

Part 87: The Great Re-Introduction

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In our bedroom we have a picture of me standing with eyes to the ground in front of a spiral staircase, and behind me is Sarah, coming down the stairs in her wedding dress.

What the picture doesn't capture is the context. This was the first time I was going to see Sarah on our wedding day. Now, it's not the first time I'd seen Sarah. She was not new to me, but the moment and the significance was. She was the same, but she was different.

And in that moment she had total control over how she wanted to be seen. She picked out the dress she wanted, she did her hair the way she wanted, she came down those stairs at the pace she wanted. I, meanwhile stood there, waiting for the moment where she re-introduced herself to me with all the trappings of the new life that awaited us that day.

Today, we read of Jesus' reintroduction to his disciples after his resurrection. Word has gotten out that the tomb is empty, but today the news of his physical absence from the tomb will be complimented by his physical presence with some of his disciples. And just like Sarah on that day, Jesus was in control of how he wanted to be seen. Nothing was accidental, nothing was casual. And instead of revealing himself in the poignant trappings of festival garments—he reveals himself slowly, progressively, and intentionally.

It's important to understand this context today because it reshapes a key question in our own lives. In sharing the gospel, or in your own walk with Jesus we often say: "How can I know Jesus? What does it mean to follow him and believe in him?"

Well today, we answer that question from the perspective of Jesus—how does Jesus want you to know him and meet him? Jesus has orchestrated this re-introduction, one that has been anticipated for all eternity, and as he comes upon his unsuspecting disciples he reveals himself by faith in the gospel, through the scriptures which speak of his gospel and among his people who believe the gospel.

That's our main point today: **Jesus desires us to know and follow him by faith, through the scriptures and among his people.**

What we will also see today is that this isn't just a road map to making sense of Jesus, this is a road map to making sense of all of life. In this passage we read of two men who are slow on account of their sadness and confusion, but by the end they are quickened and enlivened with burning hearts and lips brimming with good news.

Following Jesus doesn't mean difficult and confusing circumstances won't come. But it does give us the tools we need to think and act faithfully when we can't seem to make sense of what we are going through.

Our first point this morning is that Jesus desires us to see and follow him **By Faith**.

What is faith? Christians have long said that faith includes three things: knowledge, agreement with that knowledge, and trust in that knowledge affirmed.

But what is faith in regards to us? The author of Hebrews tells us (**Hebrews 11:1**) “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” So faith includes assurance and conviction, two words that imply rational and conscious thought and reasoning.

But notice the object of reasoning: things not seen.

In other words, faith is an act of human reason but it is not faith in human reason—faith is in something outside of us. Faith demands that we think, assess, commit and reject with the tool of our reason and intellect—but faith is not only human logic. Proverbs encourages us in this way saying, “Lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6).

We can have worldly faith in all kinds of things, internal and external. But Biblical faith refuses to make sense of the world only in terms of how we see it is, but instead prioritizes our world as God says it is. Faith assumes we need better conversation partners.

We see this need lived out as we meet these two men, on the road trying to make sense of all the events which just happened in Jerusalem.

Our passage picks up on Resurrection Sunday, the first day of the week. Earlier this morning the women found the tomb empty. Peter, hearing this, ran to the tomb and found it just as they said and went home himself trying to make sense of it. And today, these men are themselves trying to reason, rationalize and synthesize all that they have seen and heard.

Luke 24:13-16, “That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.”

If there were social media, or internet algorithms, in the 1st century, whatever happened in Jerusalem would have been the trending story on every website and news feed. Luke draws our attention to the buzzing nature of these events. Twice he says these men were talking about “these things.” Luke uses a verb in verse 15 (“discussing together”) that implies it was a sort of debate or argument.

Everyone has a theory, everyone has an opinion, everyone has a take. And they are getting nowhere. They needed a better conversation partner.

And then Jesus appears, and in a divine miracle he keeps them from being able to recognize him. And he asks the most “trolliest” question one could ever ask: “What are you guys talking about?” Or literally, “What are these words you are exchanging?”

The question stops them dead in their tracks. It’s almost as if their discussion to make sense of reality had blinded them to reality. But once they were asked about it, they were reminded of how painful the events were. Luke says this: (**Luke 24:18**) “And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named

Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened here in these days?'"

And as Jesus often does, he draws us deeper into conversation with him so that he might help us make sense of our own hearts. He says to them: "What things?"

Luke 24:19-25, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some 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."

The events that they are discussing are not less than the very events of the gospel. In one sense we could capture this as the first "Apostle's Creed," because it has all the right data: Jesus Christ our Lord, suffered, crucified, dead, buried, descended to the grave, on the third day rose from the dead."

It's nearly word for word the message that Jesus himself prepared them for in **Luke 18:31-33**, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

When Peter shared the good news of the gospel with the Gentiles he recounted these same events: **Acts 10:38-41**, "you yourselves know...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear..."

