

“They Recognized Him!”

Luke 24:13-35

Intro. – Years ago we had a picture hanging in our home that Mary had received in honor of her years of service of singing while in college. Here is a shot of that picture. It is a well known picture entitled *The Road to Emmaus*. We no longer have that picture hanging in our home. To be honest with you, I miss it. Don't remember or know as to what happened to it...

Be that as it may, that picture takes us to the very heart of our text. The Bible simply says, “...*They recognized Him.*” So says Luke under the inspiration of God concerning Cleopas and his companion. Who was his companion? We are not told, but, it possibly could have been his wife. They journeyed to the same village and stopped at the same house; thus, suggesting the companion of Cleopas could very well have been his wife.

Whether it was wife or just a good friend, Cleopas and his companion saw AND recognized the risen Lord. Thus, they came to experience that without which there would be no hope or promise. Cleopas and his companion came to know the bodily resurrection of Jesus the Christ not simply as a date, but also and more importantly as historical fact.

This historical fact is the very hub of Christianity. Without it, Christianity would be but another clamoring voice in world religions. With the bodily resurrection of Jesus, Christianity separates itself from all other religions. Its Founder and Sustainer is not a has been, but, is a living Lord and Savior. All world religions' have their founders, but they are dead and buried... Christianity's was buried, but the tomb of Christ could conceal Him no longer. He arose, He arose, hallelujah, Christ arose!

Our text takes us to but one of several accounts given in Scripture as the risen Lord appears to followers of His. This account is an amazing story that unfolds as a gripping drama with four scenes

Purpose: to see in the four scenes of our text why Christ's resurrection should cause our hearts to burn

Cleopas and his companion said after Jesus left their presence, “*Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?*” Brethren and friend, something is wrong with us if our hearts don't respond in kind whenever we hear the Gospel!

I Scene ONE

- as the curtain rises we see two people – Cleopas and his companion. They are walking a road that leads from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus -- approximately seven miles. They are headed home.
- their journey ought to be one of joy, for to be headed home should naturally put a spring in one's step and a light in their face. Remember whenever you were headed “home” after being away?...
- but for these two, there was no joy. They walked with tear-wet faces. Let's look more closely:

A. Headed Home from a Grave

1. This is why there was no joy – they were headed home from a grave – a new grave.
2. Theirs is therefore, an experience we all have had... They are going back to take up the burden of life without one whose presence is no longer, at least for a season.
3. Such is an old story, unique for the one who is experiencing it; yet, it is something universally exp.

B. Headed Home from a Unique Grave

1. They came from a grave not simply of One deeply loved but of One on whom they had centered their hopes for time and eternity.
2. Their sorrow unspeakable was expressed when they said, “...*But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel...*”
3. Thus, they were returning from the grave of their Lord – as one commentator put it “sorrow's crown of sorrow.”
4. In short, they were returning from not just any funeral.

II Scene TWO

- in the second scene we see these two, Cleopas and his companion still walking the same stretch of road, but this time, they are not alone.
- from this we must learn we too are never alone – our Lord is always with us, He promised:
 - Illus. – John G. Paton, missionary to South Pacific Islands, lost his wife/baby son within days of each other. He buried their bodies at midnight to protect their bodies from cannibals on the islands. He said, “I must needs have gone mad by that lonely grave but for the presence of Jesus Christ.”
 - Ernest Shackleton tells of his long and perilous trek over the ice and snow in the Antarctic. He writes, “There were more than three of us. We all felt that there were four.” All of which sounds just like the account of Nebuchadnezzar after he had cast only three men into the fiery furnace, and ended up seeing a fourth.
- brethren and friend that “fourth” is always present – we are never alone – we have His promise:

A. They Failed to Recognize Him

1. Some suggest because the three were walking toward the setting of the sun, thus causing a glare to prevent the two from recognizing Jesus...
2. Some suggest that Jesus’ resurrection body was different in that it was a spiritual body now, thus changing the appearance to such an extent these two disciples failed to recognize Him...
3. An obvious reason they failed to recognize Christ, they had no expectation of seeing Him again.
 - a. their eyes were so fixated on that tomb in the garden they could think of nothing else.
 - b. even though Jesus had repeated foretold of His death and that He would rise again, these two failed to recognize Jesus because they simply did not expect again to ever see Him!

