

**On the Road to Emmaus**  
Easter Sunday 2019: 4/21/19  
Luke 24:13-35

Welcome/intro/Easter palooza fun—my favorite Sunday of the year!

we're here to connect people to God and to connect people to one another, thanks for joining us on this wonderful Sunday!

Earlier you heard about our new thing launching: 5-day-a-week podcast. As a part of that on Wednesday we'll do a Question and Response from YOU about the sermon

On your bulletin, Connection Card—if you've got a question this morning as we're going through the message, write your and drop it in the offering basket afterwards and we'll answer a few of them on the podcast

It's Easter Sunday, and so of course we're celebrating the event that Christians for 2,000 years have declared has changed the course of all of history

That there was a man named Jesus who was buried and dead that God raised back to life and who never died again. Either total nonsense or the greatest thing that ever happened

And today we're going to look at an event that happened just a few hours after his resurrection where Jesus meets a couple guys who still don't know that the resurrection has happened so they're still in this fog of heartache and disappointment and pain and sadness

Any of you ever been in that fog before? Visited there once? Lived there for a few weeks, months years, decades? Have a friend who's been there before?

And as they're walking, Jesus is going to meet them right there in that pain and disappointment and by the time he's done talking with them, they're going to be in a completely different place

But it's important for us to start where they start: in that fog of heartache, pain, disappointment and sadness

Because when you hear the Easter story it can sound so hypothetical and so big and so kind of other-worldly

Jesus rose from the grave 2,000 years ago, triumphing over death forever and ever, conquering evil, forgiving all our sins, all kinds of great stuff

But for some of us it just sounds like theory, abstract religious ideas that doesn't have much to do with us here and now

But what we see with Jesus is that he is nothing if not personal, particular, local, specific.

Throughout his life, Jesus meets individual people exactly where they are in their hurts, their pains, their mistakes, their sins, their hopes and dreams

and then he invites them to where they are meant to be, leads them into the destiny God has for them, the purposes God made them for

And this morning, the good news for you and for me is that the same Jesus has a date with you, here, now, to meet you right where you are to help you to get where you are meant to be  
he wants to walk out of here with you into a resurrection-shaped future with fresh hope, fresh eyes, fresh energy  
and maybe a fresh understanding of who you are, who God is, and why on earth you're here on this earth to begin with

Bible/no Bible Luke 24: new to church, new to the Bible, four biographies of Jesus, call those the gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

named after 4 guys who wrote the biographies--usually you name the biography after the person being written about! Should have called these four books Jesus, Jesus, Jesus and Jesus, but I wasn't there when they made that decision

And we're picking up the story in Luke chapter 24-- a couple days after Jesus's execution for a short trip where Jesus has his date with them

***<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 the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" <sup>19</sup> "What things?" he asked.***

Moms and dads, any of you ever asked a question of your kids you already knew the answer to?  
Favorite ploy to get kids to own up to something!

Jesus loved to ask questions! Sometimes like in this situation, he already knows the answers.  
But the reason why Jesus asks questions is because he wants to surface what's in people's hearts: what's going on in there, really? how is it with your soul?

This morning, already, you and I have had an internal dialogue going on. The measure of how you're doing emotionally and spiritually could be what the voices in your head sound like  
Healthy, true, wise, life-giving? Or bitter, angry, proud, arrogant, apathetic, jealous, Confused, aggressive, or other?

Whatever it sounds like, Jesus wants to hear it, he wants to meet you right there.

Here, Jesus asks questions to surface their hurts and fears and these men do not disappoint, here's what they say:

*“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.*

These guys loved and appreciated Jesus and they had high high hopes for Jesus’s living  
And the hopes that they had was that Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel

Important to understand these hopes in context: Rome had over-run all of the middle east and Europe and nobody liked the Romans except the Romans! Some of you know people like that, this was a whole country like that!

