

Sermon Title: "He is Risen, Indeed!" Series: "Good News" A Series In Luke Dave Sattler April 3, 2016

Text: Luke 24:11-35, Stranger on the Road to Emmaus Sources: NIV Life App Bible; Commentaries by Bock, Green, & Wright; Study Guide by Lucado; Mark Noll's "Turning Points"; gotQuestions.org; accordingtothescriptures.org/prophecy.

Review & Introduction:

- Good morning, everyone. I'm Dave Sattler, wrapping up our Series through Luke, "Good News."
- **<Slide>** And today I have the **best news ever!**
- A man from Galilee, Jesus, born in Bethlehem of Judea in Israel 2000 years ago.
- Spent three years of His brief life performing miracles, discipling people, teaching the Scriptures in synagogues and gathering places throughout Palestine.
- Then, this same Jesus was falsely accused, in a plot cooked up by His own Jewish religious leaders.
- And handed over to Pontius Pilate, to be crucified on a Roman cross, at Passover in Jerusalem.
- Much to the chagrin of His followers. Their dreams crushed. Hopes dashed.
- But. On the third day. Jesus rose again!
- Atoning for sin. Conquering death. Redeeming humanity. And this, all according to the Scriptures.
- **<Slide>** ILL - A traditional Easter greeting in the Western Church is the exclamation:
 - Q: "He is risen." With the response, "He is risen, indeed!" I heard a lot of it last Sunday.
 - More than empty tradition, these words remind us of the good news we celebrate at Easter:
 - Jesus' death was not the end, nor was it 'in vain.' And we can share with each other this incredible truth, the bedrock of the Christian Story.
 - Dating back to the 5th Century, this greeting is ultimately based on Luke 24:34 (from our story), Q: "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."
 - And the powerful story we're studying today, rich in drama and irony, is the clincher.
- **<Slide>** Please turn to Luke 24:11-35 in our Bible or on your electronic device or p859 in the blue Bibles in the seat-rack in front of you.
- BQ: How have you felt when God didn't do what you'd hoped He would do?
- BQ: How have you dealt with it when the prayers you prayed haven't been answered? When God didn't do what you wanted? Or turn out to be who you thought he was? Or should be?
- Which leads us to the setting of today's passage.
- One that moves us from skepticism & disbelief ... to reality & action. Such a relatable story, I'm hoping it might help in your quest to face your spiritual doubts and dashed hopes today.
- <READ Luke 24:11-35> Prayer: "God, control me by Your Spirit. Move me out' the way."

Narrative Outline:

<Slide> Scene 1: Walking Away (24:11-14).

- Dismayed, bewildered, Peter is "left wondering to himself **what** had happened" (12).
- Two others, presumably from the 120 that continued to follow Jesus after the bandwagon had emptied post-Palm Sunday, are now walking away too ... on the road to Emmaus, away from the fellowship of believers, trying to make sense of events that **did not go as planned** in Jerusalem that weekend. One scholar suggests,
 - Q: This departure indicates a "fissure" in the group of disciples and the "beginnings of a **drift away** from high hopes and the community of discipleship." - Green, p844.
- **<Slide>** APP - Life's greatest disappointments do have a way, don't they, of pushing us away ...
- From God, from church, from family, from people in general. Sometimes it even feels like we've lost ourselves ... under the weight of broken dreams. And our greatest defence-mechanisms in crisis?
- Isolation. And, what I call, 'bolting.' When the going gets tough, and I'm hurt, 'I'm outta here!'
- And I have to say, hurt caused by Christian community is some of the most painful stuff around.
- To those of you who've felt burned by church or God Himself, I say, 'please don't walk away!'
- You're in church today ('good on ya'), but you've emotionally or spiritually checked out.
- Bitter, angry, jaded ... even when He's right there, it's hard to see Jesus sometimes, I know.

<Slide> Scene 2: A Stranger Joins Them (24:15-19a)

- While they're talking, an apparent stranger joins them, rather nonchalantly.
- Readers know it's Jesus, but the disciples are "kept from recognizing him" (16).

- This heightens the drama. Funny thing: post-resurrection, reports are that Jesus is nowhere to be found, but He's actually right there! Evidently the events had captured the attention of not just the disciples, but a great many. Another funny thing: everyone's talking about the events, but **only Jesus knows their true meaning**.
- When asked what they've been discussing, Cleopas responds incredulously, "Are you the only one" in the whole town who doesn't know?! 'Man, what rock have you been hiding under?!' (18)
- Now, is Jesus 'playing dumb' here?
- Or, is it a brilliant teaching-technique? Rather than just give them all the answers, ask the right questions so your students discover the truth for themselves. And this way, it sinks in way deeper.
- APP - And today, we're still asked to **make our own conclusions** about Jesus.
- God doesn't make it easy. While He loves to reveal Himself to us 'out of the blue,' and He can and He does, God still says to us today, like He said through the prophet, Jeremiah:
 - Q: "You will seek Me and find Me when **you seek me** with all your heart." - cf. Jeremiah 29:13

