

Their Eyes Were Closed

Preached: 4/11/2021,; Germantown;

Scripture

Luke 24:13 – 35 (NIV)

Message

Their Eyes Were Closed

There are some stories that are just hard to believe. How can that be true? Last Sunday we celebrated a story from the Bible that may be one of the most unbelievable stories ever – the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Many of us celebrate that story as truth. We have no problems believing it. But for many people it is hard if not impossible to believe. And if that is not true, how much of the rest of the Bible can we believe. We are going to look at a story today from the gospel of Luke, where the writer, Luke provides us with some evidence that this news – the Resurrection is true. You can believe it. You can trust the Bible.

Let's look some background information before we get into the story. When we are studying the Bible, I believe that it is important that we try to determine the author's purpose. Why is the writer including this. This story that we are looking at today is found in the gospel of Luke. At the very beginning of his gospel, Luke tells us why he is writing it.

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled^[a] among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)

So Luke is writing this book in order to help a man named Theophilus. Apparently Theophilus has heard about Jesus. He may be "on the fence" about believing in Jesus. Luke is writing to make the case for Jesus, so that Theophilus will become a believer, or will become a stronger believer in Jesus. "**So that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.**" Luke has done extensive research into the life of Jesus. He has talked to eyewitnesses who can confirm the truthfulness of what Luke is writing about Jesus. So that is Luke's purpose. As we look at this story that I read, we need to keep that in mind. Luke includes this story in order to convince Theophilus of the truth about Jesus – that he rose from the dead. None of the other gospel writers – Matthew, Mark or John – include this story. So for Luke it is an important story that will help him to fulfill his purpose in writing.

We are going to take a look at this story, and the evidence that it presents to persuade someone like Theophilus that Jesus rose from the dead. As we look at the story, there are some important lessons for us to learn for our lives.

Luke begins the story by telling us that two people were walking to a village called Emmaus. He says this takes place on "that same day". What day is Luke talking about? In the verses preceding this story, we learn that this event is taking place on the day that some discovered that Jesus' tomb was empty. Some women went to the tomb where Jesus' body had been placed. They found the tomb but did not find the body of Jesus. They were met by 2 angels who told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. He was not in the tomb. The women ran back to the place where Jesus' followers had gathered. In 24:9, we are told that that group of followers included the 11 apostles (minus Judas) and some others. Jesus had more followers than just the 12 that he had chosen to be apostles. Luke tells us that Peter who heard the report from the women ran to the tomb to see for himself. He did not find the body of Jesus. When we pick up the story in verse 13 we are told that **two of them** were going to the village of Emmaus. We understand that Luke is referring to 2 of the followers of Jesus who had been gathered in the room with the other disciples. They heard the report from the women, and they heard Peter's story. These two who are going to Emmaus were likely believers in Jesus, followers of him. We don't know much about them. Luke tells us that 1 of them was named Cleopas. He does not give us the name of the 2nd person. We don't really know anything about Cleopas. One tradition says that he was as brother of Jesus' earthly father, Joseph. That would make him Jesus' uncle. But we don't know that for sure. A couple of things that we do know about these travelers.

- There were 2 of them. That is important. According to Jewish law a testimony had to be corroborated by a 2nd witness. So whatever is going to happen in this story will be believable because it will be the word of 2 witnesses.
- They were going to a village named Emmaus. We do not know anything about Emmaus. Why were they going there? Was that their home? Was that their stopping point for the night? We don't know why they are going to Emmaus. Apparently they have given up. They are turning back. Jesus is dead.
- There were talking and discussing the events that had transpired in Jerusalem. We later learn that they are talking about what had happened to Jesus. Luke uses two words – **talking**, sharing information, facts. And they were **discussing** – sharing their opinions and feelings about what they had witnessed.

Luke tells us that while they were walking, a 3rd person appears in the story. Luke tells us that the stranger is **Jesus Himself**. It is written with emphasis – **Jesus Himself**. Here is the picture. These two are going home. What they hoped for is not happening so they are leaving. But **Jesus comes after them**. Questions come to mind – Why does Jesus come after them? Why these 2? Were there not others who may have walked away? That's a picture of His love for His people, His brothers and sisters. He comes after you when you are drifting away from Him. Luke tells us that they were kept from recognizing him. It is important to the purpose of this story that Jesus has an opportunity to teach them, which he would not have had if they knew up front it was Jesus. **Lesson** – So here is an important lesson for the early Church to learn (and for us). **Jesus comes after us. *Jesus is walking with us, even when we are not aware of His presence.***

They didn't see him at first, but he speaks and asks the question. ***What are you discussing as you go along?*** They are surprised that the stranger appears to be unaware of what they were talking about. It's as if they thought ***What else would they be discussing?*** Luke tells us that they were stunned by his question. They stopped in their tracks and their faces were downcast. (Those are details that a careful historian would discover). They tell him that they are talking about Jesus, and all that had happened to him. Their hearts are broken, their faces are downcast because of what has happened to Jesus. So they are downcast because this stranger does not know their story. And they are downcast because of what happened to Jesus. **Lesson** So here is a second observation, or lesson. **Jesus comes to us in our times of sorrow, grief and broken-heartedness.** So many people are going through a time of grief, are convinced that Jesus has abandoned them. They are all alone. But Jesus does not abandon us in those moments of sadness. He is with us and walks with us.

The story continues: He asks again – **What things?** They tell him the story of what has happened to Jesus. Jesus was obviously someone who was anointed by God – powerful in word and deed. They had hoped he was the one who was to be Israel's Messiah – Savior; Redeemer. BUT the religious leaders – THEIR religious leaders – handed him over to the Authorities to be put to death. Their conclusion was that Jesus was not who they thought He was, He was not who they hoped He was. They are giving up, turning back. Now Luke tells us one more thing about them. They had made their conclusion about Jesus in spite of the fact that there was more evidence to consider. **Vs. 22 – 24.** They themselves have heard the reports of the women who told them what the angels had told them at the tomb. Jesus was ALIVE. And they have heard Peter's report about going to the tomb and not finding Jesus. So they have been presented with evidence that Jesus was not dead, but alive. BUT they can't believe it. Too good to be true?? Maybe. Stories made up by some women? Maybe. For whatever reason they did not believe the story about Jesus being alive. And they can no longer believe that Jesus was who they thought He was. Giving Up. Turning Back. So that brings us to **a 3rd lesson: Jesus comes to people even when our faith is weak.** Maybe you can identify with these 2 people. Sometimes you have a hard time believing. Sometimes your faith is weak. Jesus does not abandon you in those times. As a matter of fact, he comes after you, hunts you down, to bring you back to Himself.

Next weekend we are going to come back to this story and finish our study of it. Remember the three lessons from today:

1. Jesus is walking with us even when we are not aware of His presence
2. Jesus is with us when we are downcast and broken hearted
3. Jesus comes to us even when our faith is weak.

Closing Prayer and Blessing