They had hoped that Jesus would be that Messiah that ran the Romans out and reclaimed Israel for God and for the Jewish people, that was the standard hope of the people of Israel for their long-awaited Messiah figure

And now, of course, those hopes to them seemed totally dashed. And as they walk these seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, “but we had hoped” is like a lead weight that they’re carrying with them

We all come in here from different backgrounds and we’ve all got different unique stories  
But one thing that we all share is this same experience of disappointment. You’ve had it, I’ve had it

And so as Jesus asks these men these questions to surface their disappointment, I want to invite you and I to enter into the same conversation they had

Let’s play a little game that I like to play around here from time to time called **Bible Mad Libs**

Today, Easter morning, about 2,000 years later, I want to invite You fill in this same blank: “But I had hoped \_\_\_\_\_”

What’s your “But I had hoped” experience that’s part of the weight that you’re carrying in here with you today?

It could be something fresh, recent, live, happening right now and unfolding like a bad dream:

Your marriage falling apart, kids going off the rails, loss of a loved one, loss of a job, battling mental or physical illness, maybe a dream that just isn’t going to become a reality no matter how hard you’ve tried

It could be something that happened a year ago, five years ago, decades ago:

the divorce that’s years and years old now but you’ve still got the tender scars; the lost loved one that you still haven’t gotten over and you might not ever get over it; the missed opportunity that haunts you still:

“But I had hoped, but I had hoped, but I had hoped”

These men had hoped that Jesus would be the one to redeem Israel, they carried that weight with them on their way along the 7-mile trip from Jerusalem to Emmaus

Jesus has surfaced their disappointments, AND HE’S GOING TO MEET THEM RIGHT HERE IN THOSE DISAPPOINTMENTS

Because Jesus loves to meet us right where we are to get us where we’re meant to be

But these men aren’t done yet sharing what they’re processing as they walk along

***22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.***

Jesus has asked the question, what are you talking about as you walk along? They’ve shared: Jesus was crucified on Friday, we had hoped he’d be the one to redeem Israel

And now we’ve heard from some of our friends that his body isn’t in the tomb any more and we’re not exactly sure what to make of that.

Here’s how Jesus meets them right where they are to get them to where they need to be:

***25 He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.***

Sometimes Jesus leads with a little tough love --“How foolish and slow you are!” Sometimes that describes me, and maybe you, too?

And what does Jesus do? He takes the Old Testament Scriptures, which they both already know and love, and helps them to understand from beginning to end how all of it points to the life, death, and resurrection of the Messiah

He’s taking their hopes, the same hopes everyone around them had, and blowing them up and explaining that he’s done something much bigger and much better

They wanted the redemption of the nation of Israel. Jesus wanted to redeem people from every language, tribe, nation, culture, and ethnicity. They wanted to be able to worship in their own temple with other people like them

Jesus wanted to build a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual community of all people, smashing through the normal barriers of race and ethnicity.

We have small group community Bible Studies that meet in people's homes all across Chatham county throughout the week—in my small group of about 15 people, we have 5 who grew up in Africa and grew up in the African church

And just about every single week we have these wonderful discussions about similarities and differences as we've all followed the same Jesus.

Christianity is the single most global movement in all of history, because that's what Jesus came for—not to redeem just Israel but the whole world

To accomplish that level of redemption did not require a military coup, he needed to sacrifice his own body to win a spiritual victory over all the forces of evil that conspire against us to keep us separated from God and each other

Forgive our sins, ransom us from sin and death forever

That's what the cross was about. And that's what the resurrection is about.

See, on our way with Jesus, some hopes have to die. And some hopes stay dead, but many get resurrected into something new and better

Jesus needed to disappoint their hopes in order to deliver on something much better

And that much better thing is that God so loved the world, that he came to meet us where we are to get us where we were meant to be

God put on flesh, became a human being, to experience all of what it means to be human--he goes all the way to the experience of a brutal death

All this in order to get us to where we are all meant to be: with God, in this life and in the next, forever and ever amen

Jesus explains all of this to these two men meeting them right where they are, on the road to Emmaus, thick in disappointment and pain, and speaks the language of Scriptures they're familiar with, all to get them to where they were meant to be--this is how good Jesus is

When I moved into my dorm at UNC-Chapel Hill a week or so before my freshmen year of college

