
FAITH AS A LIVED REALITY

The Emmaus Story

December 7, 2025

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled, "Faith as a Lived Reality, the Emmaus Story." Thank you to Rhonda, Geoff, Ed, Brian, and everyone else involved in the service. The scripture reading is Luke 24, 13 to 35. Please plan to join us for our Christmas Eve service at 7 p.m. on the 24th. Happy birthday this week to Brian, Chris, and Kranti.

Scripture Reading

Today I'll be reading Luke 24 verse 13 to 24. "Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, they were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, what are you discussing together as you walk along? They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them named Cleopas asked him, are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days? What things he asked. About Jesus of Nazareth, they replied, he was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 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.

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 they didn't find his body. 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 woman had said, but they did not see Jesus.

Sermon

Ed began talking about time. Alpha, Omega, sunrise, sunset. Carmen read from our text this morning from Luke 24. She read ancient words. Well, ancient words. C.S. Lewis once thought that people did not believe in Jesus because of miracles. Then he discovered that's not the case. See, in his day, people thought it was written the word of God a long time ago. And that was the rationale for not believing. What about our day?

Oscar Wilde, an Irish writer, poet, dramatist, also a classical scholar. At Oxford University in his graduation, one of the requirements was you must read the passion story of Jesus, the crucifixion of Jesus, read it in Greek and translate it into English. Wilde read the text in Greek, translated fluently into English. The examiner said to Wilde, stop. He continued. They asked him again the second time to stop. He continued. Finally, they insisted that he be quiet. He said, oh, do let me continue. I want to see how the Jesus story ends. See, that's one of our elite intellectuals in our 20th, 21st century.

Millennials, people between the age of 25 and 45, approximately, the children of the baby boomers, they do not know 80% the Jesus story. So how? Where do you share the gospel? Well, one book is the gospel according to Starbucks. Well, I met with somebody and talked about that on Tuesday morning. A book published in 2006 indicating how the church might make connections to the church with people.

At Starbucks, I encountered Bob. Bob asked me to tell him the story about the road to--Geoff--Erasmus. Erasmus? I said, Bob, you mean Damascus? Paul's conversion story. Scripture Reading Bob says no. See, Erasmus of Rotterdam was a Dutch theologian, a reformer in the early years of the Protestant Reformation. He authored a Greek New Testament trying to adventure beyond Roman church tradition and recover the purity and the clarity of the New Testament text. Bob listens to my explanation, but says no, that's not it.

The dialog continues another day. This time, Bob asked, tell me about the road to Emmaus. Well, Emmaus, that's our text today, right? Bob wants to know how Jesus taught. So disciples might discover faith in Jesus as the Christ. Now, Bob teaches an adult class in philosophy among many other things. He wants my outlines on Luke 24, how Jesus taught so disciples, learners, students might come to faith.

On a third occasion, Bob asked me to share the Emmaus story with him. He wants to talk about the content of the story. He concludes that the structure, the content, the application of our text this morning from Luke 24 makes for a good story, perhaps a God story. So what we're doing now in terms of the next few slides, the text unfolds scene by scene.

So here's scene one. Here's the encounter, verses 13 to 16. Verse 13, that same day. If you read this before going, it's the Lord's day. It's as Geoff alluded to, it's the resurrection Sunday. To the Emmaus disciples, it's a bad news day. See, the bad news is bad. And the good news is a trifle thin. The journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus is 11 kilometers. But it becomes a marathon and consumes the entire day. And maybe they're singing at the end. Now, the day is over. As they finally, finally invite Jesus in and recognize Jesus at the table. As they walk, as they talk, they discuss. Well, they don't just discuss the conversation. It's a lively exchange. They discuss everything that's happened in Jerusalem. And as they do that, unbeknownst to them, the fellow traveler joins them and walks step in step with them. What they should have known by spiritual intuition, by eyes of faith, by the reality of a divine presence, the text says in verse 16, they were kept from recognizing Jesus.

