

Jesus brings Understanding

Luke 24:13-35

SERIES “So What: Why the Resurrection Matters”

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We started a series last week we are calling, “So What: Why the Resurrection Matters”, and we are looking at and studying five of the 10 or 12 post-resurrection appearances of Jesus that are in scripture.

As we stated last week, these post-resurrection appearances of Jesus make up the greatest evidence we have that the resurrection is an historical event. These accounts are given to us mostly by eyewitnesses, and each appearance that we have in scripture teaches us something about ourselves and teaches us something about Jesus.

The resurrection definitely matters!

Jaroslav Pelikan was a Christian historian and a professor at Yale University. He wrote – “**If Christ is not raised, nothing matters; if Christ is raised, nothing else matters.**”

Last week for our Easter message, we talked about the resurrection mattering because all of us need hope and Jesus is hope. This week’s appearance teaches us...and this is the title of the message today: **Jesus brings Understanding**

Let me begin this message today by just asking you some questions:

- Have you ever been confused at what God has allowed into your life? Perhaps there’s been a curveball thrown your way and you weren’t really expecting it.
- Have you ever doubted what the Lord was doing in your life? You’re having a hard time figuring out and discerning what he’s up to or trying to teach you in the moment? Is he even there?
- Have you ever questioned or asked God, “Why?” Maybe you’re at a place of disbelief...shock...
- Maybe it’s something going on that has you discouraged...so much so that you are ready to throw in the towel and quit on the Lord.

Do any of this jive with you? Can you identify with any of those feelings or emotions? Have you ever asked any of these questions?

Sure, you have...we all have...

Illus. Mike Fechner – This past week marked the 12-year anniversary of one of the top influences in my life passing away. Mike Fechner was my first supervisor at the church I served in Dallas. I was twenty-two when I went on staff there and he was 39.

I had never met a man who loved Jesus and served Jesus like him. He was a very giving man...had a tender heart. He started an inner-city ministry that is still making an impact to this

day. He taught me how to fast...he taught me the importance of looking after the poor and vulnerable.

He took me on his family vacations...and his kids became family to me. He was diagnosed with brain cancer at 49 and fought it for nearly five years. I remember coming down here to Houston and going with him to radiation treatments.

The Lord took him home at the age of 53 and I'll never forget the sense of loss I felt. I mean this guy walked with Jesus and I could always count on his counsel and his prayers.

And when he died, I remember not so much thinking, "Why?" as much as just being so sad...hurting for his kids who were in high school and college at the time. I didn't understand what God was doing and couldn't believe that we were actually having to walk through and experience his death.

I knew Mike was a believer. I knew the resurrection promises. But I was hurting. I was discouraged. I was down. And it was a moment of reality not matching up with my expectations. God didn't come through like I hoped and prayed and thought and he would.

We've ALL been here at some point...and if we haven't, we will be one day. This is where the disciples were after Jesus had been crucified and put to death.

They were MORE than down. They were disillusioned. They had some questions...they couldn't wrap their mind around all that was going on and then they have an encounter with the risen Christ that changes everything.

He brings clarity...He brings understanding. Let's look at the text together.

Luke 24:13-35 – “That very day (this is the day of the resurrection – Sunday morning!) **two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,** ¹⁴ **and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.** ¹⁵ **While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.** ¹⁶ **But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.** ¹⁷ **And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad.** (Not a small detail here...some versions read, “they were discouraged”...others “their face was downcast”...what they were talking about was deeply distressing to them.) ¹⁸ **Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”** (This just to note once again that Jesus didn't die in secret. The crucifixion was public. This was front page newspaper stuff.) ¹⁹ **And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,** ²⁰ **and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.** ²¹ **But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.** (right here we get a bit of insight into the root of their depression if you will. It was unmet expectations. They thought Jesus was going to lead a Moses-like liberation and get them out from underneath the Roman Empire. Instead, they watched him die a brutal death at the hands of

the Empire – their hopes of the redemption of Israel are shattered!) **Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.** (then listen to this detail) ²² **Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,** ²³ **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.** ²⁴ **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.”** (You can sense the confusion...the bewilderment...the not knowing what to believe, can't wrap our mind around what all they have experienced and heard) ²⁵ **And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!** ²⁶ **Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”** ²⁷ **And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.** ²⁸ **So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther,** ²⁹ **but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them.** ³⁰ **When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.** ³¹ **And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.** 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?”** ³³ **And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together,** ³⁴ **saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”** ³⁵ **Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.”**

I'm going to get to the ways Jesus brings understanding because it's the point of this text, and it's where we'll spend the major portion of our time today.

