

## Believe the Evidence – Luke 24:13-35

Pastor Colin Rieke – April 30, 2017

<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. <sup>18</sup> 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?” <sup>19</sup> “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. <sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning <sup>23</sup> but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” <sup>25</sup> He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. <sup>28</sup> As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. <sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> 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?” <sup>33</sup> They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together <sup>34</sup> and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” <sup>35</sup> Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

One of the games my wife and I like to play is a “Word Search” game. You start with a random collection of 6 or 7 letters, and from those letters you need to find as many words as possible. The more words you find, the more points you gain. In order to advance to the next level, you need to find the longest word (or words) which uses all of the letters. While this game is enjoyable, it also can be extremely frustrating, especially if you don’t have the patience to find all the combinations of the letters. There are any number of occasions when both Kristin and I are left scratching our heads, trying to put the

puzzle together, trying to fit the letters into those last remaining words. Trying different combination of letters to see if they make up those words. At those times, things just don't make sense.

I think that feeling was what the disciples on the road to Emmaus were feeling as they made their way along their seven mile journey to the small town of Emmaus. Things just didn't seem to make sense. They had all of the pieces before them – Jesus, the great teacher, the messiah, God's plan to redeem Israel, the arrival into Jerusalem, but then the crucifixion, Jesus' death, and now an empty tomb with some rumors that he had risen. How did all of this fit together? They couldn't understand.

But thanks be to God that the risen (but hidden) Jesus walked into their lives to help them put all of those pieces together. And all he did was take them back to the evidence, he put the evidence together and showed it to them. As Christians living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have a wonderful vantage point in God's plan of salvation. We can see how the pieces of God's puzzle fit together in the Bible, but that doesn't mean we have it all figured out. That doesn't mean that we don't have our own times of wrestling. It's at those times, and especially at those times that we need to trust the evidence God has given us, we need to BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE that is before us

1. May your ears be ever hearing
2. May your eyes be ever seeing

(1)

Now it's important to know the basic timeline for the events on Easter Sunday, otherwise, it might get very confusing. First of all, Jesus rose from the dead, no one was around to see it. Next, some of the women who had followed Jesus came to the tomb so they could properly bury Jesus' body. They were startled by the angels, who told them Jesus had risen. After they returned to the other disciples, Peter and John rushed to the tomb to see for themselves. That first morning, the disciples didn't know what had happened. Perhaps as a way to clear their heads, two of them, we aren't told which two, wanted to get away from Jerusalem and began walking to Emmaus. I mention this since last week we heard about Jesus appearing to the disciples in the evening of that first Easter. That appearance takes place after this journey to Emmaus.

So you have here, these two disciples getting out of the city, trying to make sense at what had happened. They were throwing ideas back and forth as to what it all meant, asking questions they didn't have the answers to, when all of a sudden, you have Jesus. The only thing was, the two disciples didn't recognize him. The Bible says, **“they were kept from recognizing him.”** How Jesus kept the disciples from recognizing him we don't know, nor is it important. All they recognized was another traveler on the road with him, and they welcomed him into their company.

It didn't take long before Jesus asked them what they were talking about. Stunned that anyone would be clueless as to the events that had happened such a short time ago such a short distance away. They went on to explain the puzzle pieces they had before them about Jesus the great teacher, about Jesus the crucified one, and about Jesus the “apparently” risen one. And they still couldn't figure out how it all made sense.

Then Jesus in his perfect way asked the perfect question, “**Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?**” Then Jesus embarked upon what would have been the most remarkable Bible Study anyone had ever sat in on. “**Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**” Oh, wouldn’t we love to know what passages from the Bible Jesus would have used to help the disciples put the pieces together. But all he was really asking them to do was BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE. Using God’s Word he opened their ears so they could hear, so they could hear and understand.

