

ROAD TO EMMAUS

Visiting Jerusalem years ago. I was so tired of seeing all these historical sites of what HAD happened. When we visited the garden tomb it was different. We had a guide that showed us around the site. We had a time of communion together. Then we went and visited the tomb, as I was standing there looking in the guide came up beside me and said in a low voice "if you are looking for Jesus, you will not find Him here. He has risen!" What made it different was the fact that the guide did not just know the facts about Jesus, he had a relationship with the risen Christ. Do you?

The Call to Worship had just been pronounced starting Easter Sunday Morning service in a Texas church. The choir started its processional, singing "Up from the Grave He Arose" as they marched in perfect step down the center aisle to the front of the church. The last lady was wearing shoes with very slender heels. Without a thought for her fancy heels, she marched toward the grating that covered that hot air register in the middle of the aisle. Suddenly the heel of one shoe sank into the hole in the register grate. In a flash she realized her predicament. Not wishing to hold up the whole processional, without missing a step, she slipped her foot out of her shoe and continued marching down the aisle. There wasn't a hitch. The processional moved with clock-like precision. The first man after her spotted the situation and without losing a step, reached down and pulled up her shoe, but the entire grate came with it! Surprised, but still singing, the man kept on going down the aisle, holding in his hand the grate with the shoe attached. Everything still moved like clockwork. Still in tune and still in step, the next man in line stepped into the open register and disappeared from sight. The service took on a special meaning that Sunday, for just as the choir ended with "Allelujah! Christ arose!" a voice was heard under the church shouting... "I hope all of you are out of the way 'cause I'm coming out now!" The little girl closest to the aisle shouted, "Come on up, Jesus! We'll stay out of the way."

That was a memorable Easter for that little girl. Has today been a memorable Easter for you? We have heard again the story and sung the songs. However, have you experienced the risen savior this year?

Luke 24: 13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him. 17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 "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. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 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. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." 25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. 28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

1. Hearing the Truth – Broken Hearted (the witness of changed lives)

Emmaus was a suburb community of Jerusalem like Bethlehem, about 7 miles outside of Jerusalem. As these two men walked along it says that they were discussing everything that had happened in the last few weeks. The triumphal entry, the teaching in the temple, the last supper, the arrest and crucifixion and even the claims that the women had seen angels and that Jesus had risen. These men knew what had happened, they were eyewitnesses to everything that had taken place. They knew the story. They had heard first hand the claims of Jesus. They recognized His power and authority. They had heard about the empty tomb and that Mary had seen Jesus risen. After all this, they were still spectators to all that had happened.

It is possible to know a lot of information about Jesus but not have a personal relationship with Him. You can grow up in home where you go to church and are around Christians and see the difference Jesus makes but still not be a Christian.

It says here that as they walked along their faces were downcast and they were broken hearted. It was no wonder, their dreams had been shattered. The one they had put their hope in had died. Notice their words; “but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.” They HAD hoped, but now with the death of Jesus that hope was gone.

Let me ask you a question this morning, have you ever felt like those men? Was their ever a dream that died in your life so that hope was gone? You face an obstacle, and at first you trust that Jesus is going to show up and remove it for you. But things do not go according to your plans and your world just comes falling down around you. You know the claims of Jesus and even believe that He can do a miracle in your life, but when he does not show up according to your plans hope begins to fade.

There are so many people today that are simply spectators when it comes to their faith. They see the truth but have done nothing to receive it personally. They know about Jesus. They know the Easter story. Maybe they have seen the difference that Jesus can make in a person’s life. Maybe they have been to church and seen what others say about Jesus. However, this is as far as they go.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt got tired of smiling that big smile and saying the usual things at all those White House receptions. So, one evening he decided to find out whether anybody was paying attention to what he was saying. As each person came up to him with extended hand, he flashed that big smile and said, "I murdered my grandmother this morning." People would automatically respond with comments such as "How lovely!" or "Just continue with your great work!" Nobody listened to what he was saying, except one foreign diplomat. When the president said, "I murdered my grandmother this morning," the diplomat responded softly, "I'm sure she had it coming to her."

There are times when I understand how Roosevelt must have felt. You preach a sermon about the death and resurrection of Jesus and the necessity of receiving the gift of salvation that He offers and people just shake hands at the door afterwards saying "How lovely!" and "keep up the great work" without really allowing those words to impact them and make a difference.

Do you know of anyone who has heard the truth but that is as far as they have gone? Maybe they have seen the changed lives of others. They like what they see in church and religion but it’s just words and they never come closer.

2. Knowing the Truth – Burning Hearted (the witness of God’s word)

It says here that Jesus responded to their broken hearts by reminding them of what the Bible says. He began with Moses and went through the Old Testament with the prophets to explain what God had revealed about his plan of salvation. He laid out for them clearly what the plan of God was and how God had accomplished it. How I would have loved to have been there that day. The risen Christ laying out God's eternal plan of salvation. He did this to explain the events that they had witnessed.

Likewise, there are many people in churches today who have not only heard and seen what Jesus can do, they have read the bible. They know what it says but they go no further on their road to faith. They hear the plan of salvation. They know the facts, and have read the Bible. They can quote chapter and verse. They may even be convinced that the Bible is true.