But first can I just give you some “don'ts” when you're at a place like the disciples and don't understand all that's going on – let's call it “The curve in the Emmaus Road”.

Perhaps you're like I was:

- Experiencing the untimely death of a loved one and just questioning what's going on? Why, God, did you not stop this or change this?
- Or maybe there's been something to happen in your career that has surprised you and you weren't expecting (passed over on that promotion or let go in a merger), and it's got you wondering why God would allow such a thing in your life?
- Or maybe like the disciples some expectations you had haven't lined up with reality and you're confused – what's going on? You're not understanding why God is doing or not doing something.

If this is you...you find yourself in “The curve on the Emmaus Road” let me share with you three “don'ts”.

1. Don't isolate yourself

That's kind of what these two disciples were doing. Unlike the other disciples who were with one another and hanging out in and around Jerusalem, these disciples left "that very day" - you get a sense of immediacy to their movement.

Emmaus as the scripture notes in (v. 1) is seven miles away from Jerusalem. On foot, that's a full day of traveling. And while the scripture simply informs us where they were going (to a village named Emmaus), we can't miss that the direction they were going.

Their journey was taking them away from the temple...away from the city. They were "getting out of Dodge" so to speak!

This is often what we want to do in times of confusion or when we have been hurt or disappointed, isn't it? We want to get out of town...we want to avoid being with others...we want to isolate ourselves.

There's danger in this though.

Prov. 18:1 – "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment."

Did you know that researchers have found that when we isolate ourselves...

And listen I know that some are more introverted and extraverted – I get all that...some like to process alone and there is time for that – I'm talking though about an isolation that locks people out...isolation that is void of any voice getting through. Isolation that at its root is unhealthy.

Researchers have found that this type of isolation and loneliness activates the same regions of the brain as physical pain. In brain scans they have found that loneliness/isolation looks nearly identical to that of a broken bone.

It's not a healthy place to be. The other disciples were back in Jerusalem hurting, but they were at least hurting together. These disciples were leaving and I don't know that it was helpful just the two of them processing what they were feeling and experiencing all on their own.

2. Don't give in to discouragement

One of the reasons that isolation is so dangerous is because it can feed discouragement. The scripture says these two disciples were talking about what had taken place and when Jesus showed up and asked some questions, look at the text - (v. 17) – they were looking sad...

Their faces were downcast. No other way to put it...they were discouraged.

And we can't blame them. They had just seen Jesus die a brutal death. As previously noted, their hope of the redemption of Israel – in their minds was over...it was put into a tomb on that Friday evening. And so, their discouragement was real.

Discouragement in our journey of faith is going to come. However, we can't give into it. Jesus is HOPE – because of the resurrection, there is ALWAYS hope.

Look, what is the WORST thing you are ever going to face? Is it not what scripture calls the final enemy? Death. Even in death because of the resurrection, we have hope. So, WHATEVER it is you are going through, don't give in to discouragement.

3. Don't quit on Jesus

You see the process, right. If you're on a "curve on the Road to Emmaus", don't isolate yourself. So often isolation leads to more discouragement. Stay there too long and you'll be tempted to quit on your faith...and to quit on your faith is to quit on Jesus.

We've seen this, right? We know people...have sat on the same pews as people who once followed Jesus closely THEN something happened, and as a result, they've drifted away from their faith, and they've turned their back on Jesus.

Now, they may not articulate it that way, but that's what they've done.

Look, there are going to be times in life that cause uncertainty. There will be circumstances and experiences we go through that are not going to make sense...don't allow those situations, experiences and the emotions that come with them allow you to quit on Jesus.

Illus. Artemis II – (SHOW IMAGE) – I see this pic...it truly is awe-inspiring. If God creates this and is over this, surely, he knows things I don't know! He's big enough to handle that which is overwhelming me...can give me strength and sustain me when I'm the MOST low...MOST discouraged...MOST depressed...MOST uncertain.

Is. 55:8-9 – “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

One of the things that makes God, God – is this right here! He doesn't operate on the same playing field as we do. He's all-together different. He's not limited in ANY way.

He has promised that what he starts, he will complete (Phil. 1:6) and that he will (Rom. 8:28) “work all things together for good” FOR those who love him and are called according to this purpose.

