

Words Were Spoken...Bread Was Broken...Eyes Were Opened

Luke 24:13-35

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The Road to Emmaus tells the tale of two heartbroken and deeply disappointed disciples of Jesus who are walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They are walking on the third day after Jesus had died. This is a story about walking and a story about talking. First the two travelers are walking and talking with each other. Then Jesus joins them. Remember, this is the third day after Jesus had died on the cross. We obviously know something those two disciples do not know. Jesus has already risen from the dead. But those two disciples do not know that. Adding to the intrigue of this encounter, they are “kept from recognizing Jesus.” So as this story unfolds, let us remember to be gentle with these two disciples. We know things they do not know.

One of the things they do not know is how much Jesus does know. When Jesus asks the two disciples what they were talking about as they were walking about, they ask Jesus, “Do you not know the things that have happened in Jerusalem?” They are talking about the death of Jesus. We know who they are talking to, but they do not know. And because they do not know they are talking to Jesus they are baffled at what this stranger does not know? “Don’t you know what happened?”

So they take time to explain to the stranger all the things that have happened. As they walk, they talk. As they talk, they tell Jesus all the things they had hoped about Jesus.

- “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed, before God and all the people.” Maybe as they walked, they talked about his miracles and his ministry and all the marvelous things he did, this prophet who was powerful in word and deed.
- “But the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.” Oh, there is the bitter pill. All their hopes had come crashing down when Jesus was betrayed, tried, convicted, and crucified.
- “We had hoped he was the one.” Hope is now a past tense word for these two disciples. If you have ever had your hope crushed, and if hope has ever become a past tense word for you, then you don’t need to know anything more about how these two disciples feel utterly hopeless on this third day after Jesus was crucified. Hope is past tense. Enough said.

- And yet, there is more. As they walk and talk, they tell Jesus some strange things are percolating. Women who visited the tomb of Jesus have returned with an amazing report that they did not find the body of Jesus at the tomb. What they did find at the tomb were some angels saying Jesus was alive. Some other disciples made their own trek to the tomb and found the same thing. They couldn't find the body of Jesus at the tomb.

There you have it. Mr. Stranger who doesn't know a thing about what happened in Jerusalem, that is what happened in Jerusalem. Now you know. Friends, please tell me you understand the rich irony in this encounter on the Road to Emmaus. Those two disciples really do know what happened in Jerusalem. They have all the facts. And yet despite having all the facts, they do not know what *really* happened in Jerusalem. Their eyes are blind to the great miracle that is literally walking right beside them. Those two disciples talk the talk, but they are the ones who do not know.

At this point, the stranger interrupts and says, "My turn." My turn to talk. Let's continue to walk, and now you listen while I talk. It occurs to me that the disciples knew everything that had happened. They conveyed the information accurately. They talked the talk. But it was all disjointed. It was like a hundred pieces of a puzzle scattered about. They knew the information, but they could not see how it all fit together so that instead of defeat and despair, they were holding the pieces to a puzzle that portrayed the greatest victory and the deepest joy. The pieces of the puzzle all fit together perfectly. It's almost like Jesus says, "You two just haven't put the pieces together yet. You don't see the whole picture...yet."

The stranger interrupts and says, "My turn." Are you telling me this Jesus was a prophet powerful in word and deed? Jesus raised his hand up high, to show how powerful Jesus was. And are you telling me some bottom dwellers, some religious opponents handed him over to be sentenced, and that he died? Jesus lowered his hand way down, to signify the death. And are you telling me you hoped he was the one to redeem Israel? Stretching his hand far to one side to signify the beginning of God's promises of redemption, promises going all the way back to Moses, and slowly moving his hand from one side to another to signify all the prophets who spoke through all the pain about God's promise to redeem his people, the hand sweeps from side to side. Those two disheartened disciples must have been mesmerized as the hand of the stranger moved from top to bottom and from side to side, and boy, it sure looked like he was making the shape of a cross. But still they did not recognize him.

The stranger continues, “And are you telling me when some women went to the tomb it was empty?” Having formed the shape of a cross, Jesus now reaches right into the center of that cross like it was a tomb sealed tight and shut down with a huge stone, and he rips that tomb open. “And are you telling me the tomb was empty and the angels said Jesus is alive?” Putting all the pieces together like that, who wouldn’t be able to understand the great miracle of the resurrection? Unfortunately, these two disciples have all the pieces of the puzzle, including the risen Christ himself, but they were kept from recognizing him. Jesus puts all the pieces of the puzzle together, realizes they still don’t get it, and so he says, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken? Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter glory?”

