

## **Journey with Jesus**

Sermon - April 23, 2017

There is only one similar story in history which can be compared to Easter, and that is the creation of the universe. There were no witnesses on either story. God was acting in mysterious ways. We don't know how these things happened but we see the outcome of creation and resurrection.

At the beginning, heaven and earth and galaxies were born. In our story, something different was born: not only the resurrection but something that we should explore, if we don't have it yet, which is called FAITH in Creator. Let us see today how FAITH can be born in us.

We cannot create faith in us, but somebody from outside can bless us with this amazing gift. From our story, let us see how two desperate and faithless men went from faithlessness to the very highest level of faith.

### **1. Our first main question today is: how do you feel being surrounded by a faithless world?**

In Luke, we are informed that once Jesus sent his disciples in pairs to preach the gospel in the surrounding area. We know that one of them was called Cleopas, but we don't know if these disciples were part of the smaller group who followed Jesus on and off, or if they were part of the other 5,000 people. They are called disciples which means that somehow they were very close to Jesus.

On a journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus, we see men, who knew Jesus, who is standing next to them. They should recognize Jesus by his figure, by his voice, by his gentleness, but they are so deeply depressed that they are not able to recognize him.

Are you able now to recognize yourself in these disciples? They are walking towards the sunset and this is symbolizing their spiritual status as well. As they walk towards the sunset, they share with each other how they feel. They are sad and deeply disappointed because something happened to Jesus, out of their control. Because Jesus died, all their dreams and hopes are gone. In their conversation, they talk only about bad, sad things. The topic of their conversation can be described with one word: DEATH.

Even today, in many of my private conversations as a minister and a psychotherapist, I have to realize that most people's way of thinking is dominated

by pessimism, negativity, depression and also death. Even when two Christians meet and they find this common ground of their topic, the conversation will go well, because they both can be related to these topics: pessimism, negativity, depression and also death. The reason why they feel this way is because they are looking ONLY back and they are analyzing ONLY what they saw and experienced in the past. They focus ONLY on their bad memories and they see ONLY the sunset in front of them.

Can you relate yourself to those people who are talking to each other mostly about sickness, pain, suffering, medication, aging, nursing homes, loneliness and death? The problem is NOT that we have to face these things. The real problem is that we won't be able to see positive things until SOMEBODY turns our focus in a different direction.

## **2. We have to realize that, as we are walking towards the sunset, Jesus accompanies us.**

Jesus knew about these two disciples. He knew that they were deeply sad, wounded and depressed. Jesus knew that they needed help. This is why Jesus decided to meet them as they were walking home.

We cannot explain where he was before or from where he was coming, but we know that he is always there where his children need help.

Please always remember, that Jesus knows where you are. He knows how you feel, what your thoughts and fears are, and he will find the right way to connect you. He will accompany you because He does not want you to walk alone. He IS with you.

It is so amazing that Jesus became part of their conversation. After these two people shared their disappointment with Jesus, He started to lead the whole conversation and he turned their focus from earthly things towards heavenly glory.

**Jesus said two things to them**, which today in our society would sound impolite, as we say, politically not correct. "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!"

"Oh how foolish you are." Jesus said this to those two disciples, who knew the Old Testament and all the prophecies which were already written hundreds of years before. They had been waiting for those prophecies to be fulfilled, but when those were fulfilled, they could not believe it.

I am sure that today Jesus would say the same things to many of us. He would call foolish those who are listening to His messages for decades, but somehow they still cannot believe what the Bible says about Jesus Christ, about the resurrection and eternal life. Foolish - because they still don't make real effort to understand the depth and height of God's love. Foolish, because they compare God's wisdom to our human wisdom, and they think that God, who created this universe, cannot be smarter and more powerful than we are.

Maybe Jesus would say today to me and you as well that we are "Slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!" Often we too are slow to open our hearts to let His message in. We are slow to allow the word of God to convince us about His power and Love. We won't give time to God to turn our focus from depressing things and death towards His eternal glory, which is already prepared and waiting for us. We are slow to change from being sad and depressed to being happy and joyful.

These two people were forcing Jesus to make two miracles to prove that He is the existing, and resurrected God.

**a. Jesus started to preach as He did before in Synagogue, or as we preach His gospel today here in this church.**

Jesus started to explain to them the prophecies which were written about Him, what they already knew by heart. In the English language, there is a contradiction with this saying. If we memorize something, we say: I know it by heart. NOPE: we know the memorized things in our HEADS, not in our hearts. These two disciples memorized the Messiah's stories and this information was in their heads. Now it was time to let it into their hearts.

I am sure you know a lot of things about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, but it is time to let this information work in your heart. Let this INFORMATION create FAITH in you.

We have to understand that it was not the Jews who killed Jesus, but WE did with our sin. We have to understand that, in Jesus death, there is not weakness but power and strength. We have to understand that Jesus cross is the bridge for above that huge valley which separates us from eternal and glorious God. The cross is the bridge which will lead us into heaven. We have to understand that the suffering Jesus took on His shoulder is the punishment of our sin. He took on His shoulder

OUR sin, which was never his. He made us perfect, giving us perfection which was never ours.

**b. In Emmaus, Jesus blessed the bread as he did in front of 5,000 people and at the Last Supper, and this is how He gave it to them.**

We have to see that everything we have and receive is coming from His blessing hands. The daily bread, the recovery from an illness, our children's and grandchildren's success and happiness are all coming from His blessing hands. Every time, when we fold our hands to pray here in this congregation, at home with our family members or during our own devotion, we can experience that the resurrected Lord is standing beside us. He is lifting his hand above us from which we are receiving his daily blessings.

As these two disciples started their 11 km/ 8 mile long journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus, they were not able to see the real values of LIFE. As they accepted Jesus, who accompanied them, step by step they became stronger in knowledge. And a few hours later, at the end of their trip, their eyes were open to see the invisible and FAITH was born in them.

I really don't know if you walk with Jesus or still without Him. I don't know if you see Him face to face through your spiritual eyes, but I know two things:

- If you are walking with Him as a disciple, please accompany others who are walking towards the sunset and turn their eyes upon Jesus.
- If you are still alone, or surrounded by those who still cannot believe, invite Jesus to accompany you and you will experience how He can change lives today.

I will close this message with this awesome Gospel song:

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Saviour,  
And life more abundant and free!

Refrain:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.

His Word shall not fail you—He promised;  
Believe Him, and all will be well:  
Then go to a world that is dying,  
His perfect salvation to tell!

*Written by: Helen H. Lemmel  
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Amen