

IT'S NOT OVER!

THE EMMAUS ROAD DISCIPLES ~ LUKE 24: 13-35

We've been given beautiful weather this Easter day! Have you been looking forward to this Easter?

As much as we've been looking forward to today, soon Easter will be over. Before the day is over, the ham will be sliced and put in the fridge for this week's sandwiches. Easter baskets will be found. The chocolate eggs will be eaten. The kids who had a week off will head back to school tomorrow. Very soon Easter will be over.

For two followers of Jesus walking back to their home in Emmaus, about a seven mile walk, Easter was *OVER*. Not just the Sunday, but their hopes. They believed Jesus would be the Savior! The One to defeat the Romans, and become a King who would make the economy better, their bank accounts fuller, and the government honest. When Jesus died, their dream died along with Him. For these 2, it was *OVER*!

They are walking the walk of defeat; discouragement, disillusionment. Have you ever noticed that the saddest words begin with the letter D - like: discouragement, disappointment, despair, doubt, death. If anything causes sadness it's death!

As they walk, a man joins them, and the 2 travelers didn't realize who it is! What kept these 2 disciples from recognizing Jesus? Let me give you some ideas why they didn't see that it was Jesus walking along with them.

First, it might be their knowledge. They trusted in what they saw. On Friday, They saw Jesus beaten, whipped, crucified, and a spear stuck into His side. They saw His body quickly stuffed into a tomb. People *DON'T* come back alive again. They *KNEW* that.

They knew the Romans were experts at executions. The success rate of Roman crucifixion was brutally at 100% success. All of them died. They saw the soldier thrust a spear up into Jesus' side, and saw blood and water come out – a sure sign of death. They saw Jesus die, so they had no good reason to expect to see

Him walking along the road. That's why they didn't recognize who was walking with them.

Maybe these 2 didn't see it was Jesus because they were distracted. Their mind was on other things. There have been plenty of times I have replayed a tape in my head over and over and over. These 2 just went through something traumatic, so it's normal that those scenes would occupy their minds. Lots of times my mind is off in a cloud. I don't even hear what people are saying right to my face. It may go on for days, even years, and decades – at least my wife tells me that. Guys, does your wife tell you this happens to you too, that she is talking to you and you don't hear a word of it?

There's a 3rd option why these 2 road walkers didn't recognize Jesus. It wasn't just that they saw Jesus be put to death. It wasn't just that their mind was miles away. The 3rd option is simply: They didn't believe Jesus' Words.

They didn't believe what Jesus said to them. Over and over and over again Jesus had very plainly told them that He was going to Jerusalem where He would be betrayed, whipped and beaten, handed over to the Romans to be crucified, and three days later He would rise from the dead. These disciples didn't take Jesus at His Word. They didn't trust Jesus completely. They disregarded what He said. "Jesus can't really mean *that!*"

How do they walk? Defeated. All those "D words": discouraged, disappointed, despairing, doubting. They all describe these 2 people walking with heads down as they head home. It's OVER!

But, friends, there is another way to walk!

Jesus joined the 2 walking down the road, and He explained what was predicted about Him in God's Word, the Bible. It was foretold that He *HAD* to suffer and die. This was not defeat, but His victory! Planned and predicted long ago.

The 2 disciples invited their guest, "Come and have supper with us." Finally, there at the table, Jesus broke the bread, and their eyes were opened. Their hearts were opened. Jesus wasn't dead! Beyond a shadow of a doubt, they recognized Jesus.

Next thing these 2 are hurrying all the way back to Jerusalem – and this time their walk was different! The run of victory: The 2 travelers KNEW it's NOT over – Jesus is alive!

If ever there was a time that people doubt, it's today. Luke seems to have written this down for the average American. Most people today are comfortable with Easter. We've heard the story before. It's wonderful. Inspiring. People say Easter means, "There can be a new beginning after disaster." "There is Spring after Winter." "There is hope after darkness."

We just love the Easter story. **But we don't believe it literally.**

What keeps people today from believing that Jesus literally, actually was dead and rose back to life on Easter? Well, it's the same reasons that the disciples walking on the road didn't recognize Jesus alive and with them.