And listen...just like it was with these disciples, you never know when Jesus is going to show up in your life! You don't know if you are at the start of the curve in the Emmaus Road, in the middle of it, are about to come out of it, so don't quit on him!

Trust that whatever it is you are going through...whatever questions you may have - Jesus in going to that cross and getting out of the grave shows you that he is FOR you. He didn't quit on us, let's by his grace, strength and power not quit on him.

Those are the three “don’ts”! We’ll look at the “do’s” as we make our way through this text and see HOW Jesus brings understanding.

First, I want you to notice: **Jesus brings understanding through scripture**

Luke 24:27 – “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”

This had to be the greatest Bible study that has ever been given! Can you imagine for a moment what this was like? I mean, I know you all have a great life group teacher, but can you imagine Jesus teaching your life group?! That’s what’s going on in this moment.

Now, the two disciples still don’t know that it’s Jesus. Remember (v. 16) tells us “their eyes were kept from recognizing him”. They don’t know it’s him...but they do realize as he is talking – look at:

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?”

Listen to me: Revelation comes via the scripture. Do NOT miss this! Scripture’s ENTIRE purpose is to point us to Jesus. From the start to the finish, this book is about Jesus – that’s what he was showing these disciples.

“He began with Moses and all the prophets...and told them...taught them the things concerning himself.”

Philip Ryken – “Here Jesus gives us the golden key to unlock the meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures: they are all about him. Every part of the Old Testament finds its meaning and purpose in relationship to the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Scripture says it is only in Jesus that all things hold together (Col 1:17), and this is true of the Old Testament. We cannot fully and properly understand anything from Moses to Malachi unless we see its connection to the whole gospel, including both the cross and the empty tomb.”

Beautiful. Amazing. I can’t imagine what this Bible study was like. Did he take them to:

Gen. 3:15 (Prophecy to the Enemy) – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head (death blow – the cross!), and you shall bruise his heel.”

Did he take them to Gen. 22 and show how Isaac was the “only son of Abraham” – taken to Mount Moriah – did he point out that Calvary was the same mountain as Moriah? God provided a substitute for Abraham, but Jesus was our substitute on Calvary.

Did he take them to the Passover of Exodus 12 (tell the story) – and remind them they just came from Passover, and the blood of the Lamb was spilled out?

Did he take them to Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 53 and just quote to them:

Is. 53:3-6 – “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—everyone—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

I wonder if he asked, “Any of that sound familiar?” That had to be some kind of Bible study...no wonder their hearts were burning within them. It was so good they wanted him to stay longer with them!

Luke 24:28-29 – “So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So, he went in to stay with them.

Notice, HOW Jesus brought understanding – very important – THROUGH the scripture. The Word of God reveals to us the Word of God (John 1:1).

Interesting to me that rather than pointing to his nail scarred hands and showing them his side, like we will see him do with Thomas in next week's message – he doesn't point to his resurrection body as proof of his resurrection – he points FIRST to the scripture!

So, let me give you the first “do” when you're confused at what is happening in your life and don't quite know what do with your questions and the emotions you are experiencing. The first “do” is:

1. Do press into scripture

If you want an encounter with Christ like these disciples...if you want understanding because right now you like them are on your own Road to Emmaus...there are things going on in your life that you don't understand and can't wrap your mind around.

Press into scripture. This is where you get revelation. This is where Jesus meets you...right here in the pages of scripture. He knew he was not going to physically walk down every road with us, so what did he do?

He left us his Word. And he put his Spirit inside of us. And every time you pick up this book, you can encounter the living Christ!

This book...my goodness...it says of itself:

2 Tim. 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Heb. 4:12 – “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

You want your heart to burn within you because you hear God speaking to you? Open the word of God! This IS his Word and this is where he reveals himself to you, so if you want understanding and clarity press into the scripture.

Secondly, note this in the text: **Jesus brings understanding over time**

Notice, he didn't resolve what these disciples were feeling in an instant. He didn't even begin by showing up and immediately answering all of their questions.

In fact, he started the conversation by asking questions...listening to them.

As he ALWAYS is...Jesus is about the relationship. He wants our heart. He wants our faith built up and made strong. And what makes our faith strong and what builds our faith MORE than anything else in life is tough times.

It's a FACT. We don't have to like it, but it's true.

- Trials.
- Troubles.
- Unanswered prayers.
- Uncertain times.

