and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He went to Jeremiah where Jesus is portrayed as the righteous branch, to Ezekiel where He's the great Shepherd, to Daniel where He is the Son of Man, and through all of the prophets He unfolded to them this amazing story. What a sermon this was! Seven miles never

seemed so short. They started in the morning. they got to Emmaus towards sunset and they no doubt stopped many times along the way to get a little more into the detail of what Jesus was teaching as He expounded and explained to them the Old Testament Scriptures in a way that they had never heard before.

This brings us to the third movement. From exposition to knowledge. From exposition to knowledge. It is an invitation in verse 28: "So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he was going farther, but they urged Him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' So He went to sit in to stay with them." You get a picture here of the kind of relationship Jesus wants with us. Jesus, in this action of acting as if He is going to go on, is really inviting them to ask Him to stay, to continue in this relationship that they're enjoying together. They did. They responded. They urged him strongly, the text says. They do not want Him to leave and as a result of that Jesus gives them a revelation in verse 30. "When He was at table with them, He took the bread and he blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. And He vanished from their sight." Man, what an encounter! They sit down to eat a meal together, which is a picture again of fellowship.

My friends, God wants to have a relationship with each one of us. That's why Jesus came. That's why he died. So that that bridge could be gapped that sin had created. The message of God's Word to you wherever you are and whoever you are is that God loves you and He wants to be in a relationship with you. that's what was going on there. Fellowshiping together. And then the operation that we all need – their eyes were opened and they see that it's Jesus. In Psalm 119 verse 18 it says open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Your law. That's the Old Testament Scriptures. That is the surgery that has just been performed on their eyes. Their eyes were opened and they got to see the glory and the wonder and the beauty of the Old Testament Scriptures as it put forward the Messiah. Paul says in Ephesians 1:18 as he prays for the believers at Ephesus – having the eyes of your heart enlightened, or we could say opened. Having the eyes of your heart opened that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you. Paul's prayer is so right on.

Notice their response in verse 32: “They 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?’” From discouragement and disillusionment and despair – all of it is driven away. It’s driven away and I love that statement in verse 32 – did not our hearts burn within us as He opened to us the Scriptures?

You are familiar with John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the great allegory of the Christian life. It is also the second most published book in the English language, second only to the Bible. In the story, as Pilgrim is on his way to Celestial City, in one part of the story Christian and his friends stop off at Bypass Meadow. Now that's a bad place to stop off because you're supposed to stay on the way. They're on the way to the Celestial City. There is a path that they're to be on. Bunyan says they stepped off of that path and they went to Bypass Meadow. In Bypass Meadow, they encounter the giant Despair, and in that encounter the giant Despair takes them captive to Doubting Castle. It is in Doubting Castle that they begin to lose hope. They think there is no way out. There's no way of escape. Then Christian remembers that in his pocket there's a key. That key is called the Key of Promises. That key then is put into every lock in Doubting Castle and every door is opened. They escape the giant Despair in the Doubting Castle. and it is because of the promises of the word that open their hearts to see that truth.

The last movement is from knowledge to action. From knowledge to action. it's never too late. Verse 33: “And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together.” Even though now it's evening. They left in the morning. They finally get to Emmaus. They have this encounter with Christ and now they're at the evening hour. But still it is not too late to make the trip back again to Jerusalem. There is a sense of urgency. There's this sense of great joy. Their eyes have been opened. They now have embraced and heard and believed this good news. It is the same good news that we are to have an urgency about. It is the same as it gives us joy in the midst of times that can be despairing. It is this good news that God has given to each one of us. That good news is the life-changing Word.

Look at the last of this passage. Verse 34: “... saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road,

and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.” Would you agree with me that in this very unique time, in this time when a lot of people are facing discouragement, despair, and disillusionment, and obviously for a lot of reasons of things that are going on in our life, the great need of the hour is to be moved from discouragement, to be moved from disillusionment, from anxiety and despair, by belief. By belief in what? By belief in this book of promises. By belief in the unchanging Word of God. How does that happen?

How do we move from despair and disillusionment and discouragement to belief? The answer most certainly is that it is not through positive thinking. We don't just gear up our mind and think positive thoughts and move out of despair and disillusionment. It's not through self-actualization or any other word after the word “self”. It is not after behavior modification. It is not through psychotherapy. It is not any of those things. It is by focusing on the one who Himself has overcome sin and death. It is the risen Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of promises, the Word of God and the gospel of His grace.

The great need of the hour, my friend, is that we would all experience this burning within our heart that is related to a knowledge of God and knowing Him personally. At the end of the day, God is always bigger than any need that we have. His Word alone offers the unfailing remedy to a world in desperate need of hope. Our take away this morning on this Resurrection Easter Sunday morning is that God's prescription for a troubled heart is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is the unfailing Word of the risen Christ.

And I ask you this morning: what promise do you need to step out in faith and believe God for this morning? What promise is most pressing on your heart? Is it an awareness perhaps of God's presence? Because He has said to us I will never leave you; I will never forsake you. Is it the supplying of the needs of life? God's promise is that He will supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Is it God's care for many in your life and in your world? and God says to us cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you. Is it anxiety and fear? Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Do you need this morning a new

beginning? Do you need to know the forgiveness of sin? Do you need to enter into a personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ? His invitation is to every one of us. Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your soul.

That is the message, this unfailing remedy. It is the gospel of God's grace. It is the good news that has come to us through Christ. We offer it to all who are listening this morning. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Put your trust, your faith in Him alone. Not in yourself, not in people around you, not in your circumstances, but in Christ alone. And God will enter into your life and give you the gift of eternal life if you will simply believe and acknowledge that you have sinned, fallen short of the glory of God and acknowledge before Him your need and dependency and trust in Him alone. God promises to give us the gift that is eternal life.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we are so incredibly thankful this morning again that on this Resurrection Easter Sunday morning our message is the unchanging one. It is the message of this living Word of God. And through this living Word, Father, You have spoken to us and You have made known to us who Jesus is, what He has done, and how it is that we can have a relationship with You by putting our faith and trust in Christ alone. Father God, we pray that this message of hope would fill many hearts this morning in the midst of a time of despair and anxiety and fear. We pray that You would do that good and wonderful work in each of our lives, pointing us to this unfailing remedy, and filling our hearts with the promises of Your Word. We pray in Jesus's name, amen.