Life Group Bible Study

*Walking With Jesus - Our Direction!*

July 17, 2022

Luke 24:13-35

THEME

Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are headed in the direction that is revealed by the Scriptures and the breaking of bread.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR LIFE GROUP TO KNOW?

Our journey of faith continually takes us back to the basics on a road paved with the primal purpose of the dream of God.

WHAT DO WE WANT OUR LIFE GROUP TO DO?

We want to get back to the basics and pray for our church, its direction, and our place in that vision.

INTRODUCTION:

In today’s study, we’re going to consider what it means to get back to the basics. For our purposes, this means getting back to the open tomb and the empty cross, and asking what it means that the resurrected Christ is alive and loose in the world.

ICEBREAKER

What are some basics that you keep you grounded? Do you think we are missing some basics as a people and a culture? What do you think the basics would be for Jesus? Why?

PRAY TOGETHER

*God, we often choose to walk a path that leads us away from you and your purposes. In our journey of faith for today, help us to run back to you, and to the basic things that keep our life in focus and pointed in the direction you would have for us. Help us to understand your message more deeply, and live it more clearly. Fill us with passion for everything that you are passionate about. Open your word to us today, as we seek what you would teach us in this time together. Amen.*

Content

The story of the encounter between two disciples and Jesus on the road to Emmaus is one of the most vivid resurrection appearances. Although this story is briefly, even cryptically, referenced in Mark 16:12, it contains some key themes found throughout Luke’s Gospel: the importance of the Word, the status of Jesus as a prophet, and his role as Messiah.

It’s significant that this post-resurrection encounter with Jesus takes place on the road to Emmaus. Luke resonates with the idea of moving from one place to the next, fitting for our series about the future and this week’s theme of direction.

There are several journey stories found at the beginning of Luke. As this Gospel opens, three journeys are recorded. First, after Mary receives the news of her pregnancy, she travels to see her cousin, Elizabeth (Luke 1:39). Second, Mary and Joseph are forced to travel from Galilee to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born (Luke 2:3-4). Third, Mary and Joseph travel from Jerusalem after presenting Jesus in the temple. They realize that Jesus isn’t with them on this journey, and they rush back to find him teaching in the temple.

This story of the encounter between Jesus and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus bookends the journey motif throughout Luke’s Gospel. It’s intriguing that these stories all have something to do with Jerusalem. Almost a third of Luke’s Gospel is focused on Jesus’ journey to the city of the passion: Jerusalem.

Luke 24:13-35 NLT That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. (14) As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. (15) As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus Himself suddenly came and began walking with them. (16) But God kept them from recognizing Him. (17) He asked them, "What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?" They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. (18) Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, "You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn't heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days." (19) "What things?" Jesus asked. "The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and He was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. (20) But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed Him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified Him. (21) We had hoped He was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago. (22) "Then some women from our group of His followers were at His tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. (23) They said His body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! (24) Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, His body was gone, just as the women had said." (25) Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. (26) Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering His glory?" (27) Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (28) By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if He were going on, (29) but they begged Him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So He went home with them. (30) As they sat down to eat, He took the bread and blessed it. Then He broke it and gave it to them. (31) Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. And at that moment He disappeared! (32) They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as He talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (33) And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, (34) who said, "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter. " (35) Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized Him as He was breaking the bread.

DISCUSSION Why don’t they recognize this stranger? What might be different? Why are they leaving Jerusalem?

As the story unfolds, the disciples (Cleopas and his unnamed companion) travel some 20 miles from Jerusalem where, they believe, Jesus’ life has come to an abrupt end. The text says they are discussing the events of the previous days. The Greek verb for “discussing” indicates a debate. Perhaps they are arguing, or at least disputing, the meaning of the empty tomb.

Jesus approaches them, but they don’t recognize him. Commentator Darrell Bock concludes: “Jesus’ first post-resurrection appearance in Luke is both normal and mysterious at the same time. He has a normal human appearance, but is different enough that he is not initially recognized. This description adds to the drama and the mystery of the resurrection.” *(– “The NIV Application Commentary on Luke,” Zondervan).*Jesus asks about their conversation, and the disciples are a bit taken back. They ask their own question: “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” Jesus’ response to this is almost humorous. “What things?”

Could it be that Jesus, here, even in the first hours of the new day, is calling disciples to articulate their faith, to tell the story? Darrell Bock reminds us that part of the “delight in the story is that the reader knows the secret the characters do not.” *(– “The NIV Application Commentary on Luke,” Zondervan.)*

DISCUSSION How important do you think it is for the disciples to verbalize what has happened to Jesus? Why do you think Jesus doesn’t reveal who he is immediately?

The disciples do pretty well. They identify Jesus as being from Nazareth, and point to his prophetic role, “powerful in word and deed before God and all the people” (verse 19). Their further description of the events of the previous days is almost creedal: “handed over, condemned to death, crucified, third day, alive.” At this, Jesus rebukes them for their foggy faith in the face of what the prophets have spoken and what the eyewitnesses (the women) have seen and reported. Jesus then goes back to the Sunday school stories and sorts it all out for them.

As the day comes to a close, and the three travelers approach Emmaus, the disciples ask their companion to stay with them. One can only imagine the depth of teaching going on; why would they want that to stop? Jesus agrees, and the three of them end up at the table: a place of conversation, intimacy, story, teaching, learning, renewal, awareness, insight. All of that happens as Jesus makes himself known in the breaking of the bread. What’s interesting is that, in spite of the late hour, the disciples now have news that cannot wait until the morning. They apparently get up from the table and make their way back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples what they have experienced. They travel the 20 miles back during the evening and night to tell all of the others that the Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!

DISCUSSION Why do you think they turn around and head back to Jerusalem? What immediacy do they face? What is at stake in their return?

GOING DEEPER: KEY WORDS IN THIS STORY

Tangible: There is a sense that the first issue in this text for 21st-century people is this: “How on earth can this happen? How does a dead man come back to life?” The answer is rooted in faith that trusts that God can do what God says He can do. But more than that, there are eyewitness reports. Jesus travels with these two disciples. Both of them see Jesus. Both of them hear his voice. Both of them share a meal with him.

Experiential: The disciples have doubts. Their friend has been murdered; they saw that. But they also experience the physical presence of the one they saw take his last breath. Their hearts burn within them.

Corroboration: Their story, combined with the story of the women at the tomb, adds further strength to the conviction that is growing among them: Jesus is alive.

Journey: This is an important journey, but not only to Emmaus. There is also a progression of faith and understanding. The disciples go from thinking their Lord’s mission had ended nailed to a cross when, in reality, the mission is resurrected and passed on to them. This story prompts us to ask ourselves where we are in our faith journey right now. Where are we going? As a church, as a congregation, where have we been and what does our future look like? Does that match the vision God is directing among us? The power of God is at work among us through the cross and resurrection. How do we tell that story? Do our hearts burn with the good news of Christ? Are we willing to take the walk of faith with Jesus? Are we equipped and willing to take the good news to others?

Application

This week, pray for our church, its direction, and our place in that vision.

PRAY TOGETHER

*God, we often cannot recognize you when you come among us. Help us to see you at work in us and in your world. Join us to your movement to heal and redeem all things. Connect us deeply to one another and lead us back to the basics of walking with you each day. Guide our journey and point us in the direction of all that matters to you. Amen.*