There is Room at the Table

## (Luke 24:13-33)

I am excited to share the Word of God with you as we come to receive from the Holy Spirit today. I believe that God is going to speak to each one of us in a special way, meeting you right where you are, because he knows everything about you. The Bible says the Holy Spirit knows when you sit down or stand up and he knows your thoughts even when you are far away. In fact, he knows everything you do, including what you are going to say even before you say it.

David said in the Scriptures, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand. I can never escape from your Spirit” (Psalms 139:6-7, NLT).

Not that David would ever want to, nor would you or I, because the Spirit of God is our comforter, the Spirit of God is our strength, the Spirit of God fills us with hope. And so, David says your everlasting presence, your never leaving, never forsaking presence is too wonderful for me to understand. And that is why he cried out,

“Do not banish me from your presence. Don’t take your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalms 51:11, NLT).

Today, we want to embrace the presence of the Holy Spirit, our Teacher, and I want to share with you a message entitled, “There is Room at the Table.”

Would you join me at the table as you find your place in your Bibles, we’re going to begin studying a familiar passage from the gospel of Luke, chapter 24, verse 13 through verse 33. The context is later in the day, resurrection Sunday, and Jesus was walking toward this little town called Emmaus when he joins two disciples. They were walking along kicking rocks, feeling discouraged and without hope, because Jesus had been crucified and buried, and all of their hopes for Israel had been crushed.

As they walked, they had been talking with each other about everything that had happened, discussing what it might mean, and considering what they’re going to do next. They were struggling to understand what it all meant because they didn’t understand what Jesus had said.

"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (Luke 9:22).

And so, Jesus was going to give them greater understanding as he walked and talked with them on the road, but Luke tells us, “They were kept from recognizing him” (Luke 24:16).

In other words, Jesus’ identity remained veiled from them, he had risen from the dead, he had a new glorified body, and they did not recognize him. And so, they were walking with their only hope of heaven, but they didn’t realize it, they didn’t recognize him.

Jesus asked them,

"What are you discussing together as you walk along?" (Luke 24:17).

They stopped and stood still, surprised that he had not heard about what had happened in Jerusalem. They replied, “We were talking about Jesus of Nazareth.”

“The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:20-21).

“And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body” (Luke 24:21-23).

“They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see" (Luke 24:23-24).

Their testimony is encouraging to me because there are so many things in the world that we can’t understand, questions that we can’t answer, but our doubts can actually be a catalyst to greater faith, because as we come to God with our limited understanding, seeking answers to those tough questions, the Lord promises,

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

And that is the place where we find these two disciples as they are standing there on the road talking with Jesus about all these things that had happened that weekend in Jerusalem. Even though they knew the Scriptures, that the prophets had predicted many details about the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of the promised Messiah, all of which were specifically fulfilled by Jesus, they were totally blind to the truth.

It’s for that reason that Jesus said to them,

“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25).

In other words, they believed the promise of the coming Messiah, but they could not accept the prophecies of his suffering. Even though Isaiah chapter 52 and 53 are so very clear and relevant to the suffering of Jesus, they refused to believe, and like Peter they said,

"Never, Lord! This shall never happen to you!" (Matthew 16:22).

But Jesus was unwavering and he turned and asked them a question.

“Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (Luke 24:26).

In other words, theirs was the problem that most Jews of that day faced, they saw the Messiah as a conquering hero, a deliverer, a redeemer, but they did not see him as a suffering servant. As they read the Scriptures, they saw the glory, but not the suffering. The crown, but not the cross, and so they were blind to the message of the gospel.

Jesus knew this was a teachable moment and seizing the opportunity, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:27).

We are not told exactly what he said, but maybe he went back to Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, and the very first promise of a Redeemer. Back to when Adam and Eve first sinned, and God met them in their brokenness, and he sacrificed an animal to cover them, covering their nakedness with garments of skin. Maybe he told them about Abraham in Genesis chapter 22, climbing Mount Moriah where he placed his only beloved son on the altar? Certainly, he must have talked about the Passover, applying the blood of the lamb to the doorways of their houses in Egypt. And the Levitical sacrifices, the tabernacle ceremonies, the day of atonement, and the serpent in the wilderness.

In other words, he did not teach them only prophecy, he taught what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. That is the key to understanding the Bible, it is to see Jesus on every page. And so, as they are walking along this little path, they are hanging on to his every word, and the miles pass like minutes. But when they got to their destination, the Bible says,

“Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over” (Luke 24:28-29).

And so, by the time they got to the village, not only was it getting dark, but they were experiencing a hunger and thirst like they never have before. Their hearts were literally burning; it was that which Jeremiah spoke of saying,

“His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones…” (Jeremiah 20:9).

And so, they’re trying to process all of this, their hearts are burning, but watch what happens next, this is so amazing. Jesus went in to “stay with them,” and verse 30 says,

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them” (Luke 24:29-30).

All of a sudden, there was a familiarity; I don’t know if God lifted the veil from their eyes, or if it was in the breaking of the bread, or maybe the priestly prayer as Jesus blessed it. Or maybe it was in the distribution of that bread as Jesus stretched out his hands to them in the flickering light and they saw the wounds on his wrists.

