



Luke 24:13-35

“Hearts On Fire”

(19th in a series on Luke’s Gospel)

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The 2nd Sunday of Easter

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“Following Christ from City Center”

LUKE 24:13-35
"HEARTS ON FIRE!"

(L), First Appearance In Luke, EMOTIONS In CAPS

1) vv.13-16 JOURNEY FROM JERUSALEM TO EMMAUS.

Appearance To 2// Mk. 16:12-13

13 That day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from **JERUSALEM**, Journey From (1)
 14 and talking with each other about all **THE THINGS THAT HAD HAPPENED**. Conversation (2)
 15 While they were talking and disputing together, Faith As Walk/Conversation, Figure Things Out
Hidden **JESUS HIMSELF DREW NEAR** and stood with them. Double Meaning! Jesus Appears (3)
 16 But their **EYES WERE KEPT** (i.e. by God) **FROM RECOGNIZING HIM**. Reversed (v.31), Must Be Unshielded
 Normal + Mysterious, Non-Recognition (4)

2) v.17 JESUS TAKES THE INITIATIVE: THEY STAND STILL, LOOK SAD.

17 And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with one another as you walk?"
 And they stood still and **LOOKED SAD**. 8:44, Pathos = Emotional Identification, Gloom/Grief
 vv.18-21 Deep Irony, Tells Jesus His Own Story!

3) vv.18-21 THEIR HUMAN PERSPECTIVE ON JESUS' FATE.

Dt. 34:10-12

18 Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem Jn. 19:25
 who does not know the things that have happened here in these days?" Irony, Reproach (1)
 19 And he said to them, "What things?" What Human Blindness Looks Like From God's View
 And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, 13:34, Acts 7:22, Think Jesus Lost His *Mojo!*
Listening who was a **prophet** mighty in word and deed before God and all the people, 4:18-19, 7:16, Prophet (2)
 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned to **death**, 9:22, 44, Death (3)
Despair and crucified him. But *we* had **HOPED** he was the one to redeem Israel. 24:7, 1:68, 2:38, Redeem
 21 Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened." Nothing Happened (4)
 All Over, Time To Go Home!

4) vv.22-23a EMPTY TOMB FOUND BY WOMEN (24:1-12 Retold).

22 Moreover, some **women** of our company **AMAZED US**. Both Disciples Are Men
 23 They went to the **tomb** early in the morning and did not find the body,

5) v.23b RESURRECTION PREACHING BY ANGELS, WOMEN.

and came back saying that they had seen a vision of angels, *who said he was alive.*
 Not Convinced! 24:4-6

4') v.24 EMPTY TOMB VERIFIED BY MEN.

Not Yet Kindle Faith

24 Some of those who were with us went to the **tomb**, Peter + Others
 and found it just as the **women** said; but him they did not see. 19:32, 22:13
 vv.18-24 = Summary Of Events

3') vv.25-27 JESUS' DIVINE PERSPECTIVE ON HIS FATE.

//24:6-7, 44-47

Word
 25 a And he said to them, "O foolish (obtuse) men, One Not Seen Now Speaks! Reproach (1'
 b and slow to believe **all that the prophets** have spoken. 13:33, Prophets (2')
 26 c Was it not necessary that the Christ should **suffer** these things 9:22 Suffer (3')
 c' and so enter into his glory?" (Answer: Yes) 1 Peter 1:11, Glory
 27 b' And beginning with Moses and **all the prophets**, 22:37, What Happened (4')
 a' he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Torah = *About Him*
 They Are In The Dark, Not Him! Not Overwhelm Them!

2') vv.28-29 THEY TAKE THE INITIATIVE: JESUS GOES IN AND STAYS.

28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. Care For Stranger, Hospitality
 He appeared (pretended) to be going further, but they constrained him, saying, Never Forces Himself
 29 "Stay with us, for it is evening and the day is far spent." So he went in and stayed with them. Stay!
 Monastic Prayer, "Stay with us, Lord, for the evening falls."

1') vv.30-35 JOYFUL JOURNEY BACK FROM EMMAUS TO JERUSALEM.

