

In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul records that following the Resurrection Jesus appeared numerous times to His disciples and others over a forty-day period between the Resurrection and His ascension back into heaven. Each of the four gospels record some of the appearances which had the specific purpose of preparing the disciples for spreading the Good News, fulfilling the Great Commission. This morning let's look at one of the more famous Resurrection appearances which is found in the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Luke. The Apostle Luke provides us with one of the most detailed descriptions of any of the post-resurrection appearances by Jesus Christ. It concerns Jesus' encounter with two believers on the Road to Emmaus. Listen to this story as recorded in twentieth-four chapter, verses 13 through 35.

Read Luke 24:13-35

It was the evening of the first Sunday, the Day of Resurrection. Two individuals were heading back home after an eventful day in Jerusalem. They were traveling to the village of Emmaus which was just over seven miles west of Jerusalem. We only know the name of one man and don't know if the other person is his wife or another man. As they were walking along discussing the events of the day, all of a sudden Jesus walked up and joined in their conversation. They did not initially recognize Jesus, and were puzzled that He was unaware of the events of the day. Therefore, they assumed that He was a stranger in Jerusalem. They shared with Him the latest news and their personal disappointment and sadness about what had happened. They had hoped that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah who would drive out the hated Romans and restore Israel to the power and prestige of the Old Testament times.

They even mentioned the empty tomb. But the knowledge of the tomb being empty did not produce any more faith in them than it had in the disciples earlier in the day. Their lack of faith and understanding appeared to get to Jesus. Here He had suffered and died, and then rose from the grave and they still didn't get it. So Jesus, beginning with Moses and the Prophets, explained why all of this had to happen the way it did. He basically gave them a crash course on the prophecies of the Old Testament and showed them how He had fulfilled them. His death and resurrection were no spur-of-the-moment decision, but a deliberate action as part of God's amazing plan for salvation for all people. Jesus goes on to paint a biblical panorama of the mighty hand of God, which across the centuries had prepared the way for His coming, the coming of the Messiah.

This discussion was so inspiring that the seven miles went by quickly and before they knew it they were at their home in Emmaus. Then the suspense builds. The Bible clearly indicates that Jesus acted as if He was going on down the road; however, they begged Him to stay and have supper with them. Then as they sat at the table, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and

gave it to them, which was unusual since He was the guest in their house and not the host who usually distributed the bread. In the breaking of the bread, they finally recognized Jesus and He disappeared as suddenly as He had appeared.

At this meal Jesus did what He had done many times before: “He took the bread; He blessed it; He broke it; and He gave it to them.” These four steps or actions – taking, blessing, breaking and giving – are similar to what Jesus had done when He fed the 5000, and when He instituted the Lord’s Supper. It has been suggested that these two people were present at the feeding of the 5000, and that as Jesus broke the bread in their cottage home, they recognized His hands again.

This story is full of interesting insights that can help us grow in our personal walk with the Risen Lord. In the resurrection appearances, there is a constant theme of people not being able to initially recognize Jesus. How do we explain this? Was Jesus’ appearance altered in some way or did God limit the people’s sight? Why didn’t they see the nail holes in His hands? No one knows for sure why they didn’t recognize Jesus the minute He walked up to them on the road that afternoon. Maybe they were like a lot of us and had a senior moment.

One possible explanation is that since Emmaus was west of Jerusalem and it was late in the evening; the two people were walking towards the setting sun. The sun was sinking and the sunlight was in their eyes. Now this theory opens up some possible insights. First, as we read the text we see that these two individuals were preoccupied with the bad news of the day, their sorrow and disappointment that things didn’t turn out the way that they had expected. Their hopes and dreams had been shattered. Think about it – how often do we fail to see the blessings of the Lord and His very presence in our daily lives because we are so preoccupied with our troubles and problems? It is human nature to focus on the negative and not the positive things in life. In a way we suffer from spiritual blindness in that we let the world with its biases, fears, and negative attitude hinder our vision. How many of us would recognize Jesus if He walked right into this sanctuary this morning?

Another way to look at this is that the Christian is a person who walks towards the rising, not the setting sun. Because of the hope and assurance of the Resurrection, the Christian goes onward, not to a night that falls, but to a dawn which breaks when Christ comes into their heart and life. And that is what, in their sorrow and disappointment, these two people on the road to Emmaus did not realize. These were individuals whose hopes were dead and buried. But then Jesus came into their lives, and suddenly their sorrow turned into happiness, their disappointment into hope, and their darkness into light. And the Good News is that Jesus can do exactly the same thing for you and for me today, if we let Him.

Notice that Jesus did not force Himself on them when they reached the village of Emmaus; He waited for an invitation. Jesus acted as if He was going on down the road; however, they asked Jesus to stay and have supper with them; they invited Him into their home. God has given each one of us a previous gift, the gift of free-will. We can either use it to invite Christ into our lives or we can allow Him to pass on by. It's our individual and personal choice; one we must each make for our ourselves. In Revelation 3:20, Jesus said, "Here I stand! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them and they with me." In his famous painting on this verse, William Holman Hunt has Jesus standing at the door knocking. The key point of the painting is that there is no door knob or handle on the outside; it must be opened from the inside. These two individuals invited Jesus into their hearts and their lives were changed forever. The same is true for us, if we will invite Him in.