So here we have Jesus sharing those same events for hope, Peter sharing these same events for salvation and joy...yet these men are sharing these same events but their experience is sadness, sorrow and confusion. How? Why?

They had the gospel by facts. But they did not have the gospel by faith.

All this was true. But, they say, "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." In light of all they say, they hoped in what was seen—and not what was unseen. In light of what they hoped for—the death they saw meant it wasn't true. Moreover, what was most confusing for them? Verse 24, they went to the tomb, "but [Jesus] they did not see."

If only they could see Jesus with their eyes, if only their faith was a conviction in the things presently seen! Then they would have faith. Yet before them is Jesus, in the flesh, and they still cannot see him. For a skeptical or doubting heart, we must realize that without faith we always see less.

Why did Jesus conceal himself like this? To show what it looks like to see Jesus by faith and not by sight—to model a faith which makes sense of what we see by what God has said. Conversing with the word of other humans, but without the word of God believed by faith will always leave us wearied with words and burdened in heart.

We might often say, "If God would just do _____, I'll believe. Then it would make sense." But faith is self-emptying. It humbly places our understanding not in our own mind—but in God's mind. And Jesus now shows us where we can see this and how we are to nurture this kind of faith: **In his word.**

Jesus wants us to know and follow him by faith, in his word.

Jesus is a master at knowing when to be gracious and when to be firm. Here these men are shocked that a dead person would rise. And what does Jesus say about that problem? "Are you stupid?" That seems harsh if we view it through the eyes of flesh. Dead men don't rise. But it made perfect sense according to what they were taught to believe by faith—not just by Jesus, but by the whole Old Testament.

Luke 24:25-27, "'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

Kyrie Irving was basketball star in the NBA and he created a character named, "Uncle Drew." In these videos, Hollywood level makeup artists disguised him to look like a 70 year old man and he would visit these public basketball courts where the top street players played. He would try to get them to let him play, and they would laugh, but once they did he made them look like fools.

I imagine that if we were in the same situation of Jesus we would "Uncle Drew" these men to make our point. Nothing would vindicate his resurrection than making this the big unveiling right? It's the gotcha moment our hearts would have loved to see. But Jesus didn't do that did he? He didn't open their eyes to see his radiant resurrected glory, but instead he opens the scriptures to show them himself.

Jesus doesn't rebuke them for not believing the women, he rebukes them for not believing the Bible. If we want to know Jesus, Jesus wants us to know him through the scriptures. Faith in Jesus is not abstract faith in whoever we want Jesus to be, faith in Jesus is seeing Jesus, and all the events of the gospel, as the Bible calls us to see it.

Now we need to remember what Jesus is talking about here. He's not opening up the gospel of John, or the book of Romans and saying, "See the Christ was here." The Christian Bible is split up into two parts, the "New Testament" is the smaller portion and that includes the birth of Jesus and everything that happened afterwards. But the Old Testament, included everything that happened before Jesus came.

It's the part of our Bibles that we often want to skip, or struggle with, but here Jesus says it's all about the gospel.

There's a movie that I'm sure has already been spoiled by you, so I have very little fear talking about it this morning. In the movie "The 6th Sense," Bruce Willis character is dead the whole time. As the viewer, you don't know this till the end—it's only at the end where the filmmaker wanted you to make that connection.

If you knew this piece of information at the beginning, you would begin to see hints and clear references to this the whole time. There are scenes which made sense the first time, but now you realize it makes the most sense if we understand the fullness of truth revealed. The filmmaker could have chosen to lead with that information, but instead he chose to conceal it—only hinting at it until the proper time.

But now, you can go back and see the truth that was right in front of your eyes the whole time. This is what Jesus did as he “interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Now remember, they don’t know this is Jesus. So as Jesus does this, he is just talking about the story of the Christ and his suffering, but they haven’t yet realized that it is the Christ himself teaching this! Can you imagine what that was like? Can you imagine the difference it would make as you read the Old Testament?

I imagine it went something like this: “Do you remember when Moses wrote Genesis, and we read in Genesis 3:15 that the Devil is gonna strike an offspring of Eve on the heel, but that same heel, though stricken would crush the head of the Devil? Do you think that maybe when the Christ was crucified he crushed the head of sin and Satan, yet he himself was struck by death? But when he rose he proved that it was just a bruise.

“What about Abraham, who was spared the sacrifice of his son by God providing a substitute ram? Or in Leviticus where we see that sins are only atoned for by blood, since all sin demands death? Do you think every sacrifice in the Old Testament anticipated and looked forward to Jesus who is both the only son of God who was not spared but instead the ultimate sacrifice for sins once and for all?

“Or what of the priests who lived to make intercession for the people, purifying them so that the God who desired them might dwell with them? Could it be that every priest we see was meant to show us of the Christ, God’s true anointed priest, who brings an unholy people into the presence of a holy God cleansing them by his blood?

