



On June 29th, this past summer, my family set out for a 21-day, 5000 mile journey across the country in a 40' long RV. Some were jealous of our trip; most thought we were crazy! Our first major stop was Yellowstone National Park. One day we drove from Fishing Bridge to Tower Junction, which is about 30 miles of slow going, single lane, high altitude climbing, twists and turns. In a car, it's not a problem. In a huge RV it became one of the scariest things I've ever done! The top of the summit, Mt. Washburn, is 10,000 feet. On our descent, being a rookie RV driver, I relied heavily on the brakes to slow down and maintain speed. Everything was going fine until without warning the brake light started flashing on the dashboard and I instantly lost power to the brakes. As I pushed on the brakes, the pedal buried itself into the floorboard. My heart sunk into my stomach, my adrenaline shot through the roof as I realized we were going to either crash, die, or crash and die! Thankfully, and I would say miraculously, this all happened at just the perfect time. We had just gotten to a flat area on the other side of the mountain, and I was able to coast, in low gear, to a gas station. With sweat streaming down my face, I slammed the RV in park and let out a huge sigh of relief. After the brakes cooled down, we were good to go.

Despite almost dying, our summer RV trip will be one of the greatest memories I will have with my family. It was an incredible journey of discovery. We saw new places, old friends, we broke down twice, ate great food, spent **lots** of time with our kids, and enjoyed just how beautiful our country really is. I also discovered that most likely, we will never drive that far in an RV ever again. It was exhausting!

Twenty years ago, I began what I would call a spiritual journey of discovery. I didn't grow up in a Christian home and never thought I would become a pastor. My mother battled drug addiction most of my childhood, my father was out of the picture, so my grandparents helped raise my brother and me. In high school I began to think about God, religion, and my purpose in life. I started to wonder if there really was a God and if so, what, if anything, did he want from me? That spiritual journey eventually led me to discover and follow Jesus Christ.

This morning we are going to look at another journey of discovery found in the Gospel of Luke. It's both a literal journey from Jerusalem to a town called Emmaus and it's a spiritual journey of two people coming to know Jesus Christ personally. In this

story we are going to see three steps someone must take if they are going to discover the real Jesus. In this journey, two people start with their eyes blinded to Jesus. In the end, they will see him clearly for who he really is. We will see how spiritually blind people come to see and make the most important discovery of all. Turn with me to Luke 24:13–24.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"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. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 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. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

First Step: Discovery of Your Misconceptions

The first step someone must take in a life changing journey is a discovery of your misconceptions. Let's face it, we all have ideas about God that are simply not true. In this story, there are two travelers. One of them is Cleopas, the other is unnamed. Maybe it's a friend. Maybe it's his wife. We don't know. These two are Jews and early followers of Jesus who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover. It's now Sunday and they are walking home in a state of confusion and sadness. They are disheartened because of "everything that had happened." Jesus of Nazareth had been arrested and brutally murdered on a cross. Jesus died and their

hopes and dreams of Jesus redeeming Israel had died with him. Maybe some of you are disappointed with God today. You expected him to do something in your life and he hasn't. Maybe God hasn't lived up to your ideas about him. That's how these two felt.

As they went traveled home, a stranger appeared and walked along with them. It would have been completely normal for a fellow traveler to join others, so the two think nothing of it. We are told by Luke that the stranger was Jesus but they were kept them from recognizing him. God had a purpose in blinding their eyes from reality. Jesus asked them, "What are you guys talking about?" At that point the two stop and with great sadness respond, "Seriously, you don't know what happened in Jerusalem? Like, wow, everyone is talking about the things that happened. Videos have gone viral, tweets about Jesus are trending, and it's on all the local news stations. Where have you been buddy?" Jesus, politely asked, "What things?"

In their pain and confusion, Jesus is with them. He lovingly seeks to draw them out by asking them questions. In his ministry, Jesus often did that. His favorite tactic was to answer a question with another question. He was the master at getting people to think for themselves. Questions force us to come to grips with where we are at. Here, Jesus wanted them to voice their own misconceptions about Jesus. One of the best ways I learn anything is when I discover the answer for myself. Self discovery is one of the best ways to learn. That's what happening to these two.

All through the story of the Bible, God often asked people questions so that they can come to discover God for themselves. After Adam and Eve disobey God in the Garden of Eden, God comes along and asks, "Where are you?" He knew they were hiding, but God wanted them to realize the seriousness of their decision. They fess up and say they hid because they were naked. So God asked them another question, "Who told you that you were naked?" Years later, the prophet Elijah was hiding in a cave, on the run from Jezebel, and God said, "What are you doing here?" One day Jesus was walking through a crowd and suddenly turns around and says, "Who touched me?" Even though hundreds were touching Jesus, this touch was different. A woman who had been bleeding for 12 years fearfully replied, "It was me."

In our story two people are asked by Jesus to explain what they believe and what they saw in Jerusalem. What we see in their response are clear misconceptions of who Jesus was and what he came to do. They said, "Jesus was a prophet." That is true, but Jesus was much more than a prophet. He was a priest, king, Messiah, Savior and Lord. They said the religious rulers crucified Jesus. Again, not the whole truth. The death of Jesus could also be blamed on Pontius Pilate, Rome, the crowds who yelled "crucify him," and even Judas who betrayed him. They also didn't understand Jesus' mission. They had hoped Jesus would redeem

Israel. In their mind the Messiah would be a conquering king who would come to power, overthrow Rome, and make Israel a mighty nation again. What Cleopas and the other failed to remember are the countless prophecies about how the Messiah would do this through his suffering and death. They also mention early reports about the empty tomb. They tell Jesus about how some women found the tomb empty and it was confirmed by others as well. Amazingly, they, didn't believe in the resurrection either! Their eyes have not been opened.