This story tells us that Jesus is knocking at the door of our heart every day. The meal at Emmaus was an ordinary meal in an ordinary house with an ordinary loaf of bread being served. Jesus just doesn't come to us in church when we celebrate communion, but He comes to us in the events and people of everyday life. He meets us in the ordinary places and experiences of our lives – at the dinner table, chatting with friends, reading a book, or just sitting in a quiet place. And because of this, we must expect Him and look for Him in the people that we meet and the things that happen around us each and every day.

As we celebrated Easter last Sunday, we heard Frank/Ron and Judy sing the hymn "He Lives;" the chorus goes "He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way." On Easter the disciples learned that not only did they have a memory of Jesus, but that He still walks with us each day along the road of life. So the question is - when Jesus walks into our lives, how do we respond? Do we, like these two on the Road to Emmaus, invite Him in and listen to Him? Is He a stranger or do we recognize Him right away?

Sometimes when we are walking or jogging we are so focused on the path right in front of us that we miss the scenery and what's happening around us. We tend naturally to focus on the problems of everyday life and miss out on living. The two people in our story were so focused on the events of the past few days that they didn't see the big picture until Jesus opened their eyes and minds.

So how do you know when you have experienced the Lord's presence in your life? How do you recognize Jesus? Well, one answer is hidden in the verses of this story. These two people met the living Christ on the Road to Emmaus; although He walked right into their lives, they did not recognize Him immediately because they did not fully understand who He was. Their knowledge of the Risen Lord was incomplete.

So how did they obtain this necessary knowledge? Listen to verse 27 again: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, Jesus explained to them what was said in the Scriptures concerning Himself.” Wouldn’t you like to have been part of that conversation? Here’s Jesus giving the greatest and most detailed interpretation of the Old Testament ever. Like a giant puzzle, Jesus put all the pieces together as only He can give meaning to the Scriptures. You know, if you want to understand or get to know a great person, you read their biography. The Bible in a sense is the biography of Jesus Christ. If you want to know Jesus, read the Bible and get involved in a weekly Bible study. As Rey/Lisa sang earlier: “Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me; place in my hands the wonderful key that shall un-clasp and set me free.” That key, my friends, is the Bible. Let God’s Word light your pathway to true understanding and happiness in life.

When these two individuals came to understand the Scriptures, they saw Jesus as never before, and so can we. Listen to how they explained their feelings: “Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” As he searched for the assurance of his faith, John Wesley found it on Aldersgate Street in London one evening when he felt his heart strangely warmed during a reading from the Book of Romans. Does God’s Word have the same effect on you? Have you ever felt your heart on fire for the Word of God?

We also experience the Risen Lord in acts of worship and remembering His teachings and what He has done for us in the past. In the story this morning the eyes of these two individuals were opened when Jesus took the bread, blessed it, and broke it – the same way that He had done when He fed the 5000 and at the Lord’s Supper. I believe that for the first time they saw His hands as He broke the bread. The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus reaching out and touching people in need, whether it was healing the sick, holding the children, breaking bread or stretching out His hands on the cross to take on all of our sins. And these precious, nail scarred hands are reaching out to you and me today and every day.

The story is told of a young girl whose mother was very beautiful – except for her hands, which were shriveled, scarred and hideous. Although the child was reluctant for a long time to ask about them, the time came when she finally asked her mother how her hands became so marred. The mother told her how their house had caught fire when the girl was very little. The mother rushed upstairs to the room where the baby girl was sleeping in her crib and with the help of the Lord was able to carry the babe downstairs and outside without being harmed. However, in doing so, the mother’s hands were terribly burned. This brought tears to the child’s eyes as she said: “O Mother, you know I’ve always loved you – especially your face, smile, your eyes. But now best of all, I love your hands.”

Remember Jesus' hands were scarred saving us! The Emmaus story shows us that Christ comes into our lives in many different ways – through the ordinary events of everyday life, through the reading of the Bible, and through the breaking of the bread. Each of us can meet Jesus today just as those two people did on the Road to Emmaus. This is the truth and assurance of the Resurrection. And the other truth is that Jesus wants to meet with each of us, and have a personal relationship with us. So be alert, look for Him in the people, events and beauty of each day.

The One who left heaven's glory and became one of us bears in His compassionate hands the scars of His sacrifice on our behalf. His hands are the eternal reminder of His love for each one of us. These wonderful hands – hands that healed the sick, restored sight, gave life, eased frightened hearts, and reached out to the outcasts of life - are available you and me each and every day. I hope and pray that each one of us will recognize Him, accept His invitation, take hold of His outreached hands, and invite Him into our hearts to live forever. Amen