“What about when God promised David, the great king of Israel, that he would have an heir who sat on his throne eternally? Do you remember that Jesus, who was from the line of David, said he was the Christ and now he has risen and cannot die again? Do you think Jesus is the greater of every king? The one who rules his people perfectly and without corruption?

“What about the prophet Elijah, who called out wicked Israel for their sin, while raising the widow’s son? Do you see that the Christ is the true prophet of God who warns his people of their sin, but also raises them to life by the power of his own resurrection?

“What about Jonah, the unwilling prophet who was so repulsed by the offer of forgiveness to disgusting sinners that he had to spend three days punished in the belly of a fish before he brought the message of repentance? Do you think that was a shadow of Jesus, the willing prophet who for love for the lost preached repentance by faith and then spent three days in the grave in order to pay for our sins and give us life in himself?

“Or what about Song of Solomon, that weird book you’re uncomfortable reading? Do you think that when the Groom-King says to his beloved, “You are altogether beautiful, my love, there is no flaw in you. Come with me to Lebanon, my bride; come with me from Lebanon, Depart from the peaks of Amana, from the peak of Senir and Hermon, from the den of lions, from the mountain of leopards” that it was longing for the day when the Christ would call his beloved out of the den of sin, declare us sinless in his love, and take us into the warmth of his embrace forever loved, forever redeemed, and forever cherished?”

One old Baptist pastor named Andrew Fuller once exhorted his church, “Learn your religion from the Bible. Let that be your decisive rule.” And here Jesus, chose not to reveal himself in his flesh to these men, but to reveal himself in his word to them, calling them to believe by faith in all the scriptures said.

And what was the result? Well, we don’t see it until later, but we pick it up in **Luke 24:32**, “They said to each other, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures.’”

Church, if you want to see with the eyes of faith, the read with the eyes of faith. It seems ominous, but I promise you, by the help of the Holy Spirit and your brothers and sisters in the faith you can do it.

And this is what leads us to our last point. Jesus desires us to know and follow him **With his people**.

Notice how it is in communion with each other, and with Jesus, that Christ is seen most clearly.

Luke 24:28-33, "So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly saying, 'Stay with us, for it is toward the evening and the day is now spent.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures." And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."

What a wonderful conclusion, right? Having opened to them the scriptures, Jesus finally opens their eyes to see him and then he disappears. But notice what they didn’t do.

They didn’t go looking for Jesus. But instead the clarity they had on Jesus, and the clarity they had in the scriptures, led them to go look for Jesus people.

Luke has chosen to show us these moments of great clarity on who Jesus is do not happen in isolated mountain top experiences. But instead in a shared study of scripture, a shared breaking of bread, and lastly a shared community of faith.

Now this breaking of bread the disciples shared with Jesus was not the Lord’s Supper. But I think Luke is intentional in making that connection. It was in the breaking of bread, the same phrase he used when he introduced the Lord’s Supper, where Jesus finally opened their eyes.

We must see Jesus for ourselves by faith—but none of us are called to see Jesus by ourselves in faith.

This is why we as a church take the Lord’s Supper together as often as we do. It is because in that moment we are together reminding, remembering, and rejoicing that we have eyes to see by faith, the full witness and work of the cross.

God has so chosen that the message of Jesus given in scripture, when believed in faith on account of the work of Jesus on the cross, creates by natural necessity a community of people who marked off by their belief that, “The Lord has risen indeed.”

This community is the church, and as we conclude Luke and begin the book of Acts we will learn more about the church and its relationship to Jesus and to the Christian. But right now I want us to see two quick distinctions here.

First, Jesus' people are those whose eyes have been opened by Jesus to see Jesus. If you're visiting today, that who we want you to see. You don't belong here by showing up, or even by hearing the news that these men heard. You belong to Jesus' people by seeing Jesus by faith, through the message of the Bible.

Second, Jesus' people, having seen Jesus by faith in the scriptures are preoccupied with letting others know this message.

You'll notice that these men, made it to Emmaus which was seven miles from Jerusalem. It would have taken them about 3.5 hours to get there. And when they got there, they had a Bible study and dinner, but having realized the full reality of Jesus, at what was probably late at night, they rose that same hour and made that 3.5 hour journey back to Jerusalem.

Why? Because it was nothing but joy to tell others the good news that Jesus is alive, and we can know it by faith in his word.

And I love that when they get there, the others already have the message. They came in thinking they would be dropping a knowledge bomb, but as soon as they open the door what do those other disciples say, "The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

Here is our great motivation and hope in evangelism, the gospel compels us to share it but the Lord is always before us preparing the hearts and lives of others to themselves hear and respond in faith.

We always know more together, and we always can expect Jesus to work. So let us together then be a community who desires to know and follow Jesus by faith, through his word, and with his people.