

Third Sunday of Easter – May 4, 2014
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Luke 24:13-35 (NIV)

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles 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.

Dear Friends in Christ:

Have you ever heard the fairy tale of the Four Skillful Sons? It was written by the Brothers Grimm. A poor farmer had four sons and he sent them out to find a skill. The first son was encountered by a thief who promised to teach him his trade. The son objected – I wouldn't want to do that because I might get caught and end up hanging on the gallows. But the thief convinced him that he could teach him to be so skillful that he would not get caught and so the first son became a thief. The second brother encountered a man who taught him to be a master astronomer and gave him a telescope so powerful that nothing in heaven or earth could be concealed from him. The third brother learned to be an expert hunter and was given a gun that was guaranteed to hit its target every time. The last brother became a tailor and was given a needle that could sew anything together without even a seam showing.

Once all of the brothers return home, the father tests their skills by asking how many eggs there are inside a nest high up in a tree. The astronomer uses his telescope to count the eggs, the thief steals them away from the roosting bird, the hunter divided them in half with his shot and the tailor sews them back up so well that the mother bird never notices they were harmed. After a dragon kidnaps the King's daughter, the four brothers set out to rescue her, hoping to win her hand in marriage. The astronomer tracks the dragon down using his telescope, the thief steals the princess away, the hunter kills the dragon and the tailor fixes the boat's sails after the dragon destroys them. But alas they could not agree on who should marry the princess so the king gave each of them ½ of a kingdom and they all lived happily ever-after.

That's how most fairy tales end – they all live happily ever-after. When we tell fairy tales to our children we make sure to help them understand that they are not real. When we teach Bible lessons to our children we stress the opposite – these lessons are real.

The events of our Gospel lesson really did happen. They are not pretend; they are not a fairy tale. They are true. When we first encounter Cleopas and his friend in our text they were not enjoying a happy life. They had lost hope, they were lacking in understanding and they were in need of comfort. But the risen Jesus came to them to give them hope, understanding and comfort. And now

Theme: We will live happily ever-after

1. Because Jesus gives us hope
2. Because Jesus gives us understanding
3. Because Jesus gives us comfort

Cleopas and his friend had been in Jerusalem to observe the Passover. They were close friends with Jesus and his disciples. The events of the weekend weighed heavy on their hearts and minds as they headed back to their home in the village of Emmaus. As they were walking and talking together Jesus approached them and expressed his interest in joining them on the way and in their conversation. **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.**

They didn't have the strength to go on. They could hardly bear the thought of having to explain everything they were feeling to this stranger. Their downcast faces gave evidence of the hopelessness and despair which they carried in their hearts. We know the feeling. We've felt the frustration of trying to make sense of things that just seem to be unexplainable. Think for example of the Malaysian airliner that mysteriously disappeared about 6 weeks ago. People talk it over with our friends. They share ideas with each other. But in frustration we end up throwing our hands up in despair – saying, "I just can't figure it out. It makes no sense. It seems like a hopeless situation especially for those who had loved ones on that plane.

That's the situation which these two men were dealing with. They had mysteriously lost a loved one – one whom they had hoped would be a blessing not only to them but to their nation. Listen as they tell their heartbreaking story to Jesus. **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."**

What happened to Jesus? That's the question that was on their minds. He was a powerful prophet. He taught with authority and he backed up his words with his actions; healing, loving and caring for all. And what happened? He was arrested by the religious leaders of the Jesus and sentenced to death. They handed him over to the Roman authorities who found no reason to crucify him but did so anyhow to please the people. It made no sense. What happened to Jesus? Why didn't he take a stand? He was the one they believed would be the Redeemer of Israel – the one who would set them and their people free from their sins and oppression. But what happened to Jesus? He had died and with him their hopes had died.

But there's more – not only had Jesus died but even his body was missing. What happened to Jesus? What about our hopes? How can we make sense of it all? Jesus had come to help them make sense of it all. He had come to restore their hopes. He was not dead. He was alive. And this living Jesus comes to us to fill us with hope – assuring us that our sins are forgiven, assuring us of the Father's love and acceptance, assuring us that all things will work for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose. Because he lives we live and because he lives we have hope not just for this life time but for eternity. We will live happily ever-after because Jesus gives us hope.

A lack of understanding had robbed Cleopas and his friend of hope. When Jesus came to them he listened carefully to them and then he comforted them with the Scriptures – opening their minds to understand that the one they hoped would be Israel's Redeemer – the Christ had to suffer all these things and then enter his glory.

Jesus has given us that same opportunity. He invites those who are troubled and weary to come to him, to learn of him and promises to give them rest – to take away the troubles that cause them to become weary and downcast. **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."** (Matthew 11:28-29 NIV)

Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. These disciples should have known better. They had read the Scriptures but they had failed to take them to heart and to believe. Jesus pointed them once again to the faith strengthening words of Scripture to fill them with hope and to give them understanding. Luke didn't record Jesus' conversation with these men rather we have been left to search the Scriptures for ourselves with the assurance that when we do the Lord will provide us with understanding so that we can live happily ever-after.

The Emmaus disciples were confused because they didn't understand God and his plans for them. Much of our hopelessness and confusion stems from a similar foolishness and slowness of heart. If Jesus were here in person with us today – what would he say to us? Would he remind us of who God is? Would he point us to Isaiah 43:11 where God tells us, **"I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior."** (NIV)

Would he remind us that all power has been given to him? **"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."** (Revelation 4:11 NIV)

Would he remind of the plans God has for us? **For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.** (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV)

Would he remind us of the great love of God who sacrificed his Son for us? **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? 33) Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. 34) Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. 35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... 37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38) For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39) neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.** (Romans 8:32-39 NIV)

Or perhaps he'd hold us close and softly whisper the words of the 23rd Psalm to remind you that he is your shepherd and you are his lamb. **The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. 2) He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3) he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. 4) Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6) Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.** (Psalm 23 NIV)

Surely Scriptures like this help to remove our dullness, to give us hope to give us understanding and to assure us that we will live happily ever-after in his care. And where there is hope and understanding there will also be comfort.

How quickly the journey must have passed by as Jesus explained the Scriptures to the men from Emmaus. It's almost sunset and they have arrived at their destination. **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.**

When the time was right Jesus revealed himself to them but only after they had been enlightened by the Scriptures. They said to one another, **"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"** Jesus had comforted them with the Scriptures by removing their doubts and uncertainties and by restoring their hope. He had restored their joy. Immediately they went back to Jerusalem to share the Lord's comfort with their friends – the comfort that comes from the living Jesus.

Still today, the living Jesus comforts us with his words of love, forgiveness and peace. Still today his powerful word fills us with hope and understanding. Because of sin life will be filled with dashed hopes, confusion, and discomforts which seek to rob us of the joy and happiness which is ours in Christ. But at times like that we are not alone – our Savior lives.

He lives to silence all my fears; he lives to wipe away my tears, He lives to calm my troubled heart; He lives all blessings to impart.

He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives and I shall conquer death. He lives my mansion to prepare; He lives to bring me safely there.

He lives, all glory to his name! He lives, my Jesus, still the same. Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives: I know that my Redeemer lives. (CW 152:5, 7 & 8)

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Dear friends that's no fairy tale – that's the truth of God's Word. Amen.