<Slide> Scene 3: Dashed Hopes (24:19b-24)

- Why don't the disciples recognize Jesus? Because He looks different in His post-resurrection body?
- Perhaps. But, maybe there's more to it? The clue comes in their 'confession' in v20-21: "They crucified him; but **we had hoped** that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."
- It's this ambition that likely blinded the disciples most to the reality of the resurrection.
- 2 reasons why they failed to identify the stranger on the road to Emmaus:
 - 1) Historically, this is not how the story was supposed to go.
 - Surely, this miracle-worker was the great hope of Israel. Wasn't He just the military/political leader they'd been waiting for?! The long-expected Messiah who'd 'ride in on a white horse,' knock Rome off its perch, and put the Jews back in power where they belonged? Or, at least more comfortable than they'd been for hundreds of years? Now, Jesus was dead. And their hopes had died with Him.
 - No way this could be part of God's redemption plan.
 - 2) Culturally, this story doesn't make sense either.
 - 1st Century crucifixion was more than execution. Making death an excruciating, public spectacle was part of a larger propaganda campaign that grew the power of their greatest enemy, Rome.
 - And, they'd watched it all happen. Helplessly.
 - And probably felt humiliated too -- for even trusting Him, for ever thinking Jesus could be their Messiah. Sure, that same day they'd heard the report of an empty tomb and dear old Peter's wonderings, but it all "seemed to them like nonsense" (24:11).
 - And in so many ways it was. For the reality of an actual resurrection, and that a cross was somehow part of the God's great plan, makes no sense at all.
- **<Slide>** APP - Here we see the unbelievable nature of the Christian Story.
- I have non-Christian friends and family members who think I'm 'nuts,' or stupid, or weak for believing such 'nonsense.' Truthfully, I find that hard some days.
- Trusting in God, putting my faith in Jesus, actually means stepping outside the values of our culture.
- It takes guts; I actually don't believe faith in Jesus is 100% explainable. If there's not a shade of doubt or some questions we can't fully figure out, then there's no need to 'jump out' in faith.
- Perhaps today you're struggling with things about your faith that don't make sense.
- Jesus understands your doubts and He still has time for you.

<Slide> Scene 4: Prophecies Fulfilled (24:25-27)

- Another irony, of course, is that Jesus actually did "redeem Israel" -- and indeed the whole world.
- But, in an entirely different way than anticipated.
- The cross was how God would accomplish this. However, none of His disciples got it.
- Maybe they misunderstood, rejected the notion, or had better ideas themselves.
- ILL - It's like hearing the boss, or my kids, or my wife tell me things or give me instructions.
 - And I'm smiling, nodding politely. But never really listening to her. All I hear is words, but I'm not listening! I've already decided what needs to happen. Because I know best! [Men, good thing our wives are away at the Women's Retreat or we'd be in trouble right now!]

- Jesus interjects and has 'a go' at the two of them, "How foolish you are!" (25)
- Then He explains to them "what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (27).
- ILL - Do you know there are hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament ...
 - That were fulfilled in the life, death, & resurrection of Jesus? 353, by some calculations.
 - And these were all written hundreds of years before Jesus was even born!
 - **<Slide>** Half of those prophecies are in the book of Isaiah.
 - And 35 occur in Isaiah 53 that talks of a 'Suffering Messiah.'
 - Consider cf. Isaiah 53:10-11: "Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After he has suffered he will see the fruit of his suffering and will be satisfied."
- More irony: the last thing the disciples expected was a crucifixion and resurrection.
- Yet, Jesus and the Scriptures they'd learned about their whole lives, had talked about it all along. [Makes you feel better about everything you've forgotten that you learned in Sunday School!]
- Hard to fathom, but the career the Bible outlines for the Messiah is: suffering, then glory. This is clearly God's plan for our deliverance, to restore relationship with humanity. And we mustn't miss it.

<Slide> Scene 5: A Meal Together (24:28-32)

- This passage culminates with a meal. And again, we witness a marvellous reality: God incarnate is not above the simple moments of day-to-day life on earth. Throughout Luke's pulsating drama, many of Jesus' most intimate moments occur around a table with all sorts of people: "sinners," prostitutes, tax collectors, the poor & marginalized, officials, and of course his precious disciples.
- This meal has a pastoral feel to it. After intense discussion, they unwind together over dinner.
- In a scene reminiscent of the Feeding of the 5000 or the Last Supper, it's when Jesus takes the bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and gives it to them, that they finally recognize Him.
- And, just when they realize it's Jesus. Poof! He's gone!

<Slide> Scene 6: Stories Corroborate! (24:33-35)

- This news can't wait. They head back to Jerusalem in the night to tell the others.
- A half day after the women first saw the empty tomb, supporting evidence is now piling up.
- It's starting to make sense. Stories corroborate. Maybe, it is true! He is risen, indeed!
- Think about how this meeting 'revived' dear old Simon Peter. After his infamous denial and the many other rash, bold statements he'd made and then went back on, when Peter came back from the tomb that morning it's doubtful any of his cohorts were trusting anything he had to say.
- But after this, his stature grew and the church was the beneficiary of his transformation.
- And, in Peter's story, there's hope for all of us 'schmucks' too who 'turn our backs' on Jesus one moment and come back to Him the next!

