

The Resurrected Lord Gives us Hope

- I. A hope that was once misguided
- II. A hope that has now been restored

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ 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?"

¹⁹ "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. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ 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. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. ²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. ²⁹ 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.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Just for a minute, I want you to imagine that you have stage 4 cancer. Things do not look good. In fact, your only hope is a surgery that is so risky, that there is only one surgeon in the world who is willing to perform it. In a sense, that doctor is your only hope. You're putting your faith in him. And then on the morning of your surgery, you find out that while that doctor is on the way to the hospital, he was killed in a terrible car accident. And just like that, with that man's death, your hope dies as well.

My friends, in a sense, isn't that what happened to Jesus' disciples some 2000 years ago? They had put their hope in the one person they thought could save them. What did they say about Jesus in our text for today? "*We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.*" And then, just when things were looking so hopeful, Jesus died. And just like that, all the hopes and dreams of his disciples seemed to die with him. But of course, Jesus didn't stay dead. Instead, he came back to life. He appeared to his disciples and in so doing, he restored what they had once lost. He gave them hope. Hope not just for their lives, but hope for our lives, too. In fact, that's our theme for today:

The Resurrected Lord Gives Us Hope

- I. Hope that was once misguided
- II. Hope that has now been restored

Our account begins on Easter Sunday afternoon. Two of Jesus followers, one of whom was named Cleopas, were traveling the road that led from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a hike of about 7 miles. As they were walking, they were engaged in a deep discussion. The Greek word here describes it as almost a debate. They were going back and forth, trying to figure out what just happened over the course of the past few days. They're struggling to make sense of it all. And while they are deep in discussion, who walks up next to them? Jesus! But the gospel writer tells us that *they were kept from recognizing him*. Now, maybe that means that God messed with their eyes to prevent them from recognizing Jesus. Or maybe it means that Jesus took on an appearance that they didn't recognize. Personally, I lean toward the later explanation, primarily because of how the gospel writer Mark describes this same event. He writes in chapter 16, *Afterward Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. (Mark 16:12)* In either case, these two men didn't realize who it was who came up to them and asked them the seemingly simple question, namely, *"What are you discussing together as you walk along?"* Notice their response. *They stood still, their faces downcast.* This gives us a little insight into the emotional state of these men. They were hurting. They were discouraged. They were confused, not only by the events of the past few days, but also by the fact that this stranger seems oblivious to what is transpired. They say to him, *"Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there 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."* (Luke 24:19-20)

Now just for a minute, step back and think about what's going on here. I mean, if you're an angel in heaven listening in on this conversation, don't you have to cover your mouth to keep from laughing out loud? I mean here is the all-knowing Son of God, who has just experienced his own crucifixion, death and resurrection, and he's kind of playing dumb. "So what happened? Really. Jesus of Nazareth, you say? Hmm. That's odd." It's almost humorous. But of course, for those two men, there was no humor in this scene. They're at the opposite end of the spectrum. This whole series of events has left them feeling absolutely hopeless. Isn't that what they say? *"We had hoped that he (namely, Jesus of Nazareth) was the one who was going to redeem Israel."* "We had hoped." Actually, that's an imperfect tense. "We were hoping," or "We had been hoping." In other words, they once had hope, but now that Jesus was dead, in fact now that he had already been dead for 3 days, their hope was gone. In their minds, they had lost the reason for hope.

The question is, why had they lost their reason for hope? Exactly what were they hoping for? Well, we get a clue from their words, *"We had hoped that Jesus was the one who was going to redeem Israel.* What did they mean by "redeem Israel?" Were they thinking in spiritual terms? Were they thinking about how the Messiah would rescue sinners from the punishment of hell? Or were they thinking in national and political terms? Were they looking for a messiah to restore the nation of Israel to prominence, just like back in the days of King David? Were they looking for someone to free them from Roman rule? To make their lives on earth so much better? That's what a lot of the Jews were looking for. Think of the crowds on Palm Sunday saying about Jesus, *"Blessed is the king of Israel!"* (John 12:13). Think of the crowds who were so thrilled when Jesus fed them all a free lunch. Even Jesus own disciples, on the day that Jesus ascended into heaven, said what? *"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts. 1:6). You see, if that's what the disciples we're hoping for, if they were counting on Jesus to crush their political enemies and make their lives here on earth better again, it's no wonder that

when Jesus was crucified by those very same Romans, the hope of those Jews died right along with Jesus. You see, their problem was not that they had put their hope in Jesus. Their problem was that they had put their hope in Jesus to do something that Jesus never promised to do. You might say that their hope was misguided. They were hoping that Jesus had come to rescue them from the trials and tribulations that come with life on this side of the grave.

