

On the Road to Emmaus

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[0 : 01] Tonight's reading is from Luke chapter 24 verses 13 to 35. On the road to Emmaus. Now that same day, two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them. But they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, what are you discussing together as you walk along? They stood still, their faces downcast.

One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days? What things, he asked.

About Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed, before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.

[1 : 08] But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us.

They went to the tomb early this morning, but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.

He asked them, how foolish you are and how slow to believe all the prophets have spoken. Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further.

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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

[2 : 21] Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 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?

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven and those with them assembled together and saying, it is true, the Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.

Then the two told what had happened on the way and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. This is the word of the Lord. Well, good evening and welcome to St. Silas.

My name is Robin. I am a member of the congregation here. It is great to be speaking on this Easter Sunday and be celebrating with you all. Let me pray and then we will jump into it.

Father God, we thank you so much for your grace to us. We thank you for your word to us. We thank you that you speak to us through your word.

[3 : 31] We thank you that we can sit here this evening and be taught by you. We pray for ourselves now that as we think about this passage together, you would open it up to us.

Help us to marvel at who you are. Transform us, we pray. We ask for all this. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. So today we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and the importance of the resurrection to the Christian faith.

It can't be overstated, can it? It is the most important event in the entirety of human history. The success of the work of Christ rests on the fact that he rose from the dead.

The gospel is true because Christ rose from the dead, from death to life. If he did not rise, the gospel's false. It's as simple as that. If he remained under the power of death, there's no source of

spiritual life to any of us.

It simply cannot be overstated. This is where our hope rests in the resurrected Jesus, the living one. By our union with him, the one who's defeated death, comes all the benefits of salvation that we find in Christ.

[4 : 45] Forgiveness of sins, transformed living, secure future, the fact that we can even pray. All these things we have because we're united with the resurrected Jesus.

It simply cannot be overstated. Now we know these glorious implications that Jesus is risen, that he's alive. But in chapter 24 of Luke's gospel, the initial response on that first Easter day is somewhat different, as you might expect.

But before we jump into it all, I just want us to take a step back and just think about something that I did at school when I was little. Maybe something that you did as well.

I remember doing this activity when I was about maybe 13 or 14, where you had to draw out a timeline of what you thought your future life was going to be like.

Almost like a prediction of when you expected certain things to happen, like do exams, go to university, get a job, get married, buy a house, get a dog, have kids, etc., etc.

[5 : 49] All the way until you retired and eventually died. And the aim was to try and plot when you thought things would happen in your life. Now, I can't remember why we did that.

I just remember doing it. Now, I know when I was doing that as a kid, it's probably just looking at sort of the way other adults' lives had gone and reckoning that my life would sort of pan out in the same way.

And whilst I can't remember the exact details, I can tell you now, for definite, what wouldn't have been on there was pretty much all the actual major events that have happened to me.

Going to university in Newcastle, not on the plan. Moving to London at 25, not on the plan. I'm guessing training to be a minister in the church and preaching at a church in the west end of Glasgow wouldn't have been on the plan either.

Even being a Christian wouldn't have been on there. And I'm guessing that would have been the same for us if we tried to draw out a plan for our lives. The way our lives have turned out are not as we expected, are they?

[6 : 50] I mean, that's just thinking about it, looking from a child's perspective. Isn't that the same every week? Things happen. We never would have planned, given the choice.

Our lives are up and down. We have good surprises, but also we have expectations how we think every week is going to pan out. Never happens the way we planned it, does it?

Never quite works out the way we'd expected. Because the reality is, all of our expectations are faulty. They're a little bit off. We're full to the brim of these sort of like faulty expectations.

And the thing is, and I say expectation, but what I kind of mean is it just doesn't go the way we've planned. And what we've expected, believed, even hoped in, when it doesn't go our way according to our plan.

When it doesn't go that way, how does it leave us feeling? Disappointed, frustrated, even angry at times. Sound familiar? I don't know about you, but it certainly does for me.

[7 : 56] But here's the thing. We might have all these faulty expectations of life. But we also bring that into our spiritual lives too. Don't we have faulty expectations of Jesus?

And I'm not just talking to Christians here. This goes for everyone. Whether we're following Jesus or not. What do we expect of him? Has it matched your expectations of him?

Or do we have faulty expectations with our spiritual life too? Honestly, when I became a Christian, I thought, right, that's it now. Everything in life is going to go as planned.

I'll have peace of mind 24-7. And God doesn't want me to be unhappy, so life will just be a breeze from now on. We all have faulty expectations of Jesus.

As we arrive back to that first Easter day, it's one of the things we're going to be thinking about this evening. Faulty expectations of Jesus. Because that's exactly what the two disciples have in our Bible reading.

