

An Easter Afternoon Encounter at Emmaus
Easter Sunday - Luke 24:13-27
Stonebrook Church - 4/12/2020 - Matt Heerema

My sermon today was inspired by a Tweet from Gretchen Ronnevik

“Maybe huddling together as a small group of disciples in a home, wondering what God is doing, and what will happen next, and where do we go from here... is the most Easterly of all easter things to do...”

An often ignored scene from the first Easter:

Each year on Easter Sunday, our habit is to preach and sing about the greatness and the power and the glory of the resurrection, about how the women and Peter and John went to the tomb, and saw it empty, and they marveled!

Jesus of Nazareth, a man who no serious historian disagrees lived on this earth 2000 years ago, who claimed to be the promised Messiah of God, who claimed to teach us the way of life that God our creator had designed for us, who performed miracles, including raising dead people back to life, and who himself claimed to be God...

...This Jesus proved that all his teaching and claims were true, by rising from the dead, conquering sin and death, fulfilling the promises of God and told by the prophets in the Old Testament.

Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, rose from the dead, and ascended up into the clouds, up into heaven, returning to His Father. And he is coming back to finish the mission, and rescue all those who trust in his life, his teaching, and his death and resurrection. Every wrong will be righted, every sadness undone, and every wound healed as we enter into an eternal life of joy and fellowship with God, the Father, son, and Holy Spirit, our relationship perfectly restored.

This is the thing we celebrate on Easter Sunday, the highest and most important Christian holiday. This is our hope. It is the most important event in human history. It is the reason for all the other events. And certainly these things deserve our attention this morning and every day.

But today, as we are here in the middle of a storm of a global pandemic, it can seem hard to relate to the victory and the glory and the triumph of Christ over the grave!

And I wonder this Easter morning, if we might relate better to the other disciples who spent all of easter, until the evening, in fear, doubt, confusion, and unbelief.

Please turn with me to Luke chapter 24.

Verses 1-12 recount the familiar passage where the women show up at the place where Jesus was buried after his crucifixion, and then it takes a turn that we don't usually talk about on Easter: The apostles disbelieved their report.

Later Peter goes to the tomb (and we know from John that John is with him), to see what they were talking about, but it doesn't say here that he was filled with faith, in fact even in John it says "they didn't yet understand the scriptures..."

Then the scene cuts to a bit later, with two of the other disciples, a few miles away, walking to a village that was about 7 miles away, called Emmaus:

HOW DOES JESUS REVEAL HIMSELF TO THE APOSTLES? - The three parts have great relevance for us today.

READ: v13-27 -

FIRST: TRUST THE SCRIPTURES - Jesus comes to these doubting apostles, and what does he do? Where does he start? He doesn't throw back his hood and say "Guys it's me! It's all real!" - He first takes them to the scriptures. WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY? And yet they don't get it...

Today, we find ourselves these apostles shoes at this point in the story. What should we do?

READ: v 33-53 -

WHAT DOES JESUS DO? FIRST HE POINTS THEM AT THE SCRIPTURES

SECOND: HE SHOWS THEM A MIRACLE by suddenly appearing, probably answering their inner wish at this point "if only Jesus were alive again... if only he were here...", He gives them *physical* proof that has risen from the dead by eating in front of them - *but they still disbelieve*

THIRD - HE OPENS THEIR MINDS TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURE AND BELIEVE - And then they worship with great joy.

And this is where we see what we need

1. TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES - Jesus points us to the scripture, we must understand it
2. NOT A SIGN OR A MIRACLE OR A NEW REVELATION - we must realize it's not a sign or a miracle that we need
3. BUT RATHER WE MUST HAVE OUR MINDS OPENED TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES - Jesus must open our minds to understand the scripture and believe it

Luke's purpose in writing Luke and Acts to a church that was under persecution was to give them confidence in their faith, confidence that the things they had been taught were so. He did this through eye-witness accounts of the events, and what do the eye-witnesses say Jesus emphasized? The scriptures and our reliance on Jesus to help us understand them.

These uncertain times can be very anxiety inducing. We can feel probably a lot like the disciples felt earlier with Jesus when they were in a boat with him during the middle of a violent storm, and Jesus was fast asleep in the boat. "LORD, DON'T YOU CARE THAT WE'RE ABOUT TO DIE?!" - Jesus stood up and spoke to the storm and instantly calmed it, in a way that was even more frightening to the disciples than the storm was. "Who is this man?" -

There is some reason that Jesus has not yet calmed this storm. We don't know why he hasn't, but it isn't because he can't.

So as we find ourselves in a very confusing world, with many of our assumptions about the way things operate upended, with many of our hopes about the way things should be not coming through, as we find ourselves huddled in a room with just a few other people, thinking things are not the way they are supposed to be, we can be reminded of the disciples on the original Easter afternoon

And we'll probably see that we can be a lot like those disciples. Slow in our hearts to believe all that the scriptures say. The apostles were walking by what they could see in front of them, not by what God had promised. Perhaps they were misunderstanding some of the scriptures, how certain events were supposed to play out. Perhaps they had an incomplete picture of the scriptures. Perhaps they were claiming promises that God never actually promised.

When we look at the promises of the scriptures, we find the promise of the resurrection. That we will be resurrected *with Christ*. Some claim that we have that resurrection power available to us in this world, that we can claim power over sickness, poverty, and any part life, and you know, they are not entirely wrong.

It's just that resurrection power over sickness does not necessarily look like health in this life.

Resurrection power over poverty does not look like wealth in this life...

Resurrection power in this life does not mean we will have our wishes for things in this life fulfilled...

Resurrection power means that sickness does not have the final word.

Resurrection power means that poverty does not have the final word.

Resurrection power means that death does not have the final word.

Resurrection power is hope for the life to come.

Suffering in this life: sickness, poverty, loneliness, death - is a light, momentary affliction. The suffering is real, but it will not last.

1 Peter 1:13 exhorts us: "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Set our hope completely on his return! And later in chapter 4 he says "do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes as if something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you are sharing in Christ's sufferings, that you may rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."

And Jesus proved that these things are so, by rising from the dead.

So today, let's heed Jesus's exhortation to understand and believe the scriptures. We can pray for and work toward greater understanding of God's promises to us.

And especially

We can take great comfort in the resurrection this morning. It shows us

That God is faithful to keep his promises

Even in the light of a global pandemic

That sickness is not our worst enemy, death is,

And that death is not the final fate of those who follow Christ

Discussion Questions

1. On Easter morning, the apostles disbelieved the women's report that Jesus had risen from the dead. How does this challenge our understanding/perception of the apostles? In what ways can we be like them at times?
2. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus pointed the disciples to the scriptures, rather simply revealing himself. Why do you think he did this? What does this show us about what the disciples needed most? In what ways can we relate to this?
3. Even after appearing and giving physical proof to the disciples that he had risen from the dead, Luke's account reports that they still disbelieved. What had to happen before they finally "got it"? How can we relate to this?
4. How do these things relate to how we ought to understand evangelism and discipleship?

Pray for one another along these lines.