

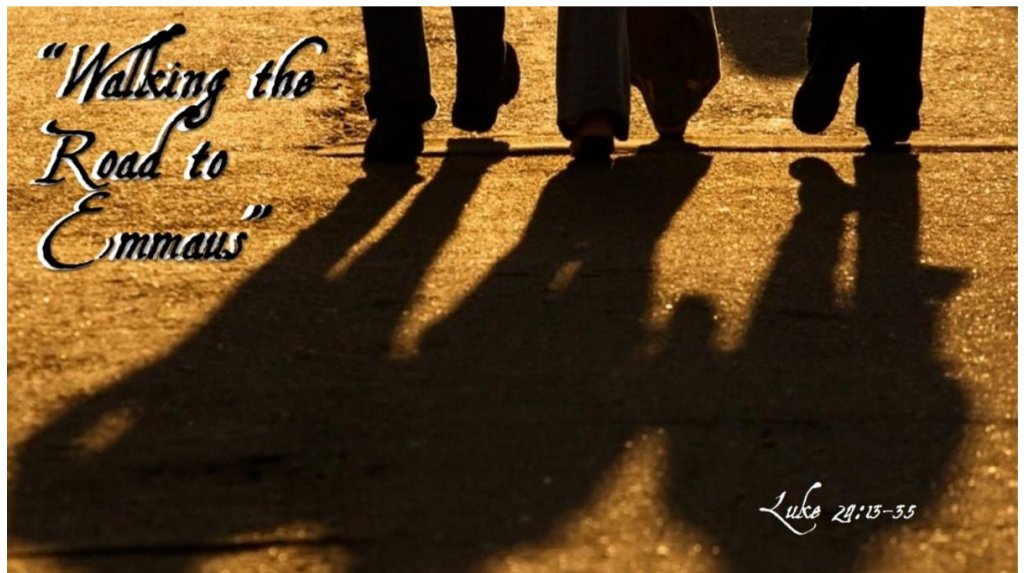
“Walking the Road to Emmaus”

...Luke 24:13-35

by Pastor Tim Dodson
at JF Believers Church
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LUKE 24:13-35 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened. 15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.

16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. 17 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?" 18 Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" 19 And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. 21 "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. 22 "Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. 23 "When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. 24 "And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." 25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. 28 Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. 29 But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. 30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" 33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.



“That was the thing about the world: it wasn’t that things were harder than you thought they were going to be, it was that they were hard in ways that you didn’t expect.” (Lev Grossman, American author)

I have a very vivid memory from my youth that I remember as if it was yesterday. When I was young I deeply identified with Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. I would run and play in the woods for hours on end and envisioned myself living in the woods in a log cabin. Can you imagine that? I had a birthday coming up and I wanted a pair of those knee-high moccasins so bad. But the fact was, we were poor, although I’m not sure I really understood that fact at that time for we were so well cared for and so loved that it was never something I anguished over. But my birthday came, and the present was the right size and everything, and I thought for sure I would be lacing up those boots and personifying Daniel Boone even more than ever. But alas, I was given a new pair of sneakers, because I *needed* new shoes. I didn’t *need* those moccasins. But man, that hit me hard! I grieved for weeks after that birthday.

Great expectations. One does not have to be participate in the Kingdom of God for very long before things don’t go down like you thought they would. God “throws you a curve” and things get messy and life takes a hard left turn. And then over time, we come to the slow creeping truth that it was not God that let *us* down so much as we

let ourselves down. However, because of our limited perspective, we *feel* as if He let us down. We thought that He would do something specific, but He didn't do it. We thought that if we were to just trust in the promises of His Word, things would happen in a certain manner but they didn't. We thought that we were praying in line with His will, but He didn't answer the way we thought He would. The way we *wanted* Him to.

That's where these two weary travelers were at as they walked the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus that epic Sunday. They had been hoping that Jesus was the "one." That He was the promised Messiah who would redeem Israel (24:21). But their hopes and plans came crashing down as the events of the previous few days unfolded, when the Jewish religious leaders actually managed to kill Jesus. So now they were going home, despondent and beaten. They were still dazed by the events they had witnessed. They didn't understand and they felt that God had let them down.

