

Let's Take a Walk
April 23, 2023
Pastor John Mars

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Good morning, Church! I want to read a passage of scripture today from Luke's Gospel, the 24th chapter, beginning with verse 13.

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 only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened here in these days?"

"What things?" Jesus 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; 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 to us 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 him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, how slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken! 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. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted 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 and stayed with them.

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, 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.

May God bless the reading of His Word.

This morning's sermon begins with a caution. It starts out bad but, Aaron, it gets "gooder." I find it hard to keep a positive attitude with all that we are exposed to and bombarded with on a daily basis. I see some heads nodding out there. I find it difficult; it's hard to achieve balance. We need to know what's going on in our world. We need to know. But there's more we need to know, too. It seems that bad news sells a lot better than good news. My personal opinion is there's a lot more good going on out there than

the bad. But we don't hear about that, so it's easy to get a skewed perspective. And to keep a positive perspective, we must be very intentional about it, because if we're not intentional about it, if we allow the world to dictate to us, it can get pretty dark pretty quick. Now I have a buddy of mine that says, "You know, that song is right. Just 'Take One Day at a Time' is good, and I have no trouble taking one day at a time. It's when three or four days attack all at once that I have a problem."

In this short story from the Gospel of Luke, these two disciples were probably about as low as you can go. Their world had been shattered. Their perspective was very dark. They had no reason for hope in their mind. And the report from the women about the tomb that morning had just confused things. Now, I want you to think about this: In Luke's account of this the women did not encounter Jesus. They just saw the empty tomb. Now if you are a pragmatic person, you're going, "Well, grave robbers have stolen the body, or the rulers have taken him to further degrade and disgrace him." So, let me set the stage. In Luke's gospel, the women get up and they go to the tomb. They find the stone is rolled away. They see an angel that says to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is alive, just as he told you. Now go tell his disciples." And so they go and tell the disciples. The disciples come back and find the tomb just as the women described it.

Our story begins that afternoon. Two disciples, not of the Twelve, but two disciples are on their way home. Emmaus is seven miles due west of Jerusalem. And as they're walking along, they're discussing what has happened over the last few days. And I can only imagine this is a very serious discussion. And as they walk along, Jesus joins them. He says, "Fellows, what are you guys talking about?" And they stop and they say, "Man, are you just getting to town? Are you just passing through? Do you not know what has taken place in Jerusalem over the last few days, about Jesus of Nazareth who was a prophet, who was powerful in word and in deed, and enjoyed the favor of God and all men? But our rulers handed him over, sentenced him to death, and he was crucified. And what is more, our women went to the tomb this morning and they found it empty. And we had hoped, we had hoped that he was the one, the Messiah, the one that was going to deliver Israel." Jesus said, "Guys, let me explain some things to you." And beginning with the Jewish Scriptures, he began to tell them all the things that were prophesied about himself in the Law and in the Prophets. And all afternoon he showed them the Scriptures, and he explained about what was happening, and what had happened to fulfill the Scriptures, but he never revealed himself. He said, "This is what I did." And, when they got to their destination, he acted as if he were going on, and he would have gone on. But they said, "Man, we got to continue this conversation. You got to tell us more about how to interpret Scripture, how to properly see things." Because, you see, this was a bewildering situation, but Jesus was making sense out of it. "You got to come in and stay with us for a while." And that evening as they ate, Jesus was invited to say the grace and break the bread. And he said the grace. And when he broke the bread, immediately they recognized him, and poof, he was gone. And they got up immediately and went seven miles back to Jerusalem to tell their buddies the good news that, indeed, Jesus is alive. And I don't know if you caught it or not, but one of the great untold stories of all Scripture is in this passage. They went back to say, "Jesus is alive!" And the Eleven said, "Yeah, we know, because he appeared to Simon." And that

is the only mention in Scripture of Jesus appearing to Simon. We have no idea when it happened or what took place.