Just think about it for a moment. These were all Scriptures that they had heard before. These were all Scriptures that Jesus had probably taught them before. But now, when they were hearing it from Jesus after the resurrection, they were finally putting everything together. It finally began to make sense. That’s a wonderful reminder for us also, especially when we feel like we’ve heard the stories before, we’ve heard the teaching before, or think that we know it already. But it really isn’t like that is it? For as much as we think we know, there’s always more to learn. Each sermon will bring out something you didn’t think about before. Each Bible Class will expand your knowledge of what God has done, each personal devotion brings into clearer focus God’s plan.

So I invite you to BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE, be ever hearing with your ears. On the one hand, this means be ever hearing, during every sermon, be ever hearing during every Bible Class, be ever hearing in every devotion you read, whether that be on your own or with your family. Be ever hearing what the Word of God is saying, not just the facts and figures in the Bible, but to ask the famous Lutheran question, “What does this mean?”

But when you BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE, be ever hearing with your ears even when that hearing is something that chastises you. Hearing with your ears also means being constantly reminded of who you are. Hearing with your ears will remind you of the times you have doubted God’s promises, the times when you have struggled to have things make sense in your life, the times when you have been slow to accept that maybe the problems in your life are not as a result of God, but as a result of you. You have the same materialistic faith that the disciples had on the road to Emmaus, the same desires to be a follower of Jesus, but also to be respected and commended by the world. This is what it means to BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE.

For it’s only when we believe this evidence, that we can come to the evidence that Jesus shared with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The evidence that Jesus had to suffer a horrific death on the cross not because he deserved it, but because we did (our sins were that bad). The evidence that Jesus paid for all of those sins on the cross, so that even you, and even me – the worst of sinners can come before God unafraid.

(2)

This is the evidence the Emmaus disciples had brought into clear focus as they walked and talked with him. Soon it was evening, and their journey was over. They invited this stranger (for that is what he was to them) in to stay with them. It was during the meal that Jesus took on the role of the host as he prayed and broke bread, handing it to the two disciples. At that moment, “**their eyes were opened and**

**they recognized him.”** Just as Jesus had hidden his appearance from before them, he made himself known.

It almost seems cruel to his disciples that Jesus immediately disappeared from their sight, but it wasn't. They had walked with Jesus the whole afternoon, having a private tutoring session with the master. And now they could exclaim to one another **“were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”** This only left them with one thing to do. Even though it was evening, even though their meal was still before them, they were compelled to hurry back to Jerusalem from whence they had come. No doubt they hurried back, perhaps even running the seven miles back to Jerusalem to share this amazing news with the other disciples. This is what BELIEVING THE EVIDENCE caused the disciples to do.

When you BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE, may you be ever seeing with your eyes. The disciples in Emmaus got to see that it was Jesus who was walking with them. Instead of being stung that he was no longer with them, they were excited to go back to Jerusalem. This is the response of a Christian today as well. Be ever seeing with your own eyes Jesus on the pages of Holy Scripture. But far from leaving Jesus on the pages of Holy Scripture, see with your own eyes what that means. Be ever seeing with your eyes what that means in your own life as you interact with your family, your neighbors (even the ones you don't always get along with), your co-workers, your fellow church members. Live as a child of the light, reflecting the light of Christ upon those in your own lives. Be ever seeing with your eyes when it comes to opportunities that God places before you, whether that's an opportunity to share the gospel message with your words, or share the gospel message with your kind actions to a stranger, the homeless, the bully.

You see, seeing with your eyes doesn't just stop when the pastor says “Amen,” it doesn't just stop when the Bible study ends, it doesn't just stop at the prayer to close your devotion. Seeing with your eyes has only begun. You wouldn't believe the euphoria that at least I get when I finally combine those 7 letters to make the long word in that Word Search game. When all the letters come together to spell a long word, it's glorious. But then it goes on to the next level, and I start all over again. For a Christian, we may not have the feeling of euphoria every time we leave church, every time we close a Bible Study, every time we close our devotion book, but our faith has just grown. It has grown for what is coming next – the next day, the next challenge, and the next opportunity. BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE, be ever hearing with your ears what God wants to tell you, and be ever seeing with your eyes whatever God wants to show you. Amen.