

“Walk to Emmaus,” Luke 24:13-35 (Second Sunday of Easter, April 28, 2019)

¹³ That very day 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. 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?” 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. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. 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.” 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.

PRAY

We wrap up our spring study of the gospel of Luke today. Lord willing we’ll come back to Luke’s gospel next spring. Next week we plan to start a summer series on 2 Corinthians.

In today’s passage we study the walk to Emmaus. Jesus meets two of his disciples, one named Cleopas and the other unnamed. Maybe it’s a friend of Cleopas’, or perhaps, as some have speculated, his wife. Jesus walks with them to this little town seven miles from Jerusalem, and on the way he has a Bible study with them. “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Luke 24:27.

The walk to Emmaus occurs on the day of Jesus' resurrection. Therefore, our passage for today contains an account of the first Bible study in the history of the new covenant. Every Bible study you've ever attended, every sermon you've ever heard preached, is descended from this one.

What I want to do this morning is show you how Jesus viewed the Bible, or as it's referred to in our passage, the Scriptures. I think it's most appropriate that we cover this subject on the Sunday after Easter, because it helps us answer the question, "What should we do, how should we live, in light of Easter?" When I think of what I hope Grace Bible to be, when I think of my vision for Grace Bible Church (which I trust is a biblical vision) I think of this text.

It all hinges on how Jesus viewed the Scriptures. Four points about the Scriptures: first, the Scriptures are authoritative. Second, they are clear. Third, they are necessary. Fourth, they are sufficient.

First, the authority of the Scriptures. It's the day of his resurrection. Jesus has only been out of the tomb for a few hours. He could have done so many things on the day of his resurrection. What would you do if you in Jesus' shoes and were back from the dead? If it's me and I had been in Jesus' shoes, I'm going straight to Pilate's house. "Pilate? I bet you didn't expect to see me again!"

But Jesus doesn't go to Pilate, nor does he go to the other disciples. First thing on the day of his resurrection, Jesus goes to two relatively unknown followers to have a Bible study. Why?

Because Jesus holds the Scriptures in such high esteem. Jesus Christ was a Scripture-filled man. You cut Jesus and he bled Scripture. He was constantly saying, "It is written." Some ten percent of all the words we have of Jesus were Old Testament Bible verses he quoted.

In Matthew 5 Jesus goes so far as to say, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota [the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet] not a dot [the smallest stroke you could make with a pen], will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:17-19.

One example of Jesus' enormous respect for the Scriptures comes from Matthew 4 where Jesus goes into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. How does he resist the temptation? *By quoting Scripture.* He used three passages from Deuteronomy chapters six and eight and rebuked the devil with them.

But have you ever wondered why Jesus bothers with quoting the Bible? What Jesus himself says that has never been said before is the Word of God. It has the same authority as Scripture. *So why doesn't Jesus say something new?* Because the Scriptures are already perfect. His thinking must have been: "Why say something new when the Scriptures already say it perfectly?"

In verse 27, the word used by Jesus and translated in our Bibles as “Scriptures” is the Greek word *graphe*. Every time it is used in the New Testament (and it’s used fifty-one times) it refers to the Hebrew Bible, which we commonly call the Old Testament.

There are influential people in the Christian world today who say we need to “unhitch” the Old Testament from our faith. The best response to that kind of talk is to point to the road to Emmaus and say, “Obviously Jesus doesn’t feel the same way.” On his first day back from the dead, he spent hours preaching the Old Testament to two people. The Old Testament is just as authoritative today as it’s ever been, precisely as authoritative as the New Testament.

The New Testament was not written to replace the Old Testament. One way you can understand their relationship is that the New Testament is one long sermon *expounding on, explaining*, the Old Testament. We need both.

And if you’re here this morning and not a Christian, welcome. I realize you probably remain unconvinced of the authority of the Scriptures. But think about it like this: Jesus is, hands down, the most important, influential man who has ever lived. That’s not debated. Yet he viewed the Bible as authoritative. If he did, shouldn’t you at least pick it up and read it seriously?

Second, the Scriptures are clear. In our passage we read that Jesus drew near to the two disciples as they walked to Emmaus. Jesus overhears their conversation and says, “What are you talking about?” They say they are talking about Jesus of Nazareth, how they had hoped that he was the one to redeem the nation of Israel, but the chief priests and rulers got him crucified. But then, they say, some women went to the tomb early this morning and found it empty, and they saw some angels who said Jesus was alive! They are clearly baffled by what’s taken place. They have no idea what all these events mean.