4 Ritual Actions

Table
 30 a And when he was at table with them, he took *bread* (1) and blessed (2), and *broke* (3), and gave it to them. He Hosts!
 31 And **THEIR EYES WERE OPENED** (i.e. by God), **AND THEY RECOGNIZED HIM**. Recognition (4')
 And **HE VANISHED OUT OF THEIR SIGHT**. Lit. *he became invisible to them*, Jesus Disappears (3')
 32 b They said, "Did not our hearts **BURN WITHIN US**. Acts 2:3, Hope Rekindled, Sign Of Love, Conversation (2')
 while he talked to us on the road, while he *opened to us* the Scriptures?" Acts 1:4, 10:41, Table Resumed
 33 c And they rose that same hour and returned to **JERUSALEM**; Good News! Journey To (1')
 and found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them who said, 24:9 Minus Judas
 34 "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon." 1 Cor. 15:4-5, Another Appearance, Joy!
 35 b' Then they told **WHAT HAD HAPPENED** on the road (way),
 a' and how he was known to them in "*the breaking of the bread.*"

A Brief Treatment Of Luke 24:13-35

The Emmaus incident is a masterpiece of Luke's art and theology which narrates two appearances of the risen Jesus: a long one to two disciples (vv.13-33), a short one to Peter (v.34). The surface structure is an elaborate 9:1 concentric structure with the angelic report of resurrection at the center (v.23b). The next outer layers (4. vv.22-23a //4' v.24) retell the discovery and verification of the empty tomb. This is framed by two paragraphs (3. vv.18-21 //3 vv.25-27') which recount the erroneous perspective of the two disciples contrasted with the Lord's reading of his own history. The issue of initiative, first Jesus in a question (2. v.17) and then the two disciples offering hospitality (2' vv.28-29) moves the story along. The story open and closes with several terms of inclusion- *Jerusalem, Jesus drew near/vanished, eyes closed/eyes opened, things that had happened/ what happened-* to mark the boundaries.

The metaphor of faith as a journey is found in the travel (v.13) and return of the two disciples (v.33), and the trips of the women (vv.22-23a) and men (v.24) to the tomb. A twin is the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40 which also ends with a mysterious disappearance and features baptism, just as the Emmaus story features the church's holy meal. Baptism marks the initial inclusion of outsiders; a meal with Jesus nurtures errant followers (Appendix: 16). Luke has a strong sacramental theology and a vivid sense of Jesus' continuing, creative presence with his followers.

Easter afternoon finds two disciples walking to Emmaus. It's all over, so why stay? A mysterious stranger then *drew near*. We know it's Jesus, but not the two whose eyes are divinely prevented from recognizing him. Jesus' resurrection body has new properties of appearance and disappearance. Yet, even when he draws near, sight is not just a matter of having eyes but of receiving divine revelation. Some things must be taught from Scripture before the veil is lifted. Jesus initiative and question about their intense conversation give pause and reveal grief (v.17). That the hidden Jesus listens to a review of his career (vv.18-21) shows divine patience and gives a glimpse into the political energy he created. "But we had hoped he was the one *to redeem Israel*." How do you reconcile the mighty words and deeds of the prophet with his tragic end, the question being, Why did Jesus lose his *mojo*? and, If God backed him early, why was he so completely abandoned? But, with resurrection, there is another reading.

At the center (vv.22-24) is contrary evidence (Appendix: 16). The empty tomb and absent body are doubly verified. The message of the angels is noted, but- as we know- was dismissed as unbelievable (i.e. dead men don't rise) and unreliable (i.e. reported by women). To be amazed (v.22) is not yet belief. That others accompanied Peter is revealed in v.24. The convincing evidence of appearances is not yet on the table, but first some Scriptural correction from Jesus who offers a new lens through which to read Scripture. It was divine necessity, i.e. the will of God, that Jesus suffer and be raised, and to that reality the whole Scripture witnesses. The resurrection of Jesus causes a radical reinterpretation of his life and death. We now read the Old Testament through him as both its author and fulfillment.

In the final two scenes (2' vv.28-29, 1' 30-35) issues are resolved. Cleopas and friend prevail upon Jesus to accept hospitality and stay the night. Here the guest surprisingly takes the role of host and in four actions repeats what he did at prior meals. It is then that God opens their eyes and the risen Jesus steps back out of their world. When the Scriptures are read with Jesus at the center, the heart often *burns*, even through the mind is not yet illumined through sight. Their rushed return to Jerusalem leads to a testimony meeting and reports of other appearances. Jesus, it appears (pardon the pun!) seems to be showing up everywhere! He is vindicated, the women trustworthy, a new world seen, and the work continues.

