

SERMON NOTES
Luke 24:13-35
"The Resurrection of Hope"

Intro:

There are, thanks be to God, times in our lives when we have known the presence of God

-There are times, such as in today=s worship service, when it is evident that God is alive and real and present among us

-There are times in our daily lives as well, when we are convinced that Jesus walks with us and lead us as our Shepherd in life - and life is full of joy and hope

These are the times that are comparable to the experience of the Israelites when the Lord God went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night

-These are the times when Christ=s living presence seems as real to us today as when he walked and talked with the disciples

-These are the times when we feel fully alive / joyful / hopeful

-some of you feel that way right now - rejoice in the Lord and give thanks!

There are other times, however, when the cloud dissipates and the fire burns so low that we have to strain to see anything of God=s presence

-The pillar of cloud seems to have vanished, and we aren=t sure if it left us or if we left it

-at these times in our spiritual journey, we walk hesitantly, tentatively - more aware of the absence rather than the presence of God

--These are the times when God seems silent and hidden

Even Jesus experienced the distress of great anguish of soul

Mark 14:33-34 He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. *"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,"* he said to them.

Perhaps some of you here today know what it is for your soul to be overwhelmed with sorrow

- **Are you facing any of these spiritual crises? *the death of hope / the absence and silence of God / anguish of soul / troubling doubts / discrepancies between spiritual expectations and reality***

What is it that triggers a spiritual crisis in your life?

-How would these kinds of stress situations affect your walk with God?

- * A close friend suddenly dies
- * *Your boss tells you that you are fired*
- * Your hopes & dreams for the future are suddenly dashed
- * *The cause you risked everything for suddenly turns sour*
- * One of your co-workers commits suicide
- * *The person you trusted most lets you down*
- * Your parents think that you've wasted your life / and you have some deep regrets yourself

This was exactly the situation for the disciples following the execution of Jesus of Nazareth

I. THE DAY HOPE DIED

For the past 3 years the disciples had pinned all their hopes on Jesus of Nazareth
-they left their homes, their families and their jobs in order to follow Jesus
-they had come to believe that Jesus of Nazareth was God=s Messiah who would set the Jews free from Roman oppression and restore the kingdom to Israel
-Jesus seemed so powerful and invincible to them - healing the sick / giving sight to the blind / casting out demons / even raising the dead
-and when they were with Jesus, the presence of God seemed so real / life seemed so full of unlimited possibilities / and the future seemed bright and full of hope

Until the day hope died

-that Friday 3 days ago when Jesus was taken from them
-he was stripped, mocked, spit upon, nailed to a cross and left to die
-and with the corpse of Jesus were buried all their hopes and dreams
-The disciples, like their Master on the cross, felt forsaken by God

If your hopes for the future had just been shattered and you were experiencing a faith crisis - where would you go to get yourself together?

Two of Jesus= disciples - one named Cleopas, the other his friend or perhaps his wife - apparently decided to go home - to a village called Emmaus about 7 miles WNW of Jerusalem

Unable to travel on the Sabbath / their first chance to leave Jerusalem would have been Sunday morning

- but the women=s reports of the empty tomb kept them from leaving right away / ----
but the last report they had was that nobody had found Jesus= body or seen Jesus alive

-so they figured they might as well just go home and lick their wounds

-they had suffered enough disappointment for one week / no sense hanging around and getting their hopes up only to be crushed again

-better off just getting out of town and heading toward home

Disappointed / despondent / confused / crushed in spirit - *that Sunday afternoon they wearily trudged along the dusty road, discussing together the events of the past week*

-they called to mind that glorious day one week ago when Jesus was publicly hailed as the Messianic King of Israel along the parade on the way into Jerusalem

-they remembered vividly his bold action of driving the money-changers out of the Temple courts

-they recalled how skillfully he handled the test questions posed by the religious leaders who challenged his teaching authority

-and they remembered Friday morning when they first heard the rumors that Jesus had been arrested and tried and was being sentenced to death

-and they were on the fringes of the crowd that witnessed Jesus being nailed to the Cross - and along with him, all their hopes & expectations that Jesus would usher in the kingdom of God

They were so sure that Jesus was the promised Messiah

-but apparently they were wrong / perhaps he was just a prophet after all – or maybe even worse – maybe he was a false prophet or charlatan

--all of their hopes that Jesus was God’s promised Messiah ushering in the Kingdom of God were shattered when Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross

This was a far deeper crisis than making some financial mistakes or poor business decisions or even making a mistake in a serious romantic relationship or marriage – *they were mistaken and confused at the core of their relationship with God*

--this was a spiritual crisis that struck them at the very core of their soul

- **Perhaps some of you have experienced this kind of spiritual crisis – or perhaps are right now**
- ***Perhaps you can recall the Day that Hope Died in your life or your family***

II. THE RESURRECTION OF HOPE: ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN LORD

As the two disciples discussed these things and fought back the encroaching bitterness and despair, a stranger approached

-they were so deep in their conversation and self-pity that they did not hear the footsteps from behind

-the stranger walked beside them, observing their earnest conversation, and after listening for a while, he interrupted: AWhat are you discussing together as you walk along?@

-Long faces with puzzled expressions turned toward the stranger: Where had he been the past few days? Why, he must be the only visitor to Jerusalem who hadn't heard of the events of that week!

-Not intimidated, the stranger asked: AWhat events?@

Then the 2 disciples spilled it all - the whole story along with their hopes and disappointments

-the stranger listened and then gently chided them for being so slow to understand that these events which seemed so final were not the last word

Then he led them in a Bible study

-Jesus explained from OT Scriptures such as Isaiah 53 that it was God=s plan for the Messiah first to suffer and die and then to be resurrected and ascend to glory

You see, the disciples, like many of us, were operating from the faulty assumption that suffering was contrary to God=s plan for His people

-God often accomplishes His purposes in our lives and in the lives of others through our suffering

-and certainly, in God=s plan of salvation, the suffering and death of the Messiah became the means of our salvation from sin and death and hell

As Jesus explained to these two disciples God=s plan of salvation from OT prophecies of the Messiah, he still was not recognized by his friends

-in the midst of their self-pity and depression, the disciples did not recognize the presence of Jesus even after having a Bible study with them

-Later, they would say: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

-But at the time, they were kept from recognizing him

-the two disciples saw only a stranger with their physical eyes / they could not recognize the risen Lord Jesus with their spiritual eyes

Spiritual sight is a gift of God=s grace

-left to our own devices, all of us would be spiritually blind

-we can know God only as He opens our eyes to His presence

-even when reading the Bible, we need the illumination of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to understand God=s truth with our hearts as well as our minds
-we are dependent upon God to make Himself known to us by His sovereign grace

As they approached the village of Emmaus, Jesus acted as if he were going to continue walking farther down the road

-but the two disciples strongly urged him to stay with them, presumably in their home (Cleopas & his wife?)

-if they had not invited Jesus in, he apparently would have continued on by himself

--You see, Jesus never intrudes into anyone=s home - or life - without invitation, permission or welcome

The two disciples invited Jesus to come into their home and stay with them

-and he did

-and it was at that point that Jesus revealed himself to them

-though he was a guest, he played the role of the host at the supper table

-Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them

-it was then that the two disciples= eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus

-they recognized him in the breaking of the bread

What triggered their recognition?

-maybe it was the way Jesus took break and gave thanks and broke it

-maybe it was when he gave the bread to them that they recognized the nail wounds in his wrists

-maybe it was the sense of deja vu - reminding them of other meals they had shared with him

-or maybe it was simply God=s time for the Holy Spirit to open their spiritual eyes to recognize Jesus as the risen Lord present with them

And then, as soon as he was recognized, Jesus disappeared from their sight

-and the disciples were left with his unseen, spiritual presence

And that is how it is for us

-first we learn the truths of God=s plan of salvation from the Bible

-then we decide to invite Jesus into our life as our Savior and Lord

-then Jesus discloses himself to us as we fellowship with him

-and then Jesus dwells in our hearts by His Spirit through faith

Today, we cannot see the physical body of Jesus

-he walks and talks with us as one who is unseen and is recognized by faith, not by sight

--though there is abundant historical evidence to make faith in the risen Lord reasonable

- at the heart of the Christian faith is a personal relationship with an unseen Person

I do not mean that Jesus= resurrection was only a spiritual resurrection

-NO - Jesus arose bodily from the grave and appeared physically to his disciples and to more than 500 people and other eyewitnesses over the course of 40 days

-and the eyewitness testimony of the disciples who saw Jesus alive enables us to believe intelligently in the resurrection

But Jesus also ascended into heaven on the 40th day after his resurrection, and today we experience the spiritual presence of Jesus - *not the spirit of a dead man living on in the memory of his followers* - but rather the Holy Spirit of the living Christ living within those who invite him into their hearts