Tell me, can you relate? Are there times when we feel a little like those disciples-- disappointed, even downcast, because God didn't give us what we were hoping for? "I was hoping to get that new job. I was hoping to be able to retire early. I was praying that God would allow us to have a child, or a grandchild. I was counting on God to keep my loved one alive." While it's never wrong to look to God in our time of need, we have to be careful that we are not building all of our hopes on something that God never promised to do. If we build our hope on what we expect God to do for us, especially on this side of the grave, if we kind of set God's agenda for him, if our expectations are not in line with his will for our lives, we're going to end up feeling just like those two men on the road to Emmaus. We're going to end up feeling hopeless.

But thanks be to God that Jesus did not leave his followers, then or now, wallowing in that feeling of hopelessness. Instead, Jesus takes I. A hope that was once misguided...and he redirects it. He points his disciples both then and still today back to the promises that God has made in his word. And in so doing, II. The Resurrected Lord gives us a Hope that has now been restored.

Isn't that what Jesus did for these two men? After the men recount how Jesus had been crucified by his enemies and how some of the women had gone to the tomb but couldn't find his body and others had gone and found the same thing, and "we can't figure out what's going on and why is this happening," what does Jesus say to them? "*How foolish you are, and slow to believe all that 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. Think about what Jesus is doing here. On his very first day out of the tomb, he spent a whole afternoon conducting a Bible study with these two men. And why does he do that? First, to show that his suffering, death and resurrection were all part of God's plan. God had said that all these things were going to happen. What Old Testament Bible passages do you think Jesus took those men through? Maybe the words of Isaiah 53, *For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.* But also the promise contained in verse 11: *After he has suffered, he will see the light of life.* (Isaiah 53:8-9,11) Or maybe the words of Psalm 16, *You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.* (Psalm 16:10).

And why did Jesus point to Old testament passages like these? Because he wanted them to be able to say, "Wait a minute, we should have seen all this coming. Jesus' death should not have been a surprise to us. This was all part of God's plan. Therefore his death can't rob us of our hope. In fact, on the basis of what God has promised in his word, we can expect the Jesus will surely rise again. This is going to turn out just the way God wanted it to happen." In other words, by pointing these disciples to the Scriptures, Jesus was resetting their expectations. And in so doing, he was restoring their hope.

But Jesus was doing more than that. By pointing them back to the Scriptures what else was he doing? Think about it. Jesus could have just showed up and said, "Hey, it's me. I'm

alive!” And they would have been thrilled to see Jesus. They would have been thrilled to know that death had not gotten the best of him. But Jesus did not do that. Instead, long before he opened their eyes to see him in the flesh, he opened their eyes to see him in the Scriptures. Why did he do that? Well, he did it for you and me. Remember what Jesus once said to doubting Thomas? *“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29)*. Jesus knew the day would come when he would not be visibly standing in front of us. So, what will we put our faith in? What will be the basis of our hope, if we can’t see Jesus with our own eyes? The answer is right here. Our hope is found in the same place that Jesus told his disciples to look. Here in the Scriptures. Here in the promises that God has made to us. What does Scripture say? *These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:31)*

Isn't that the truth? This is the tool that God uses to open our eyes to see the truth about who Jesus is and what he's done for us. Here is where we have the corroborated eyewitness accounts of people who saw Jesus alive after his resurrection. But notice that even after Jesus breaks bread with these men and they realize his true identity, their first reaction is not, “Hey, we saw Jesus with our own eyes!” But rather, *“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” He opened the scriptures to us.*

My friends, you realize that Jesus is still doing that very same thing to this day. Haven't there been times during a sermon or a Bible class or when you're reading in your Bible, that you said to yourself, “Wow, I never saw that before. I never thought about it that way”? God opened your eyes to see something you hadn't seen before. And in so doing, God deepened your appreciation for his love for you, or clarified your vision regarding his will for your life. Or he simply renewed your hope in what God has in store for you in the future. This is what our resurrected Lord has done for us. He's restored our hope. Because Jesus lives and has fulfilled all the promises made about him in the Old Testament, including the promise that he would be raised from the dead on the third day, because he kept that most outlandish promise of all, you and I can be sure that he will keep all the rest of his promises as well. And as we look to his word, we will discover more and more of God's promises. Not necessarily things that we want, but the things that are even better. Things like the assurance that our sins are forgiven. The promise of a life that will never end, the confidence that God will use even the hard times to serve our eternal good. These are the promises that we can know and cling to—all because Jesus Lives...to Restore Our Hope! In his name. Amen.