

On Their Way to Emmaus
Luke 24:13-35
April 26, 2020

When was the last time you had an expected experience not fulfilled? Maybe you set a goal for yourself and something else happened so you could not follow through. Maybe you expected a promotion and but someone else got it. Sometimes things don't turn out to be the way you expected. It happens all the time. Disappointment is a common experience that we all have.

You may be disappointed in yourself, in your child, in your spouse, in your career, in your relationships. In any case, disappointment is the experience of sadness when our hopes or expectations are not satisfied. Disappointment, if it is severe, it can lead to discouragement and despondency.

If you think about it, the Easter story is something totally opposite of what you could and would expect. Your expectation was totally abolished. Your presumption that the dead would remain dead was not only challenged but destroyed. But this unfulfilled expectation brought joy not sadness. It changed the disappointment into an exhilarating joy. The Easter story is a story of incredible surprise! It is the story of joyous astonishment!

This was true for a couple of disciples who were on their way to Emmaus on the Easter afternoon. They were religious folk, just like us. A few days ago, they went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and also to be near Jesus. They were followers of Jesus. They believed that Jesus would deliver Israel from foreign oppression. They believed him to be the Messiah.

But after witnessing the horrific event of Jesus' crucifixion, they were devastated. They were dejected, discouraged, and depressed.

The distance between Jerusalem and Emmaus is about 8 miles. It is a long walk. But what they were feeling made their journey even longer and heavier. As they walked, they talked about what just happened in the last few days. Jesus' parade, his teaching, his miracles, his trial, and his crucifixion.

They were wondering what made the religious leaders so upset that they would deliver him to be crucified. Maybe it was because Jesus called them "hypocrites." Maybe it was because he overturned the money changers' tables and criticized the priest that they had turned the temple into a den of thieves.

Then they had heard some crazy things from some of the women who went to Jesus' tomb that morning. They said Jesus' body was not there. But what they claimed was that they had seen angels who told them that Jesus was alive.

As these disciples were talking about the women, they shook their heads in disbelief and in great concern. They empathized with the women who could not accept the reality of Jesus' death. They felt pain for them because they believed those women were losing their minds.

They also pitied themselves because they realized their hopes and dreams were shattered but this story does not end there. This story is about the resurrected Christ coming to them in the midst of their sadness and despair. He walks with them, talks with them, explains God's truth to them, reveals himself to them, and takes their sadness away.

This story tells us a few things.

First of all, the Lord comes to us in the days of our trouble.

The Lord is always with us in every circumstance of life. I have noticed that when we are in pain, we often notice his presence much more keenly. Cleopas and his friends were hurting that day as they walked down the dusty road to Emmaus. And in their distress, they met the Lord.

Have you ever felt Christ's presence in a very tangible way when you were in great pain and distress?

I have met many people who told me just that that they experienced the Lord's presence in the most profound way. I heard many people say, "This was the hardest thing I have ever experienced, but the strange thing is that in the midst of my pain I have felt God's presence and his comfort."

We seem to experience God's presence much more keenly, because we are more open to the Lord and we are seeking for his help. The Lord who loves us wants us to know that he cares for us and heightens our sensitivity to experience his presence.

The second thing we notice is the way in which Lord heals the wounds of his followers.

Cleopas and his friend were carrying disillusioned spirits but Christ heals them. This is how he does it.

Jesus walks with them... Walking with them symbolizes the importance of the daily walk with Christ. We need walk with the Lord each and every day.

Then he talks with them... Talking with the Lord. It emphasizes the importance of the power of prayer.

Then he opens the scripture to them... Reading, studying and meditating the Scripture is the way to find hope and healing for our souls.

Then he reveals himself to them in the breaking of bread... If the breaking of bread signifies the Holy Communion, then he is revealing himself to them and reminding them of his covenant with them that he would be their Lord and they would be his people.

Then he sends them back to the church, to other disciples, to share their experience and their encounter.

What this tells us is that through prayer, Bible study, the sacraments, staying close to the church and the daily walk with Jesus Christ, the Lord heals our broken spirit. Through the Holy Habits, Christ can bring healing and renewal in the days of trouble.

The third thing we notice in the story is that the ones who met the Risen Christ also experience their own resurrection, too. They, too, rise to a new life.

Carol Johnson was the organist at her church in one of the mid-western states. She was an excellent musician. Everyone loved her. But one Easter morning, she over-slept and missed the Sunrise Service!

She was so embarrassed. Of course, the minister and the church forgave her but in a loving way, they teased her little bit.

On the following Easter, her phone rang loudly at 5:00 in the morning. That shocked Carol and woke her up. It was the minister... and he said:

“Carol, it is Easter Sunday Morning! The Lord is Risen! I suggest you do the same!”

Don't you think there is a sermon in that story? "The Lord is Risen... I suggest you do the same."¹

The message is clear... We, too, can experience resurrection! Not just in the future but even now! Christ is risen and so can we.

We, too, can have a new life through Him. We, too, can have a new start through Him. By the power of God's Amazing Grace, we, too, can be brought out of those tombs that imprison us!

Those who met the Risen Christ all experienced a new beginning, a new life, a resurrected hope. Every Sunday is Easter. Every Sunday we celebrate the Risen Christ! So my friends, the Lord is Risen...I suggest you do the same.

¹ From James W. Moore's Sermon, *On the Emmaus Road*, www.esermons.com.