I want you to see that Jesus had been with them all afternoon long. And finally, at the end of the day, they recognized him. He had been there all along and they couldn't see him. Would it make a difference in your life and your perspective on life if you could see Jesus at work in your life and in your world most of the time, instead of just occasionally? Would it make a difference? Would it make a difference in your perspective if everywhere you look, you saw the hand of God? Would it do something to your attitude? I've got good news. God is at work in your life. God is at work in our world. And if we have eyes that see and ears that hear, we can perceive it. We need to see Jesus in our lives. But notice, Jesus does not ever impose himself. He walks up to the guys, and he doesn't go, "Hey, it's me!" I see some real humor in this. Jesus goes, "What are you guys talking about?" And they go, "Are you new here?" He goes, "What things?" You see the humor in that? You've got to smile at that now. Jesus goes, "What things?"

Jesus doesn't get up in your face, but he's there working, constantly, even in the bad times. Jesus can make sense out of the nonsense. I didn't say Jesus can make the bad times good times. I did not say that. I said he can make sense out of even the bad times and the difficult times. He would have gone on when they got to their destination; he would not force himself on them. But they intentionally invited him in. If we want to see Jesus at work in our life, we must be very intentional about it on our part. Jesus' last statement to His disciples in the Gospel of Matthew is: "I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will be with you always, even until the very end." Seeing Jesus in our lives, in our world, will change our perspective on life. Those who expect to see Jesus will see him everywhere. John Wesley used to talk about prevenient grace; the grace of God that goes before; the grace of God that prepares the way; the grace of God that is at work in our lives, when we have no idea that God is at work in our lives. And very often, we will look back and see the hand of God. After these disciples, **after** these disciples (do you hear me?), after these disciples recognized who Christ was, then they said, "Oh man, weren't our hearts burning within us as he explained the Scriptures to us?" You see, he had been there all along. And what I want you to hear me say to you is: Christ is at work in your life. Right now, this day, you may not be able to see it, you may not be able to perceive it at this moment, but there will be a time when you will be able to look back and say, "Now I got it. Now I got it."

So, let me ask a question. Do you expect to see the hand of God at work in your life? Do you expect it? Or are you allowing the world to skew your perspective? That's easy to do, by the way. It really is, because we are bombarded with the bad news all day long. And Jesus is not into the big deal. Oh, every once in a while he'll show up and show out. But most of the time, most of the time, if you're not paying attention, you'll miss it. You see, in our passage, some people try to make this some type of a glorified communion. Folks, this was not communion. This was an ordinary house; this was an ordinary meal. And they were observing a Jewish custom. Jewish custom is, if you have a guest in your home, you offer them the opportunity to say the grace and break the bread and hand it out. That is a Jewish custom. It happened every single time there was

a dinner. They recognized him not in the extraordinary, but in the ordinary. And if we have eyes that see and ears that hear and we expect, we can see God at work in our lives constantly. And if you do, it will change your perspective. Would you like to have a more positive perspective? Would you like to have a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ? He wants it, too, and it's up to you. You must be very intentional about it. You see, what you put in your brain is what you're going to get out. And if you put garbage in, you're going to get garbage out. And if you fill your mind with all the negativity that the world offers you so freely, guess what you're going to get? But if you expect to see Jesus, if you expect to see God's hand at work in your life, you will, and it will change your perspective. Your perspective will change, and you will do exactly what these disciples did. What did they do? As soon as their perspective was changed, as soon as they recognized Christ, what did they do? Seven miles back to Jerusalem to tell their buddies! Once your perspective has changed, you can help change the perspective of those around you. Now, let me ask you a question. Does the perspective of our world need to change? Guess who's got the good news. We do. We do. We know that Jesus is alive. We know that Jesus is at work in the world. We know that good things are going on. And it's up to us to share. So, once your perspective has changed, once your perspective has changed, you can help change the perspective of those around you. Good news is infectious.

Let's pray together. So, before we pray, I want you to look at your own heart and your own mind. Are you guilty of allowing the world to rob you of good news? Are you guilty of allowing the world to give you a negative, pessimistic perspective. So, now's the time to say, "God, forgive me of that. Help me to see through Your eyes. Help me to see You at work in my life and in the world around me." Would you do that? Let's pray together.

Lord, way too often we allow the world to dictate to us. Way too often, Lord, we view the world through the world's eyes and not through Your eyes. Help us to see as You see. Help us to perceive Your hand at work. Help us to recognize You in the ordinary things that You are doing around us at all times. In Jesus' name, amen.