-and the unseen presence of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit who lives within us is a real and powerful presence

You see, this is the heart of what Christianity is all about

-Christianity is not just about going to church and getting baptized and confirmed and helping out with church rummage sales and trying to follow the Golden Rule and loving your neighbor as yourself

--the heart of Christianity is a personal relationship with a living Savior, Jesus Christ – a risen Lord whose presence is currently unseen

I am not a fully devoted follower of a religion or belief system // I am not a fully devoted follower of a moral code // I am not a fully devoted follower of a book – though I believe the Bible to be the Word of God

--rather I am a fully devoted follower of a real, unseen, living Person whose spiritual presence has changed my life

How about you? *Do you know Jesus Christ personally?*

-Is he a real person in your daily life?

-Is his unseen, spiritual presence making a powerful difference in your life?

III. OVERFLOWING WITH HOPE: EXPERIENCING THE UNSEEN PRESENCE OF THE RISEN LORD

John 10:10 (NIV) ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

- *The thief is Satan – he is a liar and a murderer and a destroyer – of lives, of marriages, of families, of churches*
- **What does this thief steal from us?**

- **Joy // Peace // and especially – Hope**
- **Loss of hope leads to broken marriages and to bondage to sin and to depression and even suicide**
- **If you are experiencing the loss of hope – one of the most powerful prayers you can pray is this:**

Romans 15:13 (NIV) ¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **Our God is the God of hope because our God is the God of Resurrection and the God of Life and the God of Love and the God of Power and the God of Creation**
- **How can you overflow with life-giving and relationship-restoring and sin-conquering and Kingdom-advancing Hope when Satan the thief is doing everything in his power to steal hope from you based on life circumstances that seem hopeless?**
- **Wherever the risen Christ is present, there is hope – hope of new life // hope of change // hope of restored relationships // hope of victory over sin // hope of renewed purpose in life**
- **Christ is Victor over sin // over death // and over Satan – the risen Lord Jesus Christ is Victor over all the hope-killers**
- **Wherever the risen Christ is present, there is hope**

How can you experience the real presence of the risen Christ in your daily life?

(1) Open the door of your heart to Jesus

Revelation 3:20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

By now, some of you have been attending church and studying the Bible long enough so that you have a pretty good understanding of the plan of salvation

-you understand that Jesus died on the Cross to reconcile you to God and that he arose from the grave to offer you new life

-and now Jesus stands at the door of your heart and knocks

-but you see, this door has only one knob - and that on the inside

-Jesus cannot open the door from his side

-all he can do is knock and call to you to open the door and let him in

-he longs to establish a personal relationship with you - to eat with you and fellowship with you and share life with you
-but he waits to be invited to come in

I urge you to open the door of your heart - your inner being - your true self - and invite Jesus to come into your life to be your Savior and Lord - to make himself at home in your heart and life

(2) Ask God to remove your spiritual blinders

Luke 24:16, 31 But they were kept from recognizing him... Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

Jesus was physically present walking alongside them in bodily form – and they didn't recognize him

--Jesus opened the Scriptures and led them in a Bible study – and they didn't recognize him

Seeing Jesus is not a matter of physical sight or intelligence or even Bible knowledge – *seeing Jesus takes spiritual sight that only God gives by His grace*

The Emmaus disciples were spiritually blinded by their grief / by their despair / by their discouragement / by their despondency
--we can be blinded by those same things today

Other spiritual blinders include a critical, judgmental spirit // or bitterness // or pride // or self-righteousness // or self-pity // or love of money // or rebellion
--if you want to see the unseen Jesus, then you need to ask God to remove your spiritual blinders and open your spiritual eyes

(3) Spend time with Jesus in the Scriptures:

Luke 24:32 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?"*

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly

The purpose of studying the Bible is not merely to accumulate knowledge of Bible facts and stories
-The purpose of studying the Bible is to encounter the living Word, Jesus Christ

-The Scriptures testify to Jesus the Messiah / studying the Bible is a means to the end of knowing Jesus Christ in whom true life is found

How can you encounter Jesus Christ in the Scriptures?