It says a little later that as Jesus opened the word to them it was like their hearts were BURNING within them. Have you ever noticed that the more you understand the bible the more sense you are able to make about the world around you? The more you understand it the more you understand yourself and the reason for everything that happens around you. The cure for heartbreak is the good news of Jesus. The gospel takes us from heartbreak to heartburn.

At the close of WWI, the French Army had hundreds of soldiers suffering from amnesia because of shell shock. A faulty record system lost the identity of these war victims. To find their families and return them to their homes, an "Identification Rally" was scheduled in Paris. Thousands of relatives of the missing gathered in a great plaza. One by one, the men were led to a central platform to speak these words: "Is there anyone here who can tell me who I am?"

There is a new movie out right now called the Case for Christ. It is the true life story of Lee Strobel who in the 1980s was a legal editor at the Chicago Tribune. When his wife became a Christian he tried to use his journalistic and legal training to disprove the claims of Christianity. Ultimately, he found that the bible was true and became a follower of Christ himself. He was certainly not the first.

Professor Thomas Arnold, author of the three-volume History of Rome, and holder of the chair of modern history at Oxford, was well acquainted with the value of evidence in determining historical facts. This great scholar said, "I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead."

Dr. Frank Morrison, a lawyer who had been brought up in a rationalistic environment, had come to the opinion that the resurrection was nothing but a fairy-tale happy ending which spoiled the matchless story of Jesus. He felt that he owed it to himself, and to others, to write a book that would present the truth about Jesus and dispel the myth of the resurrection. Upon studying the facts, however, he, too, came to a different conclusion. The sheer weight of the evidence compelled him to conclude that Jesus actually did rise from the dead. Morrison wrote his book—but not the one he had planned. It is titled, Who Moved the Stone? The first chapter, very significantly, is called, "The Book That Refused to Be Written."

The literary scholar, C. S. Lewis, former professor of Medieval and Renaissance literature at Cambridge University, when writing about his conversion to Christianity, indicated that he had believed Christians "to be wrong." The last thing Lewis wanted was to embrace Christianity. After evaluating the basis and

evidence for Christianity, Lewis concluded that in other religions there was “no such historical claim as in Christianity.” His knowledge of literature forced him to treat the Gospel record as a trustworthy account. “I was by now too experienced in literary criticism to regard the Gospels as myth.”

Finally, contrary to his strong stand against Christianity, Professor Lewis had to make an intelligent decision: “You must picture me alone in my room, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.”

Unfortunately there are many people who, unlike Lee Strobel or CS Lewis, know the bible but still do not allow that truth to change their lives, simply because of the next point;

3. Receiving the Truth – Open Hearted (the power of Christ’s presence)

At this point in the story the disciples came to an intersection in the road. The disciples had reached their destination and Jesus “acted” as if he were going farther. Why would He have done this? Jesus did not just happen to be on the road that day - he was there for those men. Why act as if he were going farther?

Jesus was waiting for an invitation. An invitation to stay. Notice that only after the disciples invited Jesus to stay that their eyes were opened. At this point they went from being spectators to participants. They went from hearing the good news to being carriers of the good news as they raced back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples.

It is not enough to acknowledge that Jesus was real or even God. It is not enough to know all the facts about his life and the plan of salvation. You must invite Him into your heart. A gift given is not yours until you receive it and make it yours. Is Jesus real in your life?

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Christianity is more than just knowing the facts about Jesus. Easter is not about information. It is a personal encounter with the living Christ. It is moving from what has happened to what is happening in your personal relationship with a risen savior.

The stone was not rolled away so that Jesus could leave. He had left before the stone was touched. He walked through a closed door to be with the disciples. The stone was not rolled away for Him, it was rolled away for us. It shows us that Jesus is risen and that we have hope. He offers us an experience with him if we will only let Him in.

Maybe you have heard about Christ. Maybe you are even feeling your heart burning as the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart. Take the next step and welcome him in. Make Him Lord of your life today.

The expression "face the music" is said to have originated from a story from Japan. There was a man in the imperial orchestra that couldn't play a note. Being a person of great influence and wealth, he had demanded that he be given a place in the group because he wanted to "perform" before the emperor. The conductor agreed to let him sit in the second row of the orchestra, even though he couldn't read music. He was given a flute, and when a concert would begin, he'd raise his instrument, pucker his lips, and move his fingers. He would go through all the motions of playing, but he never made a sound. This deception continued for years. Then a new conductor took over. He told the orchestra that he wanted to audition each player personally. One by one they performed for him and then came the flutist's turn. He was frantic with worry, so he pretended to be sick. However, the doctor who was ordered to examine him declared that he was perfectly well. The conductor insisted that the man appear and demonstrate his skill. Shamefacedly he had to confess that he was a fake. He was unable to "face the music."

In the world today there are many people who would call themselves Christians. They go through the motions, but they are only pretenders. Someday they will be called upon to stand before the Judge of heaven and earth, and their deception will be revealed. God will then separate the "phonies" from the real Christians. No one will be able to hide in the crowd. Each will be made to "face the music."