

**Sermon – Walking Toward Emmaus**  
Luke 24:13-35 written for April 26, 2020

I wonder if any of you can relate to this story of these two disciples walking toward Emmaus? I mean for this Word of God to find its way into our lives, it's helpful to find ourselves in the story. Otherwise, it's just a nice biblical story of over 2000 years ago and we probably say, "Hey, what's wrong with you two disciples of Jesus? You can't even recognize the Lord Jesus Christ when he walks along with you? What's wrong with your eyes?" So, how do we capture the emotions of these two walkers along this road? How do we slip on their sandals, breathe a little road dust and depression as they walk along? Well, when Jesus asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still their faces downcast. They were sad, forlorn, depressed. They were even devastated. Then, look. Look at the reasons given. As they described their situation to Jesus, they said, "**we had hoped** that he (Jesus) was the one to redeem Israel." **We had hoped!** Their hopes were history! Their dreams were dashed. Their expectations were emaciated. So they were walking along this rough road heading home with their heads down, no smiles, just frowns, hopes evaporating before them, like the dust on the road. So, with that, can anyone at all relate to these emotions? Ever form those words on your lips, "we had hoped." We had hoped for a better life, a better outcome, a better diagnosis, a better job.

Let me see if you might be on the road to Emmaus. If you've spent down your life's savings trying to buy prescriptions, you may be walking toward Emmaus. If you don't have the money for needed car repairs, you may be walking toward Emmaus. If you don't have work or income because of the Coronavirus, you may be walking toward Emmaus. If your daughter is in with the wrong crowd, you may be walking toward Emmaus. If your grandson is addicted to heroin, you may be walking toward Emmaus. If you've walked into a doctor's office and received a life-altering diagnosis, you may be walking toward Emmaus. If you're alone in your golden years, with broken hopes and dreams, an unfulfilled bucket list or perhaps no bucket at all, you may be walking toward Emmaus. If you fix the same meal for one, wash the same plate, the same fork, the same knife every night, watch the same channel on TV, climb into the same cold bed alone every night, you may be walking toward Emmaus. If self-quarantining is about to drive you insane, you may be walking toward Emmaus. Oh, we had hoped! We had hoped!

Sisters and brothers, do you see it? Do you feel it? In one way or another, we can relate to these two disciples. In fact, one of them is not even named. Is it you? Could it be you? I don't know. It could be me. We could be walking together toward Emmaus, deep in a discussion of crushed dreams and unfulfilled expectations. **We had hoped.**

Well, let's look at **what's interesting about this story** and then **find some hope**. What's interesting and the hope.

**First, what's interesting.** What's interesting is that the Risen Christ, on the same day as His resurrection, walks beside these two disciples on the road to Emmaus. The Risen Lord Jesus spends quality time with them. Notice that the Lord Jesus Christ comes into their presence, walks along and asks about their cares, their concerns, and their discussions. He's interested in their focus and their concerns. He wants to know what is at the tip of their tongues. He proactively inserts himself into their presence and fellowship. But they don't realize it. They don't recognize the Lord's presence. If the Risen, Reigning Lord Jesus Christ is walking with you now, would you realize it? Would you recognize him?

Another interesting point about this walk is that the Risen Reigning Lord opens up the scriptures to them. He opens them to truth, ultimate truth in God's Word. The Lord opens them to the ultimate truth, beyond their crushed expectations! The Lord opens them to the incredibly helpful and hope-filled Word of God. He points them to the greater story, the greater truth! He, in fact, points them to himself, the way, the truth and the light found only in Jesus Christ. Isn't that interesting? He points them away from their worries, their concerns, their very selves. And he walks with them in their sorry, sullen, sad road to Emmaus. And they don't recognize him, their creator, their Savior, their Lord. As we walk on our various roads to Emmaus, focused on our sorry, sullen, sad state of life, with our faces downcast, hopes gone, footsteps made with increasing effort, how are we opened to the greater story, the greater truth found in Jesus Christ? Is our focus on OUR dashed dreams or on the Word of God in Jesus Christ?

**To answer that question, let's find the hope in this story.** Since we've established the fact that you and I are also on this road to Emmaus, it fits that the Risen and Reigning Lord Jesus Christ is walking WITH us. The Risen, Reigning Lord of the universe walks with you now, today, this week, this month, this year and spends time with you. Friends, the scriptures tell us that Jesus Christ is Immanuel, which means, God WITH us. God WITH us. Scriptures tell us that when Jesus ascended to the Father, he says, "And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." But even the Old Testament tells us in Deuteronomy 31:6, "never will I leave you or forsake you." Friends, the beginning of hope is found in the fact that even in our sad, sullen, situations, the Risen, Reigning Lord Jesus Christ walks with us. He is walking right there beside you, right now, this very minute. You are not alone, and you never will be alone. That is the beginning of our hope, but what opens our eyes?

**What opens the disciples' eyes and ours to the Risen, Reigning Lord?** I'm glad you asked. This is really important. But, to answer it, we need to take a little rabbit trail off our road to Emmaus. This little trail takes us to Abraham's tent in Genesis 18. We're tired, hungry and in need of hospitality. When we arrive at Abraham's tent, he looks up and sees three men standing in front of him. He greeted them and then ran to welcome them, feed them and feed their camels. Abraham had no idea who these strangers were. He simply saw total strangers with a need, and he ran to fill it. He welcomed these strangers and provided for them. We learn that these men were the Lord coming to visit Abraham and Sarah with good news. You see, in the Middle East,

hospitality was crucial, vital and expected. No walls, no borders, no turning away strangers. When you see strangers and travelers, you help them with hospitality. In the New Testament, we hear this theme expressed in Hebrews 13, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for in doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Hospitality, welcoming, providing for needs. And, finally, in Matthew 25 Jesus tells us, "whatever you do for the least among you, you've done for me." So, with that little side trail on hospitality, we return to our story.

"As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. BUT, BUT, (and oh, this is an important 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." Do you see the turning point? BUT they urged him strongly to stay with them. They invited this complete stranger to share a meal with them. You see, at the end of their road in Emmaus, they had a choice. There was as they say, a fork in the road. They could have said goodbye and settled into their homes with their wives, children and chores. They could have continued on in their depressing discourse with loved ones and gone about their same ole same ole routines. For they had no idea who this was walking with them, BUT, BUT when they opened their home to a stranger, their eyes were opened to hope. When they opened their home to a stranger, their eyes were opened to hope. When they provided simple hospitality, their lives changed permanently and forever. Do you see it? Do you see the change here?

They turned from their discussion of their dashed hopes and dreams to caring for the safety and well-being of this stranger. They still had no idea who this was, but they turned from thoughts and worries about themselves to concerns for another human being. It didn't say they wanted to hear more from this teacher. It says they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." They turned from self-centered thoughts to the simple care for a stranger. When that transformation happened, their eyes were opened, and they saw the Risen Christ.

So, I have to wonder as we walk along on our own rough roads to Emmaus, who are the strangers, neighbors or colleagues in our midst who need our care and concern? I think your eyes will be open to see them..... And, you know what that means. Amen.