* If you are a beginner, start with one of the Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*)

* Begin your Bible study with prayer - *ask God to open your mind and heart to understand the Bible and to see Jesus Christ*

* Read the passage twice / the first time to get an overview and the second time to focus on what the passage teaches about Jesus:

- *What is he saying or doing? How does he relate to people? With whom can you identify in the story? What truth can you apply to your life?*

* Meditation - spend some time thinking about the meaning of the passage. *Lord, what are you saying to me? How do you want me to respond to this passage?*

* Application - *Is there an attitude to be changed? A sin to be confessed? An action to be taken or avoided? An example to follow? A promise to claim? A characteristic of Jesus to appreciate and affirm?*

Remember, your objective is for the Holy Spirit to use God=s Word as a means of experiencing the presence of Jesus and growing in your relationship with him

(4) Walk and talk with Jesus and listen for his voice:

Luke 24:15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them;

Look for Jesus= presence in your daily routine and activities / Include Jesus in your thought life / *Express your emotions and feelings to him / Seek his guidance when making decisions / Ask him to love other people through you / Do your work as though working for Jesus / Make him an integral part of your everyday life*

-Ask Jesus to make his presence known and real to you on a regular basis

John 10 -- Jesus (speaking of himself as the Good Shepherd): *The sheep hear his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. He walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they recognize his voice*

Jesus calls you by name to follow him – you are part of a flock that together is following him – but he speaks to each one uniquely and individually by name
--at the heart of a personal relationship with an unseen Person is to learn to recognize his voice and to follow his voice

(5) Look for his wounds

--Was it seeing his nail wounds when he broke the bread that enabled the disciples to recognize Jesus?

Sometimes when we are hurting and feeling sorry for ourselves, we can drift away from the Lord or even become angry with Him as if He were to blame for our problems
 -at such times, *look for his wounds / remember the suffering he endured for you / remember that he is with you now in your suffering*

Isaiah 53:3-5 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering... Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows... by his wounds we are healed.

The pain of rejection or grief or sorrow or physical pain or emotional wounds can become a barrier between us and God=s presence

-Or pain can become a means of drawing near to the Man of Sorrows and Suffering Servant

Philippians 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death

Have you learned to know Christ deeper by means of the unique and powerful fellowship of sharing in his sufferings?

*-When you are hurting / look for his wounds / **by his wounds we are healed***

(6) Walk in the Light

1 John 1:5 - 7 (NIV) ⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

- **God is Light -- Jesus is the Light of the World** – *we cannot fellowship with God or experience the Unseen Presence of the Lord Jesus while walking in the darkness*
- Walking in the light does not mean living a sinless life
- *Walking in the light means dealing with our sins honestly and openly – not lying / not deceiving / not covering up / not excusing or blaming*
- Walking in the light means owning up to our sins and taking responsibility for our repentance with the help of the Holy Spirit

- *Walking in the light means trusting the blood of Jesus to forgive, cleanse and purify us from our sins so that we can live a righteous and holy life*

(7) *Seek his presence in Communion*

Luke 24:30-31 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him,

Luke 24:35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Now, Jesus was not conducting a Communion Service here - he was simply sharing a common meal with his friends

-yet the church has also applied this passage to experiencing the real presence of the risen Lord in Communion

-vs. 30 reminds us of the Last Supper: ***When Jesus was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them to eat***

The early church did not celebrate the Lord=s Supper as a somber memorial service in memory of a dead Messiah

-NO - *the early church believed that the risen Lord was the host of the Lord=s Supper, and that Communion was a fellowship meal with fellow believers in the presence of the risen Lord / therefore Communion was celebrated every Sunday in the early church not only as a remembrance of Jesus= death but also as a celebration of his resurrected life and ongoing spiritual presence*

In a very real sense, Jesus is present among us and invites us to His table

-And he is present not as a guest, but as the host

-when we come to the Lord=s Table, we come to the risen Lord present among us

-we come in humility and poverty of spirit, acknowledging our neediness and sinfulness, resting by faith in his saving grace

-we come to receive of Jesus / we eat the bread in faith in order to receive the life that issues from his sacrifice on the Cross / to receive the life that comes from abiding in him and living by faith in him

-we drink the cup in faith in order to receive the forgiveness that comes from his shed blood / to receive the mercy and love and acceptance that come from his grace at the foot of the Cross

And so, as we partake of Communion in a moment - let us not just mechanically chew the bread and swallow the juice

-rather, let us remember Christ=s death for our sins / and let us seek the living presence of our risen Savior

--May God open our eyes so that we may recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread

Prayer // Hymn # 213 “Because He Lives”