B. He Led Them Towards Certainty

1. Note how Jesus induced them to speak of their burden
2. They tell their newly acquired traveling companion about Jesus “...*a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel...*”
3. Jesus, with tenderness and compassion says, “*O foolish me and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*”
 - a. i.e. the fact that your wonderful Lord was put to death on the Cross is not a proof of His defeat; instead, it is a sure pledge of His mission being accomplished.
 - b. was it not necessary for Christ to suffer these things...; yet, such is not the end but the beginning?! “...*He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*”

C. They Urged Him to Stay

1. Time passed quickly while Jesus explained to them... they had arrived at Emmaus.
2. Text says, “...*He acted as though He would go farther. And they urged Him, saying, ‘Stay with us...’*”
3. The point to be taken from this is clear – Jesus doesn’t force Himself upon anyone, BUT, He also never fails to accept when He is truly invited.
 - Revelation 3:20 “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with Me.*”

III Scene THREE

- in this scene we are taken into the house of these two where the three are preparing to eat nourishment:

A. He Blessed and Broke Bread

1. Whether Jesus was called upon by His hosts to pray over bread and break it, we’re not told...
2. Can’t help but think in doing this Jesus was tweaking His hosts with actions of that which would be familiar and revealing, giving them déjà vu...

B. He Opened Their Eyes

1. Their eyes were opened by God. It was at that moment they knew to the very depths of their souls that this amazing guest was their risen Lord.
2. At that precise moment, the moment the Lord Himself chose, they had whatever blinders on their eyes removed. Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him!

C. He Vanished From Their Sight

1. As soon as they recognize Him, He vanishes from their sight.
2. This might appear disappointing or at the very least anti-climatic, but the exact opposite is true.
3. In these 40 days of making personal appearances after His bodily resurrection – Jesus was preparing His followers for the reality that He was no less near when unseen than when seen.
4. Today, we know Jesus not by sight but by faith. Such is not a loss, but a gain.
 - a. is this not the testimony of our Lord when He said, “*It is to your advantage that I go away.*”?
 - b. by His going away, He has come the closer to us – in the person of His Spirit, the Comforter!
 - c. remember what a changed group it was when Jesus ascended back into His Father’s presence – they returned to Jerusalem with *great joy*.

IV Scene FOUR

- this scene continues right up to this very hour:

A. They Arose That Hour

1. When these two recognized the risen Lord, they could not sit still in their little cottage.
2. That very hour, though they had just come from Jerusalem, in the dark of night they returned:
 - a. probably bone weary... forgot about that because they had a story to tell that put wings on their feet and a song in their hearts...
 - b. they return and confirm what the other disciples already know – Jesus is alive!

B. Invigorated with Resurrection Faith

1. It was the resurrection fact that sent this handful of disciples into the world to literally turn the world right side up.
2. What else could explain the 180 turnaround of dejected, disillusioned, hopeless followers of Christ? It was the certainty and awareness of the risen Lord.
3. Armed by nothing less than this historical fact, they AND you and I are called to take this GOSPEL, this “good news” to a world totally lost and confused.

Conclusion: Let me conclude and summarize this message with a series of pictures to see if you *recognize* some well known people...

I use these to help summarize the point of our text and of this message. When the first century Christians were confronted with the resurrected Christ, they went forth as a down trodden, defeated, and disillusioned people to be the force of Christ’s Church who literally turned the world right side up.

The question of the hour is this – have we been confronted with the resurrected Christ? Do we receive our motivation in life from the resurrected Christ Who made grace possible? Do we recognize the resurrected Christ by daily taking up our crosses and following Him? Just how familiar are we with the resurrected Christ? Is He in fact our Lord and Savior or are we simply giving lip service when we say this? Are we so moved by our recognizing the resurrected Christ that we take Him whenever and wherever we go? Is Resurrection Sunday just another date or is it an historical event upon which all our hope rest?

O, brethren and friend, let us recognize the risen Christ always, and may our hearts burn within us as a result!