As is usually the case, I would imagine it was 7 miles of alternating periods of stone cold silence and frantic verbal exchange. Somewhere in mix...Christ heard their voices amongst all the voices simultaneous around the world, and He came to **them**. He has a way of even now doing just that. Yet when He did, *to them*, He was but a stranger: "...*their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him*" (24:16). They didn't recognize Him, for in some manner He now looked somewhat different *post-resurrection*. Maybe much of that can be attributed to the fact He was "out of context." Certainly they weren't looking for Jesus to show up. Not there, not then, and not that way. Can you relate?

When asked, these two acknowledged the *facts*, the clinical view and grasp of the events of the cross. Most of us can do that. We know the story. We know the points of that which transpired. But do we behold the grandeur and epic nature of what occurred? Did they...*do we*, grasp the bigger picture? The depth of what transpired and how such changes everything? Everything had changed now, for them and us.

Their words were "*we were hoping*." And therein lies the reason for their blindness. Their path was different than the Lord's. A choice had to be made. Just as with us, they had to decide whether they would cling fruitlessly to what they wanted, or receive what God wanted *for* them, and live that out. Things hadn't worked out the way that they had planned. It all hadn't turned out like they hoped and believed. And when they don't for us, we fail to recognize His presence and His continued involvement.

The passive voice of the verb suggests that God had closed their eyes from recognizing Jesus. Why would God do that to them? And further, *why would God do such a thing to us?* Jesus asked them about the events that had transpired. It's obvious that He knew, but did they? How did they see these things? What did they think happened over there in Jerusalem?

Often God seeks for us to acknowledge His truth. To bring it out into the light of day and often to even verbalize it. As we'll see, He had some important lessons to teach them (and us) about trusting in His written Word before He allowed them to see the living Word who was there with them. But what we know is that the story began with these two men disheartened and disappointed. It ends with them rejoicing and in awe. It's a story that has been repeated a million times since that day.

The first thing we must acknowledge, *although we may not want to admit it*, is that, like these men, we all face times when we are disappointed with God. We are inevitably disappointed with God when our desires, requests and expectations do not match His sovereign plans. The "hidden" Jesus tells these two guys that it all not only ***did indeed*** happen but it was actually ***necessary*** for the Christ to suffer these things (24:26).

Often one of the most brutal lessons we can learn is the fact that God is in charge of history, moving it along according to His will and plan. Such a premise sounds great from the outside when it's all merely conjecture and

philosophy. But when its real and it's now and it's **us**...*well*, that's different! And such was the case herein as to the greatest tragedy in history, the crucifixion of our sinless Savior. Although it was the worst crime that could ever be committed, the fact remains that God did more than just allow it to happen. He went so far as to have actually orchestrated it.

Folks will at times try to comfort others by saying that some terrible tragedy that seems beyond our understanding, was *not* God's plan. There has been plenty of those over the last few years. I'm sure they mean well, but if *anything* can happen outside of God's plan, then He is not absolutely sovereign. We don't always *like* it...and we don't always want to believe it, ...and we clearly don't always understand it, but scripture tells us that God "...works all things according to the counsel of His will." He makes everything work out according to **his** plans. *Even when we disagree, fail to acknowledge, or even fight against such.* Now either that is a fact, or the Word of God is a lie and we all best just go on home then.

That being said, we honestly must admit that despite our love for Christ, it is hard when we have prayed and hoped for something that we thought was His will, but then it doesn't happen. We *want to want* what God has set upon the table! But when you had your mouth all watering for deep pan pizza and instead you get jello salad...*well*, let's just say there is going to be some natural disappointment. *These* men had a **plan**. But it wasn't **God's plan**. When our expectations do not match God's program, we tend to wallow in our disappointment. Such of course only acknowledges that we fail to believe that he loves us profoundly and has our interest and care in mind always.