HEARTS ON FIRE

“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road....”

The inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

L U K E 2 4 : 3 2

Grief needs the leisure to walk and talk. It was common when I was a country preacher to look out the window and see a car parked beside the granite cemetery wall at Bethel Church in Fairfield County. Mostly widows, but from time to time a widower or couple, particularly just before Easter and on Mother’s and Father’s Day, often with flowers, sometimes a whole family. It was for them a pilgrimage, a place to tell stories and stand in front of a tombstone with a name and two dates, sometimes two names. They cared whether or not we kept the place up and sent money for perpetual care. The next day I might receive a phone call, “Preacher, tell your church the grass needs mowing. We don’t want momma’s plot overgrown!”

At least once a week I have a conversation with someone who’s not grieving well. They wonder why they’re depressed with an array of non-specific ailments. “I just don’t have any energy. It’s been a long time since I laughed. God seems far away. I’m drinking too much again.” It’s grief, and it needs attention. Grief can kill you, sap life from the soul and condemn you to endless hours in a recliner with the shades pulled. In our day of instant everything, grief is tempted to take a shortcut, to heal too quickly. It takes a slow walk through the valley of the shadow to get to the other side. It was a three hour, seven mile walk from big city Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus.¹ It’s all over now. Jesus is dead, and with him any dreams of a kingdom.

Leisure to Walk and Talk (vv.13-16)

Two disciples leave the gathering and walk out of Jerusalem towards Emmaus, trying

¹ For a discussion of options for the village’s location, see David Garland, *Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 949.

to make meaning out of the chaos and tragedy of the last three days. They were numb, bewildered. One chapter of life has abruptly closed; they now walk into an uncertain future without Jesus and the powerful spiritual and political hopes he stirred. Luke gives us a video clip in verse 13: “That day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all the things that had happened.” Grief needs leisure to walk and talk. They remained in Jerusalem on the Sabbath- the day after the cross- and on the afternoon of the first day of the week walk home. “Passover is past, Jesus dead, the dream over. How could we have been so wrong?” says one.

“But all the signs were there,” says the other, “especially the healing and miracles. Where did the power go? Why did he lose his *mojo* at the end? It doesn’t make sense. It’s been three days now. Time to go home and start over.”

“While they were walking and discussing together,” writes Luke, “Jesus himself drew near and stood with them.” The Risen One steps out of the invisible, back into space and time.² It’s not an issue of distance because that world is not far away; it overlaps and interlocks with this one in surprising ways. We live in the presence of two realms, one which we see, the other we cannot unless enabled. He strolled up- I presume from behind.³ We know who the stranger is; they do not. We observe his dealing with two disappointed disciples. Candid Camera!

Verse 16 tells us “they *were kept* from recognizing him.” It was Jesus, but his body is filled with new properties, one of which is a form of cloaking. To see him requires divine revelation, an opening of inward eyes by the Holy Spirit; apart from that he cannot be seen. Unbelief is a form of blindness, and remember, these two were among the men who early that morning dismissed the women’s report as *an idle tale*.⁴ The phrase *were kept from recognizing him* is passive voice which implies divine hiding. They were not to be overpowered by his glory; their grief would be respected and dealt with gently. So what we have is *a when*: the first day of the week, *a who*: two bewildered disciples, *a why*: it’s all over, *a where*: a long walk home, and a second *who*: a mysterious stranger. We watch the dealings of God from a box seat.

² For a wealth of insights, see N.T. Wright, *Surprised By Hope* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2008), Chapter 4, “The Strange Story of Easter,” 53-78.

³ James Maxey, “The Road to Emmaus: Changing Expectations, A Narrative Critical Study,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 32:2, April 2005, 114.

⁴ 24:11.

Peeling the Onion (vv.17-21)

The Hidden Jesus takes the initiative and asks, “What is this conversation you are holding with one another as you walk?” Kind of nosy, isn’t he?