What Jesus says in response is so instructive. He says, “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?” Luke 24:25-26. Jesus calls these two disciples “fools” because they didn’t understand from the Scripture that, of course, the Messiah had to suffer and die before he could enter into his glory. **It was all right there, if they had only read it.**

We see something similar in John 3. Jesus tells Nicodemus, a Pharisee and leader of Israel, that he must be born again. Nicodemus is baffled and says, “How in the world does that happen? What does that even mean?” Jesus gets *irritated at* Nicodemus and says, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?” John 3:10. In other words, Jesus tells Nicodemus, “If you’ve been around the Scripture as much as a teacher of Israel should be around the Scripture, then everything I’m saying right now should be clear and plainly understood.”

We tend to think of the Old Testament as arcane and confusing. In our more thoughtless moments, we say the Old Testament is about a God of wrath and anger, while in the New Testament we find the God of love and grace. Just last week the British comedian John Cleese, of *Monty Python* and *A Fish Called Wanda* fame, wrote, “Evangelism is defined as spreading the word of the gospel. The gospel – the teaching of Christ and the apostles – is to be found in the New Testament. There is no gospel in the Old Testament, so why are ‘evangelists’ so keen to

spread the word of the Old Testament?”

John Cleese is not a Christian to my knowledge, so I don't know why he feels the need to comment on this. But I think Jesus would say to him, “Oh, foolish one, and slow in heart to believe. The Old Testament is full of the gospel, the good news about me.”

To give just one example of many I could give, I'm going to read several verses from Isaiah 52-53, where Jesus is prophesied as the coming **suffering servant**. From it we'll see the good news that the sinless son of God, Jesus Christ, loved sinners enough to die on the cross and bear the sins of all who trust in him *is indeed in the Old Testament*.

“Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. ¹⁴ As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind— ¹⁵ so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.

“Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ 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—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

“⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. ¹¹ Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.” Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

The Old Testament Scriptures were clear about Jesus. Yet Cleopas, his friend, and all the other disciples failed to see it. Why? *Because they saw what they wanted to see*. They wanted to

read about a Savior who would come and deliver the nation of Israel from the Romans, their immediate, temporal enemies. They wanted to read in the Scripture about the restored Davidic monarchy. They wanted to read how God would make Israel great again. They had the red caps and everything.

They didn't want to read about a suffering servant. They didn't want to read about a Messiah who would have to die before the glory came. *They didn't want to see it, so they didn't see it.*

We do the same thing. Friends, when we approach the Scriptures, or a sermon, or a Bible study with an agenda, we won't see what's actually *there*. We say, "I just need some encouragement today, I just need a word from the Lord, so I'll study the Bible." Or we say, "I need to learn how to be a better parent," or "I need to know God's plan for my life, or help overcoming my addiction, or how to handle my money, so I'll study the Bible." But so many who come to the Bible like that walk away frustrated and think it isn't clear. Why is that?

It's not that those things aren't important, it's just that they aren't the point of the Scriptures. There is nothing wrong with topical studies of the Bible, but they are not foundational because the point of the Scripture is not to give you all the advice you want at any given time, *but to tell you about the God who always is:* his character, his purposes, and how you can align yourself with what he's doing in the world. That's what you desperately need to know, that's *who* you desperately need to know, and all we need know that can be found in the Scriptures. And friends if you get that right, **all your other concerns will fall into place.**

Third, Jesus teaches the necessity of Scripture. When Jesus meets Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus, you'd think he would say, "Hey, guys, it's me! I'm alive! I was in the tomb, but I've been resurrected. Isn't it amazing?"

But Jesus doesn't do that. Instead, we read in verse 16 they are deliberately kept from recognizing Jesus and, again, he uses that time to have a Bible study with them.

Why would Jesus do that? Because Jesus knows just seeing him resurrected is not enough to guarantee belief. You also need the Scripture. Without the Scripture, you won't understand.

At the very end of the gospel of Matthew, Matthew 28, we read where the eleven disciples met Jesus on a mountain in Galilee before his ascension into heaven. Verse 17 says, "And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted." Some doubted! They saw Jesus, they knew it was Jesus, they weren't kept from recognizing him like Cleopas, yet they still don't believe.

You see, no one becomes a Christian just because they believe in the resurrection. Years ago I heard about a woman who had grown up in the Hindu faith. She eventually became a believer, but she talked about how confusing the Christian message was to her before she converted.

She wrote, "Christians ... claimed this resurrection, which made no sense to me - not that I didn't believe Jesus couldn't rise from the dead if he were God, but I had no idea what possible relevance that could have ... I wasn't even interested, because I never understood what importance that event should have to me. No Christian had ever explained that to me - they'd

just say crazy stuff like, ‘I’ve been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and now I’m saved! Jesus died for your sins! Don’t you want to be saved?’ ... it all made zero sense to me, just as though someone said, ‘My red balloon popped and then candy canes fell out of the sky, your rabbit is winking at me, doesn’t all this make you want to buy a new Nissan??’ ... You just have no idea what [Christians] are so excited about - so Jesus rose from the dead, big whoop, so what? Good for him, but....so what?”