[8 : 57] Faulty expectations of Jesus. In fact, these two blokes are just like us. They had hoped and believed that life was going to pan out the way they expected.

And they're responding the same way we do when it doesn't. They're disappointed. They're frustrated. Even a little bit dejected, you might say. So we're going to jump in. Rewind back to that first Easter Sunday.

And it's not really surprising, is it, what these two blokes are talking about. I mean, you can put yourself in their shoes. What else would they be talking about? You know what it's like when big news happens today.

You can't stop people talking about Brexit. People talk about the big issues of what's been going on. And these two are just like us. I mean, it's obvious. Jesus, their leader and friend, has just been put to death.

And we know the whole sort of palaver, if you like, that surrounded the circus of the trial around the crucifixion. And it's as they chat, as they discuss the events of these few days, that this stranger joins them and quizzes them on what they're chatting about.

[10:03] We can totally understand their reaction. Verse 17, if you look with me. What are you discussing together as you walk along? Asks Jesus. They stood still, their faces downcast.

Stood still, faces downcast. They're absolutely gutted. They pause from walk, emotionless, standing still in utter sadness and grief.

And of course they're gutted. Who wouldn't be? But they're amazed. This fellow who's just rocked up doesn't know what's going on. Verse 18, they respond.

Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days? It's almost disbelief. Where have you been? Don't you know what's going on?

You mean to tell us you don't know what's happened? Where have you been, man? What things? Jesus replies. It's no wonder the way Cleopas responds in verse 19, is it?

[11:03] I mean, you can almost imagine him saying these things, like welling up with tears in his eyes. About Jesus of Nazareth. He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed, before God and all the people.

Well, the chief priests and our rulers had handed him over to be sentenced to death. And they crucified him. But we had hoped he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

Don't you know what's happened? Don't you know anything? And then we hear those words. We had hoped. We had hoped. We had hoped. He was going to be the one to redeem Israel.

We had hoped. Their hope as it stands now has evaporated. It's gone. They are hopeless. They had hoped he would redeem.

They had hoped he would set Israel, the nation, free. I mean, it's entirely plausible and probable that just a week earlier on Palm Sunday, they were among the crowd singing him in on his way into Jerusalem as their king.

[12:07] If they had drawn a timeline of the week that lay ahead on Palm Sunday, if they had sort of journaled what they thought was going to happen, when the Messiah entered into Jerusalem, the holy city, what would they have written?

Would it have been the events of the last two days? What were they hoping for? They were hoping for a greater king than David, to be rescued, set free, redeemed from the Roman Empire.

What were they hoping for? Were they hoping that Jesus was going to call on 10,000 angels, that he was going to don some warrior attire? Wasn't the kingdom of God going to come down? We don't get an insight into exactly what they were hoping for.

But it's no wonder, is it, that they were disappointed and full of grief, even slightly frustrated. It's all gone wrong. Just like that activity I did at school, planning out and thinking about future, they've sort of made up, dreamed up God's plan, and they've not come out with what they expected.

They interpret the events the way they see it, the way they expected it to go, and it hasn't happened. Jesus, their friend, is dead, and they hope their harrow in him has been smashed. We're a lot like that.

[13:32] Life, in general, doesn't go the way we want. We have these faulty expectations, hoping in our own plan, or hoping that our plan is actually Jesus' plan for us.

And then when it doesn't materialize, when it doesn't happen the way we wanted, we lose hope. Sometimes we think it even more so once we start following Jesus. Take the sentence.

Take the sentence. How do we finish it? I had hoped that. I had hoped that my marriage would be great, but it's just as hard as it was before.

I had hoped that my kids would be, well, superstars, but they're just by an average. I had hoped that I'd have loads of money, but I'm broke.

I had hoped to be free from anxiety and depression, but it still plagues me every day. I'd hoped to break this addiction, but it's no use.

[14 : 42] I'd hoped for a great career, but I hate my job. I'd hoped to just be happy, but life still sucks. I'd hoped for my friends and my family to become Christians, but they'll laugh at me when I'm not in the room.

I had hoped. How do we finish that sentence? But the interesting thing, in the middle of all these emotions that we see from these two blokes, is that Jesus is there himself.

He's there with them, but he keeps himself hidden from them. Just look with me again in verse 15. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked with them.

Jesus himself came up and walked along with them, but verse 16, they were kept from recognizing him. Why does Jesus remain hidden? Why does he not just go, ta-da!

It's me, Jesus! There's something more important, isn't it, that he wants to teach them. Jesus is going to show them their faulty expectations that they have of him.