Waiting on the Lord – these things strengthen our faith, and we have to learn that in this world that we, as Paul put it in (1 Cor. 13:12) “see through a mirror dimly.”

On this side of eternity there are going to be questions and fears. There are going to be situations that arise that are outside of our control and that cause us to think deeply about our faith and what is it that we really believe. Stuff is going to go down that shakes us to the core, and in these moments, we have a choice.

We can cut and run and give up on Jesus OR we can trust that he is sovereign and in control. We can choose to believe that he is working his plan. We can entrust our lives to the Creator of the universe and walk with him believing that in time we (even if it's in eternity) he will bring understanding to what he has allowed into our lives.

Illus. Ah-hah! – This is the most often repeated words in heaven! So, here is the second “do”:

2. Do trust God in the waiting

Waiting is never fun, but my goodness...there are some things God does that can only happen in his waiting room. I'm telling you this from experience. It's worth it to wait on God!

God is not on the same time schedule as we are. He is working in us and developing us.

Illus. Waiting to pastor (9/5/16)

Ps. 27:14 – “Wait for the LORD; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!”

NOTHING builds the faith/trust muscle like waiting on God. Your curve on the Emmaus Road may last longer than the person next to you. Just keep walking...Jesus will bring understanding...it will take place over time (Ps. 119:105 his word is a lamp into your feet).

One of my favorite quotes is by author and former pastor, **John Piper** – **“God is always doing 10,000 things in your life, and you may be aware of three of them.”**

The resurrection proves God is FOR US. It proves that he has all the power in the world. It proves he has EVERYTHING under his control.

So, wait patiently on him while you're on your Emmaus Road, and I promise you WHEN he shows up, he will do for you exactly what he did for these two disciples. He'll open your eyes and speak words that burn in your heart and bring understanding when you need it the most. Our job is to trust him in the waiting.

Third and finally...and this will be an interesting one to get into...Jesus brings understanding THROUGH scripture. Jesus brings understanding OVER time, and then thirdly: **Jesus brings understanding in communion**

Now, allow me to get really theological with you for a moment. Look with me at what the scripture says:

Luke 24:30-31,33-35 – “When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight... (AWESOME! Look now at (v. 33-35) And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

It was in the “breaking of the bread” that their eyes were opened. Maybe the disciples were there when Jesus broke the bread and fed the 5,000 that day on the shores of the Sea of Galilee...or perhaps they were there in the Upper Room, when he broke bread with them instituting the Lord's Supper – I tend to think this was the case!

There was something to Jesus breaking the bread that opened their eyes to who he was and made them run back to Jerusalem even though it was the end of the day.

Jesus commanded his disciples in instituting the Lord's Supper to take the bread (his body broken) and to drink of the fruit of the vine (his blood poured out) until he came.

It's why we still take the Lord's Supper today.

And while as Protestants, we believe this meal is symbolic of his body and blood...in a VERY real way, when we take of his supper, he is present in it!

The Lord's Supper is meant to remind us of the price paid for sin AND when we take it, we are affirming by faith that we are a part of the family of God.

In other words when we take it, there is a deep recognition going on...our eyes are open when we take the Lord's Supper unlike other times of Christian worship. Like these disciples when the bread is broken, we recognize EXACTLY who he is and what he has done for us.

As Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 11:26** – **“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”**

In the Lord's Supper we encounter the risen Christ, proclaim his death, resurrection and return. In this meal we partake of him and all his benefits...and check this, we do it together.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the Church...the Church gathered. Where there are “two or three” just like in this story on the Road to Emmaus.

So, here is the third and final “do”:

3. Do gather with God's people

Because this is where communion is to be practiced. In the church gathered. This is where your faith is strengthened. It's why the writer of Hebrews wrote:

Heb. 10:24-25 – **“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”**

We need one another...to overcome isolation...to fight through depression...to be encouraged to keep waiting on the Lord and not quit on him!

When we are together, the manifest presence of Christ is here and it's especially so when we share in the Lord's Supper together. So, “do keep gathering with God's people”.

The last thing you need to do when you're in a curve on the Road to Emmaus is drop out of church and fellowship with God's people.

“So What?” – that’s the name of this series: “Why the resurrection matters?”

It matters because if Jesus didn’t rise from the dead, we’d still be in the dark. We’d be sad and despondent just like these two disciples were that day. BUT...because Jesus did rise from the dead, he brings with him understanding.

Will you pray with me?

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.