It stopped them in their tracks, “And they stood still and looked sad.” It is hard to be present to the grieving. It takes patience to ask, then listen as the same story unfolds for the *umpteenth* time. But what care! That the risen Lord takes time to walk and listen to two grieving friend. Eugene Peterson- one of my favorite writers- reflects on the quality of listening Jesus offers:

“...listening requires unhurried leisure, even if it’s only for five minutes. Leisure is a quality of spirit, not a quality of time. Only [then] do persons know they are listened to with absolute seriousness, treated with dignity and importance.... The question I put to myself is not ‘How many people have you spoken to about Christ this week?’ But ‘How many people have you listened to in Christ this week?’”⁵

Jesus does not blast them with resurrection glory and reduce them to prostrate heaps of quivering flesh. Rather he hides, questions, asks to be invited into their world, stands in silence as profound sadness fills their faces. He honors their humanity. Jesus is not into quick-fix and easy answers. As the old spiritual puts it:

“There’s not a friend like the lowly Jesus- No not one! No not one!
None else could heal all our soul’s diseases- No not one! No not one!
Jesus knows all about our struggles, He will guide till the day is done;
There’s not a friend like the lowly Jesus- No not one! No not one!”⁶

Pain and grief often wear the mask of anger. Can you hear the annoyance in their voice, “Where have you been? Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened here in these days? Don’t you read the papers?” Sadness and anger are roommates, aren’t they?

Skillful counselors tell me wading through the hot lava of anger is often the price you pay to get below the surface. Anger is a test, a boundary, and if listening

⁵ *The Contemplative Pastor* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 31.

⁶ *Songs of Zion* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1981), No. 38.

stops here, so does healing. So the Hidden Jesus wades into the sarcasm with a repeat question, “What things?” Showing up along the way, taking initiative, asking open-ended questions, uncovering grief, wading through anger, not being run off: this is the cultivation of a wounded soul. It’s what love does.

Cleopas and his friend had the facts right but the meaning wrong. Listen as we move with them down the slopes from high hopes to deep disappointment:

“And they said to him, ‘Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and crucified him.’” *They are all right!*

“But we had hoped he was the one *to redeem Israel*. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened.” *All wrong!*

People always bring personal agendas to faith that must be sifted like wheat from chaff. They think it’s God’s job to fix their world and give them what they want on their time line. In this case it was the nationalistic hope that Jesus would deal with Rome and restore the glory that once belonged to God’s people, verse 20: “But we had hoped he was the one *to redeem Israel*. We thought we backed the right candidate. After all, if he can raise the dead, maybe he can raise an army of angels!”

There are other versions as well, “But we had hoped he would fulfill our *financial* dreams.” “But we had hoped he would fulfill our *romantic* dreams.” “But we had hoped he would fulfill our dreams *for our children*.” “But we had hoped he would *heal our diseases*.” “But we had hoped he would *heal our land and spread democracy and keep us number one in the world!*” “But we had hoped.... but we had hoped....” You fill in the blank. People lay all sorts of hopes and dreams on Jesus, as if it was his job to sign the checks they write, and when he doesn’t jump through hoops of their design they say stupid things like, “Well, the faith worked for others but not for me,” or, “I’ll show him; I’ll never go to church again.” Thirty years later nothing has changed, just older and bitter and blinder. Jesus is under no obligation to fulfill our fantasies on our terms. Sorry. His invitation is *Follow me!*

People get angry and hurt when God doesn’t fulfill their fantasies, as if getting what you hoped for was God’s payback for believing the right things about Jesus. Layer by layer Jesus peels them like onions. First grief, then anger, now a distorted,

agenda-driven political faith imbued with violence and hatred is exposed. This is how Jesus deals with his friends. He hides and exposes them.

We have to acknowledge that Jesus’ preaching of God’s kingdom tapped into a deep reservoir of love of country. But God’s work in Christ is bigger than political agendas and will not be held captive to any. For all this is good about our country, we are not “the last, best hope of mankind.” Such statements are blasphemy. The last, best hope of the world is God’s kingdom revealed in Jesus Christ who stands in judgment over all political and economic systems. And when this young country of ours has run its course and takes its place among others whose glory has come and gone in the course of history, the church will still be pointing to a kingdom that one day will arrive. So don’t wrap Jesus up in the flag of this or any nation; he will burst it apart just as his did the linens they bound him in late one Friday. It’s good to love country; patriotism which leads to patient, principled civic engagement is a virtue, but it cannot be number one, and the two are so easily confused and then manipulated. No political party is God’s party; the church is the party of God. Our purpose is not to save the nation; our purpose is to witness to Christ and to his new world which is present even now. We are salt and light, and remember salt stings and light exposes. I am an engaged citizen, but that is not where my hope lies.