[15 : 55] But he's not going to show them by just telling them who he is. He's going to show them from the scriptures, from the word of God. He's going to show them by revealing God's plan for the whole of human history.

He's going to show them that the events over the last few days, concerning himself, and the plan for the whole of history, are intricately woven together.

Jesus is going to reveal who he is, and why he came through his word, through the scriptures. So we're going to look at that in our sort of second point, realistic truth from Jesus, real truth from Jesus.

Jesus. Now, I'm sure most of us here have bought flat pack furniture over the years. Now, this might sound a little weird, but I love putting flat packs together.

I know that sounds weird, but I actually get, you get a bit of a kick out of it, whether you get all those bits and pieces, you lay them all down, and you get the instructions, and you count all the pieces, and then putting it together bit by bit, and finally, I always feel like I've accomplished something.

[16 : 57] Maybe I was never that good at DT when I was younger, but I think it's great. I've always enjoyed it. When you get a new chest of drawers, or a new bed, and you actually get to using it, it don't collapse. You get a sense of achievement from doing it.

Now, imagine trying to put it all together without the instructions, or you get some screws missing. It has happened from something that I bought from Ikea, but that's not the point. Imagine when you try to do it, you need the instructions, you need all the bits and pieces, or otherwise, you've got no hope of putting it together, have you?

There's no chance. What we see is Jesus has the missing pieces, and he has all the instructions. He reinterprets their faulty expectations to give them a clear view of reality, to give them the real truth.

Just look with me. As he interrupts their chat, he's pretty, and when we look at it, when he interrupts their chat, he's actually pretty surprised that they don't understand. What does he say?

He sort of looks, it's almost like he thinks they're experiencing some sort of like spiritual amnesia. Look at him, verse 25. He said to them, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart, to believe all the prophets have spoken.

[18 : 07] Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. Jesus assembles, he sort of gives them and assembles the like gospel flat pack for them.

He shows them how all the pieces fit together. He shows them the plan. They've tried to assemble things their own way, but didn't add up, didn't work. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory, beginning with Moses and all the prophets?

When it says beginning with Moses and all the prophets, that's basically like a summary statement that means the whole of the Old Testament. Jesus explains to them how all of it points to him.

It's all about Jesus. Right from Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament, all the way to Malachi, every book is concerning him. But he doesn't just say it, he explains to them, teaches them the hows and why.

Probably pointing out bits they've never even thought of. The whole Bible, all the scriptures are about Jesus. It was necessary for him to suffer and die. Next time, when you're looking through your Bible, why not take some time to look some of the scriptures up?

[19:17] The Passover in Exodus, the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, and Psalm 22. They're just bits of the Bible you could start with. There are literally thousands of bits that you could look at that all point to it's all about Jesus.

It's amazing. Because this plan, God's plan from the beginning of human history that spans the whole of eternity, is concerning the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus in glory.

That is the plan, and it's always been the plan. Can you imagine being there? You have Jesus himself, the resurrected Lord Jesus, himself explaining about himself.

I mean, this surely has got to be the greatest teaching session that's ever happened. Jesus himself. You think that must have been incredible. Wouldn't we give our right arm to have that opportunity? And the whole irony of it is they don't even know it's him. They've got no idea. Now, granted, they know he was pretty special, and they're obviously quite impressed with his knowledge, because they go and invite him to stay, in verse 29.

[20:22] But, Jesus has even more planned. Verse 30, when he was at the table with them, he took bread and gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

Their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. Jesus reveals who he is, and notice, once they know it's him, he disappears. He doesn't carry on teaching.

You'd expect, once they sort of, he's revealed who he is, that he might teach them some more stuff. But he doesn't. He's disappeared. All his teaching was done, from the scriptures, on the road.

That is, the means, the way he teaches them about himself, is through his word, and through the scriptures. It's the main way, that Jesus chooses to reveal, who he is, and why he came.

In fact, this theme runs throughout, the whole chapter. If we look just to the previous story, in verses 6 and 7, when the angels speak to the women, it's, what do they say to him?

[21:28] He is not here, he has risen. Listen, remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee, the Son of Man must be delivered, over to the hands of sinners, be crucified, and on the third day, be raised again.

There, the angels say, remember what he told you, in the scriptures. And then, the story that comes after this one, just, just turn over the page, to verse 45 and 47.

This is when Jesus, is in the room, and what does he say? It says, there, he's talking to the disciples. Then he opened their minds, so that they could understand, what? The scriptures.