Conclusions: This story pictures for us a great deal of what being a Christ-follower is all about.

- Let's conclude with a few application points.

1. <Slide> Our Saviour is familiar with all suffering.

- To take on sin, and death, the 'bully' of the human race, Jesus had to suffer.
- He had to be crucified. And come out the other side.
- To make it possible for us too to come out the other side! Through suffering to new life!
- I find it comforting that Jesus is no 'plastic' Messiah. He knows how it feels ... to be homeless, rejected by family & friends, forsaken by His Father, betrayed, falsely accused, misunderstood, alone.
- Jesus came not to redeem Israel from suffering but through suffering. By taking it on Himself.
- Truth is: this side of heaven God does not promise to take our suffering away [I wish He would], but He does promise **to be with us** right in the midst of it.
- The passion of Christ gives us the greatest gift: hope for our own new life. In our suffering, with Jesus in the picture, there's always reason for hope. No matter the circumstance.

2. <Slide> There is power in the Word of God.

- Even though it's the bread-breaking that ultimately uncovers Jesus' identity for the disciples, it's first through His interpretation of Scripture that the truth is revealed to them.

- ILL - Recently, I received a call from a local church about to move asking if we wanted their Bibles.
 - On my visit, the church administrator presented me with 2 heavy rubber-mats.
 - She informed me they didn't need the Bibles anymore, they had sat dormant for a very long time, were infested with silver-fish, and should be kept outside in the cold to kill off the bugs.
 - Then she said, 'Our church is down to 25 people, how do you keep your church vibrant?'
 - Caught a little off-guard, I replied,
 - Q: "We just teach the Word, try and love people, and trust Jesus to show up!"
- It's easy to toss the Scriptures out all together, especially today in a world that values conventional wisdom and new ideas, and sees the Bible as archaic, outdated, or full of far-fetched stories.
- Honestly, I'm not sure I 'get' how the Bible works either. But I am certain,
 - Q: "All Scripture is **God-breathed** and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." - Cf. 2 Timothy 3:16
- Mysterious and amazing, God speaks powerfully through His Word.
- To me. To you. To His people gathered. That's why we preach it here every Sunday.
- And I've preached it every Wednesday of my career in Youth Ministry and Coffee Time.
- There's no substitute. God's in it. Reveals Himself and His plans through the Bible.
- ILL - I try and read a bit of it every day. God's Word is my foundation.
 - Not always, but every so often, God hits me with something that seems just for me: "fresh truth" jumps off the "old pages" to comfort, direct, or fire me up! - Wright, p297
- It's near impossible to know Jesus apart from His Word. You must be in it too!
- Pick a church that teaches the Scriptures. Join a small group that studies the Word. Get yourself a Bible or Bible App and read it regularly.

3. <Slide> The presence of Jesus makes all the difference.

- ILL - Many churches today operate as one or the other:
 - A 'Bible Church' or a 'Spirit Church,' a 'Word Church' or a 'Presence Church.'
 - Bible without Spirit can breed legalism with little anticipation of fresh experience of God.
 - Presence without Word can lead to a kind-of 'chaos' with little grounding in timeless truth.
 - This story reminds Christ-followers of our need for both God's Word & God's Presence.
- Testimony of the 2 disciples is summed up beautifully in V32: "Were not **our hearts burning within us** while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"
- Illumination: God touching our hearts, opening our eyes, showing up in our lives by His Spirit.
- ILL - This same language appears in the conversion story of John Wesley ...
 - Methodist preacher during England's great revival of the 18th century, effects of which are still being felt in Christian circles 275 years later in North America. Listen to his journal ...
 - **<Slide>** Q: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a meeting in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle of Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation; and assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." - From John Wesley's Journal, May 24, 1738, in Noll's Turning Points, p219-220.
- **<Slide>** Maybe you, like Wesley, at times have sensed God's presence ... in nature, when you've been praying, the odd occasion in church, in a song, or when you've read something in the Bible, or when you've confided in a Christian friend or family member. But you're still skeptical.
- My encouragement to you is this: Ask Jesus to reveal Himself. Honestly invite Jesus to keep showing up in your life. And, I'm convinced He will! The presence of Jesus is the 'game-changer!'
- Core to the Christian experience, it's that sudden realization that Jesus is **actually present with us** by His Spirit that grabs us and holds us close to God amidst all of life's suffering & brokenness.
- I know this to be true in my own life as I've faced my own crushed dreams and dashed hopes.
- This is the new world God ushered in with the appearance of His Son Jesus on the Emmaus Road.
- There's no clear way, no true life for any of us without the warm presence of Jesus. Amen.