On the road to Emmaus we see God’s work of destruction. An inadequate faith linked to a partisan agenda is being purged, and painful it is. There are times when God hides and lets disillusionment, disorientation, and despair do their cleansing work, clearing space for a more adequate faith. Some call it *the dark night of the soul* a season when God hides from our senses, doing a deep, inner work. They did not know it was Jesus, and that is precisely what allowed them to be probed so deeply.

The Core of a New Faith (vv.22-24)

When we tell a story or joke we save the punch line till the end. But not Luke. As an ancient writer, he puts the most important material, the hinge on which the story swings, at the center, then surrounds it with a series of frames.⁷ In verses 22 through 24 we have the core of the Emmaus story: empty tomb, messenger angels, and a risen Lord! There are two sets of witnesses to the empty tomb, first the women, then the

⁷ Called chiasm, inverted parallelism, or ring structure.

confirming testimony of the men.⁸ On either side of the center we have the empty tomb- found and confirmed. And at the center a message: *he is alive!*

The tomb was empty, but an empty tomb alone proves nothing. Intriguing, but inconclusive. But between these reports is a word of a different order, not of natural discovery but of divine revelation, something no one could have known on their own. "... some women of our company... came back saying that they had seen a vision of angels, *who said he was alive.*" Here is the explanation for the empty tomb. Jesus is alive again and forever beyond the reach of death. His body was transformed, it's not here any more! He's back with God and soon to make an appearance! If we read between the lines, Luke is sending a message about what resurrection means. Whatever happened to Jesus, it involved his flesh. It is not the mere resuscitation of a corpse back to this life as with Lazarus. The body of Jesus was taken and transformed into another mode of being beyond space and time, losing none of its embodied identity but all of its limits.⁹

Why is it important to be precise? Because there's so much misunderstanding, and secondly because Jesus is an image of our future. What happened to him is promised to us. In resurrection our sin-dulled senses will be fully awakened. The new body will experience the wild ecstasy of the glory of God for which we were made. Every legitimate pleasure you've experienced, from the most subtle to the most overwhelming, are only hints of what it means to live fully exposed to the Living and Triune God. We will not be less than we are now but more. We sometimes think of those in heaven and later in the kingdom as wispy, immaterial and vaguely unreal. But it is rather us who look that way to them. This flesh, bound for the death, will one day be permeated by the life of God. Eugene Peterson writes:

"You don't live in a mechanistic world ruled by necessity; you don't live in a random world ruled by chance; you live in a world ruled by the God of Exodus and Easter. He will do things in you that neither you nor your friends would have supposed possible."¹⁰

⁸ Numbers 35:30, Deuteronomy 17:6ff.

⁹ C.H. Talbert, *Luke* (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1982), 228-229.

¹⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids, MI William B. Eerdmans, 1992), 175.

Our faith is not so much common sense and conventional wisdom; it's a new world ruled by the new physics of resurrection. The one who walked with our two discouraged friends is still nearby. The living Jesus is not far away, and his every grace is an invitation to respond. God's grace changes lives and leaves a legacy.

Cleopas and his fellow traveler heard the early morning reports, but like Peter and the others dismissed them as so much hysterical female foolishness.¹¹ That's how it is when the real stuff comes your way; it's such a surprise there's no category in which to place it. Faith is not fitting God's stuff into my world so much as God drawing me into a new world. And by letting them rehearse a truth they rejected, Jesus prepares them for a turn-around.

The Bible and Hospitality (vv.25-29)

What a perfect time for Jesus to pull back the veil and reveal his glory. But he did not, and there's a reason. The roots of their faith would not hold if they were shallow as the roots of a china berry tree, just below the surface in the thin soil of experience. To hold, faith needs a deeper taproot, one sunk deeply into Scripture.

What God did in Jesus is not some last minute arrangement to cover the embarrassment of sin. It's where the whole thing's been heading since the start. And here there is a change of roles. The one who's been listening now becomes their teacher and visits back on them some of their earlier frustration:

“And he said to them, ‘O foolish men, and slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not *necessary* that the Christ should suffer these things and so enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Jesus did not lose his *mojo*. His suffering is not a sign he failed God. He was sent to suffer as a prophet and Son; it was the only way to expose the truth about just how rotten things are on planet earth. This is what we do when God's shows up in person: we torture him to death. This is what sin and evil look like. How is he to overcome our great enemy death unless he goes down into its awful darkness and from the realm of the dead to be glorified again? So his question is this, “Was it not

¹¹ Lk. 24:11.

necessary that the Messiah should suffer all these things and so enter his glory?” Yes, it was; it was a divine requirement. The rejection of God’s prophets in Scripture shows our resistance, and that resistance came to full strength against Jesus.