As the two continued to speak, Jesus listened well. What we see are two people discouraged, confused about what really happened, and lacking in faith. Look how Jesus responded in verses 25–27,

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to have a Bible study with Jesus? To have him open the Old Testament and show you how it's all about him? I am dying to know what Scriptures Jesus read with them. Did he start with Genesis, move to Deuteronomy and end in Isaiah? We don't know. Could you share your faith in Jesus without using the New Testament? I don't think many can.

Let me do a little experiment with you. I'm going to read something from the Bible:

*He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.
Surely he took up our pain
and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,*

*and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.*

Who is that talking about? It's clearly about Jesus. That is the Prophet Isaiah (Isa. 53), writing 700 years before the birth of Jesus Christ and 200 years before we have the first historical record of anyone being crucified. Jesus wanted them to see and believe, from the Scriptures, who Jesus is and understand why he came to suffer and die. This brings us to the second step of a life changing spiritual journey—a discovery of the Scriptures.

Second Step: Discovery of the Scriptures

Why did Jesus keep these two from recognizing him? I didn't know that answer until this week. Jesus wanted them to discover the real Jesus from the Bible themselves. Through a complete and accurate understanding of the Scriptures, they came to faith in Jesus. Think about it, Jesus could have said initially, "Hey guys, I am Jesus, the guy you are talking about, I'm alive, hi five!" But he didn't. Even if he did, we don't know if they would have believed him anyway. By not revealing himself to them, Jesus was preparing the early church to rely solely on the Scriptures for faith in Jesus. This is so important because the early church and Christians today only have the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit to bear witness to Christ. We don't have Jesus physically walking around, teaching and performing miracles. All Scripture reveals who Jesus is. Every story whispers his name. God uses it today to open the eyes of those who do not yet know him. Apostle Paul told us, *"Consequently faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ"* (Rom. 10:17).

Lee Strobel was an atheist and legal editor of the *Chicago Tribune* in the late 80's and early 90's. His wife had recently become a Christian and Strobel didn't like it. He thought the idea of God was stupid. So he set out to disprove his wife's new faith. He meticulously read the Bible and considered the claims of Christ hoping to disprove it. Here is what he writes:

"I did that for a year and nine months until November the 8th of 1991, and on that day I realized that, in light of the torrent of evidence flowing in the direction of the truth of Christianity, it would require more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to become a Christian. Because to be an atheist I would have to swim upstream against this torrent of evidence pointing toward the truth of Jesus Christ. And I couldn't do that. I was trained in journalism and law to respond to truth. And so on that day, I received Jesus Christ as my forgiver, and as my leader.

"And, just like with my wife, my life began to change. Over time my values, my character, the purpose of my life began to be transformed over time in a way that, as I look back, I can't imagine staying on the path I was on compared to the adventure and the fulfillment and the joy of following Jesus Christ."

The discovery of the Scriptures is absolutely essential to an honest discovery of Jesus Christ. Lee Strobel took a year and nine months to do that. You might say, "Well, if Jesus would just appear to me, like these two, then I'd believe." No you wouldn't. There were plenty of people who lived during Jesus' day who saw him do miracles, heard him teach and still didn't believe. Jesus told Thomas, after he had touched the nailed pierced hands of his resurrected body, *"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"* (John 20:29). Believed what? Believed the Scriptures.

Third Step: Discovery of the Risen Christ

The final and third step of a life changing spiritual journey is the discovery of the risen Christ. Let's read verses 28–35,

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 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.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

The two men reach their destination, Emmaus, and urge Jesus to stay with them. Hospitality was very important in those days and allowing a fellow traveler to continue would have been unimaginable, especially as it was nearly evening. They went home, opened a bottle of wine and baked some bread. Around the dinner table, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them. At that moment their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus. Did they see the scars on his hands as he broke the bread? Did they remember the feeding of the 5000 and the last supper? No doubt, God was working in them, allowing them to finally see and experience the risen Christ for themselves. And as soon as they recognized Jesus, he disappeared.

Finally it all made sense to them. The reports of the empty tomb were accurate. Jesus was alive and appeared to them in person. Looking at each other they said, "That's why our hearts were burning inside of us! It was Jesus who shared the Scriptures with us!" The two disciples couldn't contain their excitement and left immediately to Jerusalem. This would have been another long (7 mile), dangerous journey (traveling at night was

not recommended), all to share about the resurrection of Jesus. They get back to Jerusalem, find the disciples and hear reports that Jesus has also appeared to Simon Peter as well. Finally they get to share their story. Hope is welling up inside of them again. Jesus really is alive. And suddenly, ***“While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you”*** (Luke 24:36).

We are all on a journey of discovery and the greatest discovery is to recognize the risen Christ. Where are you at on this journey? What misconceptions do you have about Jesus? Like the two, are you discouraged and disillusioned with God? Your next step is to seriously study the Scriptures for yourself. Maybe some of you are starting to discover the Scriptures already. For the first time in your life you are considering the Scriptures with an open mind.

Maybe you're beyond those two discoveries, and like the two you need to invite Jesus to stay and share a meal with you. Have you made the discovery of the risen Christ? Have you placed your trust in him? Has your heart burned for him?

There is a tension here between our work and God's work. We need to discover Jesus for ourselves and at the same time, God needs to open our eyes to the resurrected Jesus. For those of us who have done that, who have placed our faith in Jesus, then like the two, we need to continue to share with others the risen Christ.

Knowing and following Jesus is a life changing journey of discovery. Where are you on the road? Where do you want to go?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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