Now on another occasion at Starbucks, I'm reading the Emmaus text. I'm interrupted by Vaughn. And Vaughn says, "Still at a day, he's a retired school teacher. He accuses me of thinking too much. I should just relax. I speak to Vaughn of good news. He says, I'm so disillusioned. See like the Emmaus disciples, Vaughn has given up hope. The Emmaus disciples were kept from recognizing Jesus by their despair. Their disillusionment, their depression, their faces are downcast in verse 17. By their disappointment in verse 21, we had past tense hoped. In a time of crisis, they fail to recognize God's twin hands, Jesus and the Holy Spirit reaching out on a mission of redemption. We sometimes are like them, aren't we? Men, you're blind by the light. See, Lewis was thinking this, the intensity of the resurrection, the straightforward nature of truth. See people are, they complain. The gospel is not rational enough. The gospel is too simple to be embraced.

Scene two is dialogue, verses 17 to 18. We have the next slide. Jesus engages in dialogue with the Emmaus disciples, but there's a purpose and a reason for the dialogue. He wants to establish relationship. He challenges them, what are you discussing? Know their faces are downcast. If you read their body language, the meta message reveals their underlying feelings and thoughts. One disciple's named Cleopas, he responds by critically asking Jesus, Jesus, where have you been? Everybody knows what's happened in Jerusalem. Historians, Jewish, Roman, non-Christian, Christian, all have recorded the facts of the Jesus story for our consideration. The Jesus story is not new, if you can read. Jesus responds by asking, is he playing dumb? What things have happened in Jerusalem? He solicits their story, their perspective, their worldview, and he engages in active listening to build trust in the relationship.

So scene number three, the sharing of stories and visions verses 19 to 24. The Emmaus disciples proceed to tell Jesus the Jesus story. You get that? The Emmaus disciples proceed to tell Jesus the Jesus story from their limited understanding and their limited faith perspective. Jesus was, see it's all past tense. Jesus was a prophet. Jesus was powerful in word and deed. Jesus was God's messenger to the Jewish nation. But our leaders had Jesus crucified in

verse 20. We had hoped that he was the one, the true Messiah. The nation had been disappointed before. There were as many as 50 false Messiahs who preceded Jesus and claimed to be the son of God. We had hoped that he was the one, the true Messiah, who would finally be the son of God. Who would finally redeem Israel. The Emmaus disciples proceed to share their vision. They say, what is more? Well, we now face an identity crisis. If you have an identity crisis, and no one who does, it's a crisis of meaning. It's a crisis of faith. It is now the third day since the crucifixion they say. They pause. They recall that some of our female disciples went to the tomb heard this morning, but they didn't find the body of Jesus. Their testimony was confirmed by other disciples who later went to the tomb and didn't find the body of Jesus. They said, the woman amazed us. The woman said they had a vision of angels who said Jesus is. Jesus is not dead. Jesus is very much alive.

Well, let's go back to Vaughn at Starbucks. See, Vaughn sees my Bible open to Luke 24. He inquires about the Emmaus text. I share the context with him, how Jesus taught so potential disciples would have faith in him. Vaughn is cynical. He says the people won't get it. I suggest that the people don't know, don't need to know and understand the how of Jesus teaching his teaching methodology, but that the truth and hearing that Jesus teaching will naturally unfold as we act, as we live out, as we live out his story and make the mystery of the gospel my story. I confess to Vaughn that the reality of the Jesus story is unfolding in our relationship as we share stories and visions as educators.

Well, Vaughn laments, the millennials, they don't have the same values. The institutional churches, they're closing. They don't have enough money. See, to Vaughn, it's already the third day and the end is near. I suggest there's hope. Vaughn thinks I'm too optimistic. As an ambassador for Christ, I believe we can redeem time, events, and people. Again, in despair, Vaughn states, the world is going to the proverbial dogs. Well, I like dogs. I suggest to Vaughn, all the woofing that you hear is not the last word. And we talk about the word. And he talks about a theologian, Jacques Ellul, who talks about the humiliation of the word and Jesus being the word. So this is not a new concept that Jesus is word. I suggest we can model and mentor a new generation of students, of disciples. We can be disciples. Vaughn, we can do church together. We can be church together. Right here, right now, at Starbucks, not an institutional church, anywhere, because where two or three are gathered together, Jesus is there. Jesus is present. Vaughn gets up to leave. He's not sure what to make of me. He shakes his head, but then he reaches out and shakes my hand.