Later we will hear them ask, “Did not our hearts *burn within us* while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” This is a fascinating testimony. Their eyes are still veiled, their intellects clouded, but their hearts- the deepest part of the self- is already on fire as Jesus the Hidden One unfolds the true meaning of the law and prophets which are finally *all about him*. There are times when God kindles the emotions before he illumines the mind and clarifies the understanding. The Holy Spirit can begin with any of our human faculties and capacities: memory, intuition, intellect, will, emotion, imagination, but in the end they must all be claimed and purified so that our spiritual senses perceive rightly.¹²

Pay attention to the movements of your heart, especially during worship. Become sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit as you sing and pray and listen to Scripture read and preached. God often kindles a flame of desire or yearning in the heart before he illumines the minds and moves our wills to some decision. But note that it was Jesus’ interpretation of the Scriptures that was the occasion of their inward burning. The Book is about him; he is the key that unlocks its treasures.

I don’t preach each Sunday just so you can know I’ve done my homework during the week. The purpose of preaching is to set us up to hear the Word of God, the living word that cuts to the quick and lays us open to God. One day we won’t need the Book. It’s now a bridge over which to walk towards God, but when we are there the bridge has served its purpose. We will then see God face to face and be friends of the Book’s characters. But until then the Bible is our first authority in matters of faith and practice; the fact that Jesus taught them shows the value our Savior puts on the Book. So if you are embarrassed by your lack of knowledge of the Book, do something about it. Join a study group. Begin to read, else you will be a trivial Christian all your life, blown about by fads in the culture rather than rooted deeply in God’s truth. Cut off the TV. Open the Book. Ask for help. Gather the kindling and pray God send fire into your heart so that you can burn with love for Christ. There was no other way for us to be saved and brought home to God than by his taking on our flesh and then our sin through his voluntary suffering, as he said of

¹² On the healing of the senses to perceive divine revelation, see William J. Abraham, *Crossing the Threshold of Divine Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

himself, “Was it *not necessary* that the Christ should suffer these things and so enter into his glory?” Yes, it was a divine necessity; there was no other way. Like prophets before him, Jesus was rejected and suffered.

In a courtship one person takes the initiative, then waits for a response. You know the cues: a glance, a smile, a new way of holding hands, an invitation to a new level of intimacy. A dance of point and counterpoint develops. Jesus steps out of glory into time and up behind two friends trudging sadly home towards Emmaus. With one question and then another he weasels his way into their dialog. He then seizes the agenda and opens the Scriptures from the inside since he shares in the inspiration of their authorship. If ever he stops initiating towards them- what we call *grace*, there can be no response- what we call *faith*. But if they balk and refuse to follow his lead, the dance is ended from their side- what we call *unbelief*.

Our story comes to a critical juncture in verses 28 and 29. Emmaus is just ahead. He will not invite himself in. Despite his previous moves, there comes a point at which Jesus waits to be invited. Will they respond? His gestures lead them to think he is going further. But they constrain him, and by their insistence welcome him into their home: “So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained him, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is evening and the day is far spent.’ So he went in and stayed with them.”

There is no home so humble, no dwelling so plain and small, no fare too simple for the lowly Jesus who hides his glory that he may accommodate himself to our little worlds. And if you had eyes to see, you could look over Greenwood and see lights on in those homes that invited Jesus to be their guest. Into their home they invited the one who had walked with them incognito and set their hearts on fire.

Dr. Karl Barth, the last century’s most famous theologian, was on a streetcar in Basel where he lectured. A tourist sat down. "Are you new to the city?" he asked.

"Yes," said the tourist.

"Is there anything you would particularly like to see?" asked Barth.

"Yes," he said, "I'd love to meet the theologian Karl Barth. Do you know him?"

"Well as a matter of fact, I do. I give him a shave every morning." The tourist left delighted and said to himself, "I met Karl Barth's barber today."¹³ How easy to miss the one we’re looking for!

¹³ PreachingToday.com search under Lk. 24:13-35.

