

“AND THEIR EYES WERE OPENED...”

(Luke 24:13-35)

© 2024 Rev. Dr. Brian E. Germano

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1. Read CEB text: Luke 24:13-35 and Pray.
2. Twin seven-year old boys were always getting into trouble. Their parents knew if any mischief was reported in town, the twins were probably involved.

A--Their mother heard that a local preacher in town had been successful in disciplining children, so she asked if he would speak with her boys. The preacher agreed, but he asked to see them individually.

B--The mother sent one boy in the morning, with the other boy to see the preacher in the afternoon. The preacher, a huge man with a deep booming voice, sat the boy down and asked him sternly, "Do you know where Jesus is, son?" The boy made no response.

C--So the preacher repeated the question in an even sterner tone, "Where is Jesus?!" Again, the boy made no attempt to answer. So the preacher raised his voice even more and shook his finger in the boy's face and bellowed, "WHERE IS JESUS?!"

D--At that, the boy screamed, ran directly home and hid in his closet. When his twin brother found him in the closet, he asked, "*What happened?*" His brother replied, "*We are in BIG trouble this time! Jesus is missing, and they think WE did it!*"

3. So... *Where IS Jesus and how do YOU see and experience him in your life today?*

A--Well, that's the simple, fundamental question illustrated in today's Luke 24 story of the disciples' encountering Jesus on their way to the Jerusalem suburb of Emmaus

B--And from this encounter, I want to suggest today that we learn two simple things about how to answer it.

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4. First, I believe this scripture teaches us that we can see and experience Jesus when we **“know when to say when” to our complaining.**

A--I want us to notice that when Jesus first approached these disciples, he didn't announce who he was right away, and *they* didn't notice, either. Why not?

1--Well, Verse 16 tells us that "*their eyes were **kept** from recognizing him.*"

2--But that begs the question: *WHO* prevented "their eyes" from recognizing him? Was it *God*, somehow mysteriously masking Jesus' true identity? ...OR Was it perhaps instead the disciples' *own actions* that prevented recognition?

B--To see what I mean, let me invite us all to do short exercise:

1--I want everyone here to think of what you did yesterday – mowed the lawn, slept in late, tended your garden, went fishing or golfing, whatever...

2--Then, when I say "Go," I want you to turn to a person next to you and (for 30 seconds) share what you did,... *Except* as you do this, I want you to both share *at the same time* (i.e., *don't* take turns, but talk at the *same time*). Ready? Set? Go!...

3--[**AFTER 30 SECONDS...**] How did you feel? Kind of frustrated?

4--You see, it's difficult to pay attention to someone else when you're busy concentrating on yourself, isn't it? I.E., It's hard to *listen* when you're *talking*.

C--Well, consider this:

1--In today's scripture, the entire time that the disciples were telling Jesus all about problems and pouring out their own grief to him, they did not recognize him.

2--But the minute that they stopped concentrating on themselves and their own problems, and let Jesus minister *to* them in the breaking of the bread, Verse 31 tells us that "...*Their eyes were opened.*"

D--I wonder how many of us today miss the opportunity to be ministered to by God or by Christ because we're so busy *complaining* to Him about all that's wrong with our lives, or our spouse, our family, our church, or our country (and its leaders), or our world?

1--We get so caught up in our own needs and our own agenda that God *can't* minister to us because we simply "won't shut-up!"

2--In some ways, there are some of who at times would rather moan and groan about our problems than let Jesus fix them!

E--But you know, the wonderful thing we learn about Christ through this story, though, is that he doesn't tire easily of our "carrying-on."

1--No. Like that Easter-day evening, Jesus patiently listens to us, and waits for us to get through.

2--Then, when *we're* finished complaining, *He* starts ministering and healing, just like he did to those two disciples at the dinner table.

F--Of course, I'm *not* saying that we can't or shouldn't share our problems with Jesus, but I *am* saying that we need to know "when to say when..." -- WHEN to *stop* talking and telling Jesus our problems, and WHEN to *start* listening and receiving our healing.

5. A second thing this story teaches us is that we can learn to **expect to see and experience Jesus in the ordinary things of life.**

A--Too often in today's glamour-oriented society, we tend to place a heavy emphasis upon the sensational, the spectacular, the dramatic

1--We want to wear flashy, modern clothing.

2--Drive the most advanced and best-looking car on the market.

3--We want to be noticed--to be famous for something *big*.

4--Think of how successful gossip magazines are in "selling" the sensational (even if they're not entirely true!).

B--And the sad thing is that, on the whole, our Christianity is rarely any different:

1--We tend want to do *big* and *important* things for God, like be a missionary or help starving children in Africa. Or perhaps we want God to do or perform some great miracle for us in our lives.

2--We're also easily impressed with "big" churches and the "big" buildings and ministries that accompany them.

C--And as a result of our infatuation with "bigness," we don't often think of the "little," ordinary things of life -- like walking along a road talking to grieving strangers, or breaking bread at dinner-time -- as mattering much to God.

1--But what about giving a co-worker or even an employer a smile or pat on the back when they've had a bad day?

2--What about being Jesus to someone else simply by *listening* to ***their*** problems for a change, instead of dumping *yours* on them?

3--What about sending cards to homebound/shut-in church members so they know they're not forgotten?

4--What about all the things that go on at church "behind the scenes", like volunteering in the church office, or helping with children's church or in the nursery? or helping create a more welcoming environment by serving as a Worship Greeter? or volunteering to help with our Audio Visual ministry (where they will TRAIN you well!)

D--You see, I believe that in God's eyes, these things are **as important** (if not more) than preaching sermons, singing a solo, or serving on the Church Council.

1—Sure, God needs public types of ministry, too. But though these may be the *most visible*, in fact they're probably the *least common* types of service we can do!

2—Instead, *God's* work is done mostly through simple, ordinary, everyday acts that perhaps might *seem* mundane and boring, but which are a beautiful sacrifice that's pleasing and acceptable to Him.

3—Did you know that this next week (April 21-27) is ***National Volunteer Appreciation Week***, a week for us to say thanks to all who volunteer their time and work for any service organization or cause.

4—And while many of you give your time and energy in this way to various civic and nonprofit organizations and groups in our community, today I'd like — at the very least — to say thank you to any and all who do this in and through our local church here at Cornerstone UMC — so if you volunteer in anyway here at our church (whether in choir, praise band, AV ministry, ushering, greeting, congregational care, helping with children, youth, men's or missions ministry, or in any other way, please stand up (even online) and let us recognize you.,,

E--My point is that this story reminds us to **expect Jesus to make His presence known through the common, ordinary things of life.**

--III--

6. So then, how and when do YOU see and experience Christ in your daily life today? My prayer is that we'll all learn from this story that...

A--...We can experience him *when we STOP complaining about our OWN lives and START and taking time to let Him speak and minister to us and others in and through the common, ordinary things of life.*

B--On a dusty suburban road outside of Jerusalem, two disciples met and entertained not just a stranger, but the Son of God himself. Jesus does no less for us today.

1--Like he did back then, (in the words of an old hymn), "*He walks with us, and talks with us, and tells us that we are his own....*" [UMH#314, "*In the Garden*"]

2--Often, we don't even know that it's Him.

C--But when we take time to stop, look, and listen, "*our eyes can be opened,...*" and we find that he's been there all along, seeking to minister to us his healing and wholeness.

7. [PRAYER]