It might be **our knowledge** that keeps us from believing Jesus actually rose again. It's common for people to say that the Easter account in the Bible is just a story, a fable. It's not true history. All Easter means is Jesus' spirit lives on inside of each one of us whenever we think of Him. People today say, "We don't believe it's *real*, but we love what the Easter story STANDS for – this spiritualized meaning."

If you reject the historical accuracy of Jesus' resurrection, if you spiritualize Easter into just a story or fable, if you trust your knowledge of the way the world appears to work more than God's Word and the eye-witness testimony written there, then Easter still might give you a good feeling inside, but you won't have truth. What you'll have left will be like a pep talk to lift your spirits when you're feeling down. What you'll have left will be just like a catchy song that makes you feel good.

If we spiritualize Jesus' resurrection – and most people today do – you're left with really NOTHING and you'll still be stuck in despair. There's a LOT of despair these days, isn't there?

So, knowledge might keep us from believing Jesus actually rose again. The second way we can be like the 2 disciples walking home in doubt is **Distraction**. Focus your mind on other things.

Easter, Jesus, resurrection, heaven or hell – just don't think about that stuff. No need to deal with that today. Instead, wrap your heart and mind around other stuff going on around you.

I remember a day I spent in Wittenberg, Germany. That's where Martin Luther lived and taught, and preached, and wrote. The world was forever changed by his writings. One person in our group was talking with some townspeople in a local café. "It must be wonderful to live right here where Luther discovered the truth in the Bible that we are forgiven and get to heaven by what Jesus did for us – by God's grace – by gift." "No, not really. We don't care about that," they said. "Aren't you thrilled about what Jesus did to love you and forgive you and get you to heaven?" someone in our group asked. "No" they responded, "we just don't think about heaven." "Then what DO you think about?" They said, "having a nice glass of wine here today, with my friends, and enjoying this conversation."

That's a normal attitude in most of Europe. The church buildings are empty and the cafés on the sidewalks right outside are packed. And that's where America is headed. "Don't think about it." Instead, have a nice moment with your nice house, nice cars, nice furniture, nice boat. Eat, drink, do whatever you want in any way you want as long as you enjoy yourself now. In America we even say "It's your right!"

That may be where you are in your belief. And yet, all of us from the moment of our birth have an appointment with death. It's dumb not to be prepared for what we know is inevitable. And when we come face-to-face with our last hour, none of the pleasures will matter at all. You'll be left empty and filled with despair.

But, friends, there is a different way to walk. It's the walk of the 2 disciples when they were running back to tell their friends. This different way is a life of joy and confidence. This different way is a life with meaning and purpose. This different way is simply: Believe the truth of Jesus' Words. Take Jesus at His Word. Trust Jesus completely.

Luke, who wrote down what happened the first Easter, goes way out of his way to show Jesus is REALLY, physically, literally

living. The 2 travelers ATE with Jesus. Then they RECOGNIZED Jesus. They positively ID'd Jesus! Jesus was REAL. They took food from His hands. They ate together. Jesus disappeared before their eyes. Now that He is risen, Jesus can literally appear when and where He wants. He is Lord over all things – master over sin, death, and hell, and over physical limitations, and time.

Later that night, Jesus appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem. What makes it special is that the doors were locked. But Jesus just appeared to them. He is above all earthly dimensions. Nothing holds the resurrected Lord Jesus back! Nothing.

Then Luke reports that He ate a piece of broiled fish before them. Why? The eating shows us that Jesus is real – physical, not a figment of the imagination, not a vision, or a ghost. He's real. And He's above all.

But why tell us the fish was broiled? Why not fried fish or sushi? Why add that detail? Broiled? It's not necessary for the story. Why add it? It's because Luke *isn't making up* a story, he is *reporting*. He is simply telling us what happened. Jesus really is alive. Lord over all!

Cleopas and his friend were discouraged, defeated, disillusioned – just like the other disciples. If this story were fabricated, these disciples would have been portrayed like heroes. They wouldn't put themselves in a bad light if they made this up. But the disciples DIDN'T get it. Why did Luke record their doubt? Because it really happened.

Jesus' physical, literal resurrection means Jesus is LORD! His reign is NOT over! He has power over all things! He has authority over all creatures! He has authority over YOU. He is God – Lord, Master – over ALL.