The Scripture is necessary because until fact of the resurrection is interpreted for you by the Bible, it does you no good. You need to know you are a sinner, that because you are a sinner you deserve God’s wrath, and that Jesus lived the life you should have lived and, on the cross, died the death you deserved to die. And then the resurrection can make sense, because then you can understand the resurrection means something: it means God accepts Jesus’ death in your place. He is your sacrificial substitute. The resurrection is like God handing you a receipt saying, “Your sins are paid in full.” The Scripture is absolutely necessary for knowing the gospel

Fourth, Jesus teaches the sufficiency of Scripture. By that I mean the Scriptures contain everything we need to love God and be perfectly happy in him.

My sense is that while most Americans who claim to be Christians, and certainly most Mississippians, would claim to affirm the sufficiency of Scripture, in practice we don’t believe it. What we really believe in the sufficiency of experience. That’s why we constantly look for powerful experiences with music and testimonies and sermons (whether they are biblical or not seems to be a secondary consideration). Some of us long to see miracles, so we flock to ministries that claim to heal people of disease and sickness. We want to experience what we think is the power of God in our lives, because if we do we think we can get to the place where we say, “Yes, God is on my side, he’s in control of my life, he’ll bless me and keep anything really bad from happening to me.”

But the ultimate experience would be to meet God himself, would it not? Can you imagine seeing the resurrected Jesus? You’d think nothing could top that.

Yet what happens on the road to Emmaus? The opposite of what you’d expect. Cleopas and his friend meet the risen Jesus. You talk about a religious experience – that’s an experience! But they are kept from recognizing Jesus, and instead Jesus leads them in an afternoon-long Bible study! I don’t know how much more clearly and compellingly Jesus could have made the point: **you don’t need to look for experiences of my power. *You need to look for me in the Scriptures.***

I love verse 32. The disciples did not say, “Did not our hearts burn within us when we realized we were walking with the resurrected Jesus?” They said, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

Now I do not want anyone to get the wrong impression about what I want our church to be in light of this text. I’m sure a few of you think, “J.D. just wants us to read and study the Bible at Grace, all head no heart.” Absolutely not. That’s not what I want at all. That’s not the goal.

I want our church to experience fellowship with Christ, just like Cleopas and his friend did. But will never draw near to the risen Jesus, his love, power, wisdom, forgiveness, and grace unless we get to him through the Scriptures. ***There are no shortcuts, there are no other routes.***

I wrestled with verses 28-35 all week, trying to figure out why the disciples' eyes weren't opened until they sat down to eat with Jesus. I especially wrestled with verse 35: "Then they told [the other disciples] what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."

Why were they kept from recognizing Jesus until they ate with him? Some have taught it's a repeat of the Lord's Supper, but that can't be right. Cleopas wasn't at the Lord's Supper, so it wouldn't have meant anything to him, plus the text says nothing about wine.

I think it's this: Luke, the author of the gospel, is making the point that you'll never have that kind of fellowship with Jesus until you first find him in the Scriptures. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says (in a verse addressed to believers at the church in Laodicea, not to unbelievers, as we so commonly hear the verse used), "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice [put another way, my words] and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him [or, sup with him, as the old King James puts it], and he with me." ***It was only after they saw Christ in the Scriptures that they saw him at the supper.***

My vision is for Grace to be a hub in this community for serious Bible study. But not study as an end unto itself, not because I want us to have bragging rights as the most literate church in town, definitely not because I want us to be all head, no heart. I want it because I want us to have fellowship with Christ. Only through the Scripture can you get to know and have communion with the real Jesus. Only through Scripture can we abide with him. "If you abide in me, and ***my words*** abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." John 15:7.

Oh friends, nothing could be a more appropriate response to Easter Sunday than for us to do what Cleopas and his friend did on that first Easter Sunday: study the Scripture, so we can know him. Nothing will change us into a less prideful, less fearful, less shameful, more loving, more gracious, and more daring congregation in this community like meeting Christ in his Word. I want to hear around this church over and over again not, "Man, do we know the Bible," but instead, "Did not our hearts burn as the Scripture was opened unto us!" May it happen individually, in small groups, and as we come together on Sunday mornings, as we work carefully and deliberately through books of the Bible. May God bless us as we seek to commune with Christ through his Word. AMEN.