Whatever it was, the Bible says, it was at that moment that “their eyes were opened and they recognized him” (Luke 24:31).

Whatever it was, suddenly everything began to make sense, his body beaten, flogged, and scourged. Their Messiah hanging on the cross, suffering and breathing his last, dead and buried, but on the third day gloriously raised to life. Now, they are sitting there in amazement, still holding the bread in their hands, “and he disappeared from their sight” (Luke 24:31).

Looking at each other, verse 32 says,

“They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

They recognized Jesus not because of his words, not because they heard the stone was rolled away, but because they recognized him in the breaking of the bread.

No sooner did they recognize him; then did he disappear from their sight. And so, they got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. Verse 33 says,

“There they found the Eleven and those with them assembled together” (Luke 24:33).

They went back to where the church was gathered, where their brothers and sisters in Christ were waiting, because the Jews believed that where two or three are gathered the divine presence is among them. In fact, Jesus affirmed that when he said,

“For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

And so, everywhere believers are assembled, in the same moment, in different places around the globe, Jesus is in each location to encourage, strengthen, and comfort his disciples. In other words, wherever and whenever we gather, there is room at the table for you to come and experience the presence of Jesus. No matter where you have wandered or how far you have gone astray, there is still a place for you at the table, because Jesus is our Shepherd. He said,

"Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep” (Luke 15:4-6).

Those two disciples had given up so quickly, turning their backs on Jerusalem, walking home disappointed and discouraged, but the good shepherd came looking for them. It wasn’t until they had gathered around the table and were breaking bread that they recognized the one who said,

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35).

So often in our own lives we leave disappointed and discouraged, because we were looking for the wrong thing, expecting the wrong thing, searching and seeking for things that don’t matter, things that are temporal and have no lasting value. Then when it doesn’t happen like we prayed, when we don’t find what we were looking for, we find ourselves disappointed and walking away from the promise and purpose of God. Instead of seeking him and coming to the table to taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8).

We fail to recognize that so much of what we have been looking for is just a cheap substitute for the real thing. You may have been looking all over the place, but you had false expectations, because Jesus is all you need. You may not have recognized him, he may not have been what you prayed for, but he is exactly what you need.

Today, he invites you to come to the table, because he is the bread you need, he is the bread of life, and he said,

“I have come that you may have life and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

And yet, there may be some of you here who have been walking around disappointed and discouraged, without hope, hungry and thirsty, but Jesus promises, “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst" (John 4:14).

If you will just come to him, trusting him, believing what he said, Jesus promises,

“Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

But so often in life, we’re just not hearing him, like those two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus weren’t hearing what Jesus was saying.

Their hearts may have been burning, but they weren’t hearing what he was saying, because they were going in the wrong direction, they were walking away from Jerusalem, walking away from the place where the promised Holy Spirit was coming. And so, Jesus chases them down, because they needed to be with the other believers, he was positioning them for something so much greater than they could’ve ever asked or imagined.

In the same way, I wonder if there are some of you who have been walking with Jesus and he has been speaking to you, but it’s been a one-sided conversation. I know for a fact that he has been talking to you, because Jesus said,

“My sheep listen to my voice” (John 10:27).

And so, right now, Jesus is positioning you to hear his voice, and the Holy Spirit said,

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7-8).

In other words, some of you don’t think that he speaks to you, but he says don’t harden your hearts. He has been talking, he has been ringing your phone, he has been delivering the mail, but your mailbox is full, and you haven’t been able to receive it.

Others of you, if you are really honest, would have to admit that you haven’t given him any space or time, because you’ve always got those earbuds in your ears. In other words, you’re always listening to other things, worldly things, and you are never positioning yourself in a place where you can hear from him. You haven’t gone to your prayer closet, that quiet place, where you can be still and know that he is God (Psalm 46:10).

Some of you blame God, like he’s just not speaking to me, and I want to encourage you to position yourself to receive. I want you to know that there is room at the table, and if there is one thing that we all need to learn to do, it is to learn to sit at Jesus’ feet like Mary, listening to what he said (Luke 10:39).

In other words, we’ve got to come to the table, we’ve got to open up the Scriptures, and we’ve got to get God’s word into our souls every day.

The problem is that many of us are like Martha. “She was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made” (Luke 10:40).

I know I wrestle with this, so much to do and so little time, and I find myself easily distracted by all the preparations. And maybe some of you do as well, which means that we have to reprioritize our lives so that we are focused on that which is important, the eternal and not the temporal. And that we come to Jesus, we come to the table willing to change, willing to reorder things, willing to reschedule things, because we want to position ourselves to receive from Jesus.

Today, I want you to know that there is still room at the table, if you are hungry and thirsty for the things of God, come and spend some time in his presence. There may be some of you right now, and your heart is burning within you, and maybe for the first time ever you are able to understand the Scriptures, to recognize Jesus, and to know that he is God. And so, my prayer is that you would fall at his feet, willing to let go of the things of this world, realizing that living for Jesus is the only thing that will truly satisfy forever.

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