This upsets people today. Makes people angry. Because if Jesus has not been raised, then His teaching is nice, but we can ignore Him. You can take Jesus or leave Him. Who cares?! If He's just a dead teacher or philosopher, then He's just one of many, many dead teachers or philosophers thru the ages.

If you don't believe Jesus literally, physically, really rose from the dead, then Easter is nothing more than a feel-good story. But

Luke goes way out of his way to report what happened -- Jesus is really alive, which means He is Lord over ALL.

See, Christianity claims something that NO OTHER RELIGION even comes close to claiming!

Don't other religions have stories of people being raised back to life? Sure. Even the Bible has stories of other people being raised. But NOBODY WAS EVER RAISED LIKE JESUS!

Lazarus was raised from the dead, and he died again. They had to roll the stone away for Lazarus to let him out. They had to take the grave cloths off of him.

NOT JESUS! Jesus was raised never to die again. His tomb was sealed and guarded, yet the women show up on Easter morning, and the stone is already rolled away. Why? To LET Jesus *OUT*? No. The grave cloths were left laying there. Grave clothes, and tomb walls are not barriers to Him. He is Lord over all. The stone was rolled away from Jesus tomb, to let us *IN*. So His disciples can SEE. He really IS alive!

Lazarus rose to die again. But Jesus rose to break the power of death! Jesus' resurrection is the death OF death!

Easter is not really a nice story. It's just the opposite - so in your face! Jesus' resurrection means that He is not just ONE PATH to the truth.

Jesus says "**I AM THE Way, and the Truth, and the Life.**" He is not another teacher pointing with clues you can use on your search for truth. He IS the truth - not just for you *personally*, but for ALL people! Since He is Lord over all, He gets the say so on what is right and wrong and His Word applies to all people -- whether they agree or not. God's Word says there is only one way to heaven and it's the way of receiving the forgiveness Jesus won for you -- and this applies to all people whether they believe it or not. This is why our world is trying to cancel Christianity and those who are Christians.

The Bible reports that Jesus rose physically, bodily. Jesus has flesh and bones. To God, flesh and bones matter! To God the Father the physical-ness of this world is very important! God the Father is not giving up on this world!

So Christ's resurrection moves me – when I see someone hungry, to feed them. When I see someone living in poverty, to help them!

The Early Christians were known for this. The plague swept thru a region, and many people were sick and dying. The Romans ran away to save their own lives. They left family members to die, but the first Christians went into the cities, to care for the sick and the dying. They cared unconditionally. And the Romans asked: Who ARE these people? These Christ-followers? Why would they DO this?!

Why? Because Jesus lives! Because the material world is important to God the Father. So they would care for those whose bodies were sick.

This truth is for ALL people – its universal. This is why our Care is for ALL people, regardless if they are young or old, helpless or don't have all their mental capabilities. Care is unconditional. That's not a popular viewpoint these days.

Christ's resurrection moves you from the walk of defeat to hope that is untouchable! Maybe you came here this morning convinced that "It's Over" for you. But, Jesus' resurrection gives you a HOPE that no one and nothing can take it away from you.

So if I lost my house – that would be devastating, but not a total defeat ... because the resurrection happened. It's NOT over!

If I lost my health – that loss, as difficult as it would be – would not be the end of my hope ... because Jesus' resurrection happened. It's NOT over!

If I lost my spouse, or my marriage, or even a child – those losses would not be the end of life, because nothing can take away the eternal victory of Jesus' resurrection. It's NOT over!

Worse yet, if I lost the ability to enjoy my chocolate (I know that's awful! -- really, really bad!) but even that is not the end – because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's NEVER over!

No one, no power, no situation or circumstance can take away His victory for you.

So folks, today, I'm calling you to a new foundation for your life. A certain foundation now and forevermore. It is the truth of God's Word. Jesus IS alive. It's NEVER over for you.

Jesus can change your life from darkness, doubt, and defeat, to the run of victory!

So today, **Will you believe with your mind, rejoice with your heart, live with your actions, *because IT'S NOT OVER!***

Happy Easter!
He is RISEN!