He told them, this is what is written. The Messiah will suffer, and rise from the dead, on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sin, will be preached in his name, to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

It's amazing. The whole point, is that Jesus is teaching them, from the scriptures. But as we read all that, as we read this account, we're even tempted towards, I'm sure we are, being a little bit jealous, of these two blokes, and think, well you know, it's easy for these two, in fact it's much easier, because they had Jesus in body, speaking to them directly.

[22:41] It's much easier for them, it's harder for us. What we really need, is some sort of equivalent, to help us understand the plan. We need some direct sign from God, something that would make it, crystal clear, about who's Jesus is, and what God's plan is.

Something that would, tell us God's plan for our life. But notice, these two blokes, they don't get a special sign, or a special way, because Jesus teaches them, from himself, from the scriptures, from the same Bible, that we have.

And actually, if we were to think like that, we've kind of got the wrong end, of the stick, because the reality is, we're not missing out at all, because Jesus is alive, and he's alive right now. The risen Lord Jesus Christ, is alive, and he's here with us, right now, at this very moment, in this room, by his spirit.

And what are we doing? We're opening up, the scriptures together. Jesus is teaching us, and he's here by his spirit. The living and reigning Lord Jesus, is with us now, teaching us, using the scriptures.

And what is he teaching us? It's the same thing, as he taught these two blokes, on the road. He's teaching us, that the Christ, the Messiah, Jesus himself, had to be crucified. He's teaching us, the same things, that everything, the plan of human history, is all about a person.

[24:07] It's all pointing to Jesus. He's the centerfold. The life, death, resurrection, and future coming, of Jesus, in glory. This is, what all the finished pieces, point to.

Do we realize, the enormity of that, as we sit here this evening? Or even, even when we open our Bibles, at home, or even with our kids? This is not a small thing, because the resurrected Lord Jesus, is teaching us.

He's speaking to us personally. What a comfort. What a joy. What an amazing thing to behold. Jesus is alive, and he does speak to us, through his word, through the scriptures.

Faulty expectations, lead to faulty hope. Now, I don't know how you finished, that sentence off, earlier, I had hoped. Whatever it is, you hoped and planned, what your life would look like, whatever your imaginary timeline, of your life, looked like, the reality is, we don't know, the ins and the outs, the little details, moment by moment, changes and surprises.

We don't know. Jesus didn't promise, that this life, would be straightforward. In fact, being united with him, the way of the cross, is our pattern. But this is one thing, that we can know, by looking at the scriptures, by having Jesus teach us, from his word, that we can reinterpret, those faulty expectations, of him, into real truth.

[25 : 37] Jesus is risen from the dead. He's alive, death's defeated, he has revealed it to us, speaking through his word. However your life looks, whatever disappointments we have, big ones, little ones, Jesus is risen from the dead.

He's risen from the dead. And you see the changed reaction, this has, on the disciples. Verse 33, they got up, and returned at once, to Jerusalem.

There they found the eleven, and those with them, assembled together, and saying, it is true, the Lord has risen, and has appeared to Simon. All the grief, the disappointment has gone, their faulty expectations transformed, Jesus is risen from the dead.

He indeed has come to redeem, to set free, and to save, but in a way, that they had never thought possible. He's reframed, the way that they thought, about how they pictured, their life was going to go.

Totally reframed it. This Jesus is the exact same Jesus, that is alive with us, and with us, through every situation, and faulty expectation, that we have.

[26 : 44] Life for them, is forever changed. If death itself no more, if Jesus is risen, if the whole of history, is centered around this man, we can reinterpret, our own faulty expectations.

We have a hope, a hope that's not based, upon wishful thinking, or shattered dreams, but a hope that's based, on a person, the person of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, at work, in us, and for us.

Let's pray. Father God, we praise you, and thank you, for your son.

We thank you, for his life, death, and resurrection. We thank you, that the whole plan, of history, is centered, on your son.

We thank you, that we can have, true hope, realistic hope, in you. We thank you, that you're alive, and that you reign, and that you're with us, and through, everything that we, go through, you're there.

[27 : 51] We thank you, that you teach us, in just the same way. We thank you, that your truth, is still the same, as when, as the same truth, that you taught, to these two, these two blokes, on the road to Emmaus, Lord, that you teach us, the same truth, it's the same gospel.

We thank you, that you've saved us, that you've brought us, to new life. We thank you, that you reign, and you rule. And we thank you, that that reign, and that rule, will go on forever. We pray, Lord, that we know, at times, we have hoped, in things, and we do.

We expect, our life, to go certain ways, and we long, to not suffer, we long, for things, to go certain ways, Lord. But we pray, and we thank you, that you're with us, right in the middle of it.

We pray, that you'd content, our hearts, with the knowledge, of a risen saviour, year. Have mercy upon us, we pray, this week, in Jesus' name. Amen.