Banquet and Witness (vv.30-35)

According to Jewish custom it is the head-of-household who presides at the table. How odd it was when the mysterious guest took the role of host. Verse 30: “And when he was at table with them, he took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave it to them.” These are the four actions Jesus repeated at numerous meals: he took, blessed, broke, gave. But in that moment, something happened. The veil was lifted, and for the first time since he joined them on the road they saw him for who he was. “And their eyes were opened (by God), and they recognized him.” Just as swiftly as he was seen he was gone, his place at the table empty. “And he vanished out of their sight.” He came from the invisible world in a new resurrection body- able to walk and talk and break bread in his hands, and to it he returned.¹⁴

It was not an hallucination but a revelation, a glimpse it would take a lifetime to think through. He is risen! That’s why the tomb’s empty. He met them on the road of grief with divine listening. He inflamed their hearts with his teaching of Scripture.¹⁵ And now, after their invitation to stay the night, he shows himself at the table and is gone. Their grief has, through his careful ministrations, been transformed into joy and a sense of holy adventure. A whole new world opens before them.

Here in this text is a four-part outline of the deep structure of Christian worship: 1) Gathering with one another and the Lord, 2) Scripture read and interpreted, 3) The holy meal, and 4) Scattering to witness.¹⁶ They walked with one another: community. They poured out their hearts to Jesus: prayer. They listened to him teach Scripture: study. At the table where he is host their eyes are opened: Holy Communion. We cannot make Jesus reveal himself to us; he is free to work where and how he wills. He is not under our control. What we are to do is to wait on him in the places he has appointed for us, in the means of grace, the primary one of which

¹⁴ For literary parallels of appearing and disappearing deities in Greco-Roman literature, see Luke Johnson, *Luke* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 398; R. Alan Culpepper, *Luke: The New Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. IX* (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1995). 475-476. The other world, however conceived, is highly interactive with this one.

¹⁵ On meeting God in Scripture, see Chris Webb, *The Fire of the Word* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP, 2011).

¹⁶ See *The U.M. Hymnal*, 2-3 for this order.

is Sunday worship where the riches of divine revelation are on display.¹⁷

You may be interested to know that there are stories coming out of North Africa and other Moslem areas that the risen Jesus is making himself known to Muslims through supernatural means, primarily dreams and visions.¹⁸

One of my teachers, Dr. Peter Wagner, tells the story of a rich man in a Muslim country who brought his daughter to a Christian hospital. “The daughter had been paralyzed for four years. They put her in a private room with a cross on the wall. The man- a devout Muslim- demanded it be taken down. Reverently, they took the cross down; the Christian staff had been threatened for witnessing in a Muslim country.

“That evening, the Christian nurse, in her quiet way, told the girl Christ died on the cross for our sins and that he can forgive her sins and heal her. “She could not sleep that night because she had so many questions. *‘He can heal me? Who is he and where is he? What is this mystery of the cross? Why was my father so angry and so afraid of the cross?’* With tears streaming down her cheeks she longed to know more about *Isa* (that’s Arabic for Jesus).

“In the quiet of that night, she saw a figure in white. A halo of light around his head filled the room. Then she heard his voice, ‘Get up and put the cross back on the wall.’ With fear she said, ‘I cannot walk.’ Jesus then revealed himself to her and told her, ‘I am Jesus who died on the cross, and I am alive. Get up and walk.’ She got up and took the cross from under her bed and put it back on the wall. When she turned, the Lord was gone. She started shouting, “I saw Isa and he healed me! I can walk, I can walk!’ She called her father who rushed to the hospital and witnessed what had happened. All he could say was, “I want to know more about Jesus.”¹⁹

¹⁷ The third U.M. *General Rules* states, “It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, *Thirdly*: By attending upon all the ordinances of God; such are: The public worship of God. The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded. The Supper of the Lord. Family and private prayer. Searching the Scriptures. Fasting or abstinence...” (*BOD*, 2012, 77-78).

¹⁸ See Jennifer Riley, “Christians Urged To Pray For Muslims During Ramadan,” www.ChristianPost.com, Sept. 12, 2007; Christ Mitchell, “Visions of Jesus Stir Muslim Hearts,” CBN News, December 8, 2006; Jerry Trousdale, *Miraculous Moments: How Hundreds of Thousands of Muslims Are Falling in Love with Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 2012); “Two Imams Baptized,” Joel News, April 3, 2013, www.joelnews.org.

¹⁹ “Visions of the Risen Jesus,” *Good News*, January-February, 1996, 20-21.