So scene four, the sharing of stories and visions from Jesus's perspective, this is verses 25 to 27. Jesus proceeds to fill in the gaps. He reminds the Emmaus disciples of the larger story and the broader vision of what's their story and vision are only a fragment. Jesus speaks bluntly to these disciples. He calls them foolish and slow. And we don't speak to our students that way, do we? At least we shouldn't. Although they reference the prophets, they did not adequately evaluate all the evidence. Like them, 1 Corinthians 13 verse 12, we see but a poor reflection. We know in part, but as Jesus teaches, we begin to see face to face and know fully. Note there's a spiritual sequence in the story. The cross must precede the resurrection. So in this world, we find injustice, we find suffering. So where do you begin? Where do I begin? To share the Jesus story.

So at Starbucks, on more than one occasion, Jimmy asked me to give him the source of happiness. Bob inquires about life's purpose. He knows me well in 10 words or less. [laughter] Vaughn laments about lost values. Joe asked, which candidate is the lesser of two evils? George asked me to distinguish between right and wrong. Jerry is concerned about injustice and evil in this world and how we might make a difference. See each of these individuals provide a unique opportunity to begin to explore and share the Jesus story. You begin with their question where they are. Jesus reinforces the messianic message by telling the story of Moses and all the prophets explaining what was foretold by himself. See how long did that take?

Scene five, Jesus waits for the disciples to come to their own knowing and seeing, this is verses 28 to 32. Notice verse 28 is a transition. Near the end of Jesus' teaching, he pauses. He stops. Dramatic effect perhaps. Who makes the next

move? In sports, if you watched the Maple Leafs last night, games are won and lost on transition. Either you have the puck or you don't have the puck. And if you don't have it, how do you get it back? Offense to defense, defense to offense. How do we take the offensive and overcome resistance, evil with good with God, Romans 12 and verse 21. It's almost evening in verse 29. The Emmaus disciples invite Jesus in to stay with us, to stay the night perhaps. Jesus accepts their invitation. And this is Geoff now at the table.

The table in the Emmaus disciples household becomes the Lord's table. Jesus is the Holy guest. He's also the Holy host. He's also, I guess, the Holy Ghost--the Holy Spirit. Jesus expresses thanksgiving. He serves the bread. He presides at the first post resurrection Eucharist, which means thanks offering, thanks giving, supper of the Lord. As the disciples now recognized Jesus, he disappears from their sight. On reflection, they know who Jesus is. Intuitively, they should have recognized Jesus on the road, as our hearts were burning. What does that feel like? As Jesus broke open the meaning of scripture. Like Augustine, we know God has been the Lord. He has made us for himself. And our hearts are restless until we find a rest in him. See, Bob said, "What's the meaning of happiness?" He asked for 10 words. I gave him 17.

The next slide is verses 33-35. The Emmaus disciples act. They jump up. They run all the way back to Jerusalem, confirming, confessing, their personal witness of their encounter with the risen Christ. Now, the last slide. Faith. Faith is based on knowing, knowledge, which leads to not just head reflection, but perhaps heart and life reflection. Faith is based on seeing, which leads to discovery. See, Jesus leads us to discover who he is. But until we act, it's only theory. See, faith means we have to act upon what we know and what we see. The risen Christ is now made visible. Prayer. The bread. The scripture. His flesh. We and all other strugglers and seekers come to faith. As we encounter God's twin sons, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We're beggars. We've been fed. And it's our mission to tell other beggars not only where the bread is, but the source, Jesus, who is the bread of life.

Last statement goes to Peter in 1 Peter 3, verse 21. Peter reminds us, see, this is a Jesus story, not just a resurrection story. It's a story of how people come to faith. But Peter reminds us, we are saved by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead in 1 Peter 3, verse 21. Long sermon. Now the day is over Ed. See, he chose that for a reason, right?

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