At this point in the narrative, at this point as they all walked and talked, as Jesus took his turn and talked the talk, we come to one of the most intriguing and inviting scriptures in all of the bible. Luke tells us in chapter 24 and verse 27, “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” What is intriguing is that is all Luke tells us of what Jesus said. Moses to the prophets, that is a whole history of God’s redeeming work with Israel. And all Luke tells us is that Jesus explained to them what all those Scripture said about Jesus. What did those Scriptures say? We want to know. We are all ears. Tell us Jesus? Let us know these wonderful things that are told of you in the Scriptures.

Talk about intriguing. Oh yes, this one single verse is so very intriguing, but it is also inviting. This one single verse invites us to dig deep into the Scriptures, from Moses, and even from before Moses for when the Scriptures talk about the Law and the Prophets they are referring to the whole scope of God’s redemptive promises that are spelled out in the pages of the Old Testament. Dig deep and explore and search and meditate and listen and learn and present yourself as clay ready to be formed and as an empty heart ready to be filled, as a seeker ready to be found, indeed, a sinner longing to be saved. This story of walking and talking with the risen Jesus is about a whole lot more than two disciples on the way to Emmaus. This story is about you and me and about the risen Lord who walks with us and talks with us and who through his gracious acts of revelation shows us how all God’s promises have found their great Amen in the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.

- On that dark night when the people of God spread the blood of a lamb on the doorframes of their houses so that God would Pass Over them and spare them from his wrath...Jesus was there. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

- When the High Priest slaughtered one goat and used that blood to show God's precious gift of atonement and then laid his hands on the head of another goat and sent it out into the wilderness, carrying the sins of the people far, far away...Jesus was there. The death of Jesus was an atoning sacrifice, covering our sins, removing our sins as far from us as the east is from the west, and bringing us near to God with the precious promise that through Jesus we are AT ONE with God.
- When the psalmist cried out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me", Jesus was there. When the psalmist prayed from the pit Jesus was there. When the psalmist proclaimed that the stone the builders rejected would become the cornerstone, Jesus was there.
- When the prophet declared that though our sins were like scarlet, God would make them as white as snow, Jesus was there. When the prophet said our names were written on the hands of God in a sure sign that he would never forget us nor forsake us, Jesus was there, writing our names on his hands, his hands that would be pierced by the nails. And when the prophet told us of a suffering servant who would take up our infirmities and carry our sorrows, and that by his wounds we would be healed, Jesus was there.

On the third day after he was crucified, Jesus walked and talked with two disciples. Jesus talked the talk and he told them all the mysteries and the miracles and the marvel and the wonder about how his suffering fulfilled every single one of God's promises of love and redemption. Jesus talked the talk then, with those two disciples. That same Jesus is walking with us today, right here and right now, and Jesus wants to talk the talk with us. We are invited to discover how Jesus fulfills all God's promises.

The walk ends as they arrive in Emmaus. Jesus intends to keep walking, but those two disciples urge him strongly, "Stay with us." Remember, even though Jesus put all the pieces of the puzzle together for them, they still do not recognize him. Remember, even though Jesus has talked the talk with them and showed them from Moses and all the Prophets God's plan to use the suffering of his Servant to redeem Israel, those two disciples still do not recognize Jesus....until...

Until...they sit at table. Until they sit at table with Jesus. They do not recognize him until they sit at table and Jesus takes bread. They do not recognize him until Jesus sits at table and takes bread and gives thanks. They still do not recognize him until Jesus sits at table and takes bread and gives thanks and breaks the bread. Just a few days before Jesus sat at table and took bread and gave thanks and broke the bread...a sign and a symbol that he would give his life, that he would be broken like the bread was broken. When the bread is broken it is a time for the followers of Jesus to remember that he gave his life, he suffered, and he died for us. Jesus talked the

talk, but those two disciples did not recognize Jesus until...he sat at table with them, until he took bread, until he gave thanks, and until he broke the bread. It was then, it was at that moment, that their eyes were opened. It was then that they recognized Jesus. It was then that they saw Jesus. I think you can see where this has all been leading. They realized Jesus talked the talk. But it was not until the bread was broken and they remembered his death, it was not until the bread was broken that those two disciples finally realized Jesus not only talked the talk, Jesus walked the walk.

WORDS WERE SPOKEN
BREAD WAS BROKEN
EYES WERE OPENED

Hallelujah and thanks be to God.