Why should we be surprised if the one who appeared and then vanished in Emmaus does not show himself today- sometime through dreams, especially in those places that are under a thick cloud of spiritual darkness?

When the news is really good, you don't have to train people to share it. It overflows under its own energy. The hearts of our two friends had been set aflame, their minds illumined, their eyes opened, and now their tongues spread the fire. Fourteen miles in one day- back and forth to Jerusalem. But the trip back was shorter than the trip home because it was energized by divine life. They were drunk with the joy that their adventure with Jesus was not over but begun in a new way, verse 33:

“And they rose at that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them who said, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

They went to share their story, thinking they were the only ones, and found- upon arrival- that the risen Lord had been busy elsewhere. Peter also had an encounter. Jesus was popping in and out all over the place!

CONCLUSION

Luke may be the best storyteller in the New Testament. We now know something of the ways the Lord. The risen Jesus does not overpower our broken humanity but graciously initiates in our direction, always looking for a response. He hides and waits and probes. And when a response is forthcoming, it leads to deeper cycles of involvement with the grace that transforms us at the deepest levels of our being. And it can happen to you! Seek him, and he will find you. Wait upon him, and when he makes a move in your direction, respond! It's the only way to be a living disciple.

Sacramental Recognition/Disappearance Stories in Luke-Acts²⁰

Item	Luke 24:13-35 (Eucharist)	Acts 8:26-40 (Baptism)
Travel	On way to Jerusalem (v.13)	On way from Jerusalem (v.26)
Topic	Two disciples ponder the death of Christ (v.14)	Eunuch ponders suffering and death of God's servant (vv.27-28)
Outsider Appears	Risen Jesus (hidden) draws near (v.15)	Philip draws near by divine guidance (vv.29-30)
Question	Jesus asks, "What is this conversation which you are holding?" (V.27)	Philip asks, "Do you understand what you are reading?" (v.30)
Answer To Question	From disciples (vv.18-24)	From eunuch (v.31)
Christological Explanation of Scripture	Jesus explains Scripture from a Christological perspective, "Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scripture the things concerning himself" (vv.25-27)	Philip explains Isaiah as a prophecy of Jesus, "Beginning with this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (vv.32-34).
Apology/Defense	The Messiah's suffering leads to glory (v.26).	Suffering of Christ explained (vv.32-33)
Request	By disciples that Jesus say with them (vv.28-29)	By eunuch that Philip sit in the chariot (v.31)
Ritual Expression	Eucharist, which signals that the despairing disciples are reintegrated as genuine believers (vv.30-31)	Baptism, which signals that the eunuch is incorporated as a true believer in Jesus (vv.36-38)
Recognition	Eyes opened (v.31)	Understanding gained (vv.35-36)
Disappearance	Jesus sudden absence (v.35)	Philip's sudden disappearance (vv.39-40)

Luke 24:13-35 Concentric/ Chiastic Structure

1) vv.13-16 Journey From Jerusalem To Emmaus.

Appearance to two disciples (v.15a)
Jerusalem (v.13)
all the thing that had happened (v.14)
Jesus himself drew near (v.15b)
their eyes were kept from recognizing him (v.16)

1') vv.30-36 Journey From Emmaus To Jerusalem.

Appearance to Peter (v.34)
Jerusalem (v.33)
what happened on the road (35)
nd he vanished out of their sight (v.31b)
and their eyes were opened and... recognized him (v.31a)

2) v.17 Jesus Initiates: They Stand Still, Look Sad.

2') vv.28-29 They Initiate: Jesus Goes In, Stays

3) vv.18-21 Their Perspective On Jesus' Fate.

- a. Reproach (v.18)
- b. *Prophet* (v.19c)
- c. Death (v.20)
- d. Nothing happened (v.21)

3') vv.25-27 Jesus' Perspective On His Fate..

- a. Reproach (v.25a)
- b. *Prophets* (v.25b)
- c. Suffer (v.26b)
- d. What Happened (v.27)

4) vv.22-23a Empty Tomb Found By Women.

women (v.22)
tomb (v.23)

4') v.24 Empty Tomb Verified By Men.

tomb (v.24a)
women (v.24b)

5) v.23b Resurrection Preaching By Angels/ Women.

and came back saying they has seen a vision of angels who said he was alive.

²⁰ J. Neyrey, *The Resurrection Stories* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 42-44).