That does not mean that we are somehow the profound "center of the universe" or even the "center of His greater will." Isaiah 55:8-9 says "...My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts." The fact is, God has the **whole show** in mind all at once, and holds to a singular goal and plan to bring it all to fruition, all the while bringing glory to His Father and furthering His Kingdom on earth. Maybe it all just comes down to remembering who the *Master* is and who is the *servant*...

"For I know the thoughts I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." Jeremiah 29:11.

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." Romans 8:28

"The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness." Jeremiah 31:3

"... in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 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 8:37-39

The things God does is at times a difficult thing to process, let alone accept. It's the "why" that confounds us and disappoints us more than anything. Isn't it His loving goal that His people have assurance, comfort and hope? Why then would He have shut the eyes of these men from seeing the risen Savior? The answer is, because He had a better reason and a better time. We know that God had previously closed the disciples' minds so that they could not understand Jesus' frequent references to the cross (9:45; 18:34). God wanted them to go through the despair and confusion of the cross before they came out into the full light of the resurrection, and so He closed their minds from understanding the plain statements about Jesus' death.

Often we find ourselves disappointed with God because we have embraced a particular **part** of His Word, but not the whole. The disciples were all quick to focus on the glories of Christ's kingdom, but they were slow to grasp the sufferings that had to precede that glory (24:26). They often thought, "Won't it be great when we're all there, reigning in glory with Jesus!" But somehow they overlooked the Scriptures that predicted the suffering and death of Messiah as the sacrifice for the sins of His people. They thought rightly that Jesus would redeem Israel, but they didn't understand that redemption required the offering of Himself as the Lamb of God!

Notice the word "all" in 24:25, 27: They were foolish not "to believe in *all* that the prophets have spoken." "Beginning with Moses and *all* the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in *all* the Scriptures." Their fault was in focusing on parts of God's Word, but ignoring other parts.

We often are disappointed with God for the same reason. We like all the promises about the good stuff that God will do for His children! But what about the promise of 2 Timothy 3:12: "*And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*"? Do you embrace that promise too? What about Hebrews 12, which promises discipline for all of God's true children? What about the many references to the struggle and warfare of the Christian's walk? If we only focus on part of God's Word, we will be disappointed when trials hit, as surely they will.

We are at times disappointed with God because we are reluctant to believe His Word...*what He has already said on a matter*. Thus we seek a private interpretation. 2 Peter 1:20-21 warns us that "*no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man...*" Believers can often be slow of heart to believe all of God's Word, especially the difficult doctrines, and the ones that are not socially or culturally acceptable. Yet scripture is one cohesive unified presentation of God and His will and direction.

These discouraged, disappointed men thought that Jesus was dead and gone, when in fact He was the one walking and talking with them as they trudged along that dusty road. He was near to them even though they did not know such outwardly. Christ not only joined them, but He *went with them*. Even in times of trial, disappointment and even human despair, Christ travels with us. It is that level of love that He gives us, not merely an ideal or creed, but personal involvement. The whole of His earthly life is proof of this. He did more than *say* He loves us! He came to walk with us, commune with us, and to experience what we experience. When you are disappointed and discouraged, you may think that the Lord is a million miles away. But He has promised, "*I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you*" (Heb. 13:5). **Never**. Even when we *think* we are alone.

We might think we know where we're going, but the Word of God says, "*The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps*" (Prov. 16:9), and "*many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails*" (Prov. 19:21). These two men found out that they ultimately couldn't control the outcome of their lives or the events of this world. They discovered on that road that "*a person's steps are directed by the LORD*" (Prov. 20:24), whether you accept such or not.

The reason that God's plan is always better than ours is that He can see the future and we cannot. We can't even see into the next minute. At best, we can only take educated guesses, but God knows for certain what will happen tomorrow, next week, and years down the road. It's like He can see around the blind corners of time. Isaiah writes about God, "*I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done*" (Isaiah 46:9-10). So wouldn't you want to trust God's plan for your life over your own plan?

Isn't that really the point of all this?