I was an out of state student and the only one from my Northern Virginia high school who came to UNC. I grew up a Christian but obviously college is a major crossroads for faith

And of course since I knew no one, I was looking for friends

So when a cute girl and a pretty cool guy knocked on my door a couple of days before classes started and told me they were from a campus ministry and invited me to come join them to play ultimate frisbee, I was totally all about it

If you're not familiar with ultimate frisbee, think combination of soccer and football played with a frisbee without any tackling

Now I have long goofy arms. God gave them to me. They are long, goofy skinny white guy arms

And pretty much the main thing that skinny white guy long goofy arms are good for is chucking frisbees. I can throw a frisbee the full length of a football field. If frisbee throwing was a spiritual gift, I'd be crushing it

And so when a cute girl invites me to join a bunch of friends at an ultimate frisbee game where I might meet other cute girls, I'm in! I can't wait to impress all the ladies with my frisbee throwing abilities because of COURSE that's the kind of thing that matters to the ladies, right ladies?

So I roll on up to this gathering of Christian students and there's somewhere around 50 people and somewhere in there I meet **Jeff Rutledge**.

Jeff was a senior, and just a great guy. And as we got to talking, we discover we've got some things in common—his dad was in the military, my dad was in the military; he went to high school in northern virginia I went to high school in northern virginia

Wait, what high school did you go to? **Robinson High School**. The exact same high school I went to

Now like I said, NOBODY from my graduating class had gone to UNC. And nobody the year before had gone to UNC either. And I don't know but not likely the year before that either

It may very well have been that Jeff Rutledge was the LAST person from my high school to go to UNC

There were 16,000 undergraduate students at UNC, we might have been the only TWO who had gone to Robinson High school, and here I was meeting the other one, the week before my freshmen year of college even started

Jesus meets us where we are—cute girls and ultimate frisbee, Jeff Rutledge from Robinson High school, to get us to where we were meant to be—that campus ministry, **InterVarsity Christian Fellowship**

As I was getting involved in the ministry the first few months of my freshmen year, they did a weekend retreat.

And at that retreat, they carved out time on Saturday morning for us to spend a full two hours of quiet to pray and read scripture and answer questions

Now I'm a huge extravert and two hours of quiet and reflection and prayer sounded like death only slightly warmed over!

But everyone else was doing it and people shared ahead of time how they'd met God in some powerful ways when they carved out more space to be with God

So I gave it a shot. And it wasn't necessarily easy or natural at first, but I discovered to my surprise that I kind of liked that kind of time—I started doing it on my own every so often

God meets us where we are in order to get us to where we are meant to be.

After college, I went to work for that organization, doing college campus ministry. I thought I'd do it for four or so years--I ended up doing it for 16 years

At some point I discovered a great book called **Sacred Pathways** which introduced me to the idea that we've all got different temperaments that God wired us up with

The book identifies 9 different temperaments, almost spiritual personality types, he calls Sacred Pathways and if we can begin to cultivate practices that match pitch with how God wired us up, we experience God to whole new depths and degrees

Doing a couple of hours in silence and prayer, that's something that hundreds of millions of contemplatives have loved throughout the centuries

The Contemplative path is one of the sacred pathways I discovered resonated with me as Jesus was meeting me along the way to get me to where I was meant to be

Some of you have never had any meaningful connection with God in part because you've never discovered a way of connecting with God that matches pitch with how God made you

We're going to give you a gift at the end of the service that we hope will equip you to leave here to more regularly and more fully meet with Jesus as he longs to meet you on your way

Jesus met me as a scared 18-year-old through my 18-year-old love language: cute girls, ultimate frisbee and then meeting Jeff Rutledge and the high school connection

He was meeting me exactly where I was, in order to get me to where I was meant to be, a sixteen year career that I loved and more importantly into a deeper relationship with God who loved me more than I ever realized

And now here I am, and here you are, Easter 2019. And Jesus has a date with both of us here, the resurrected Jesus wants to meet with you this morning.

Some of you have had a powerful experience of meeting Jesus somewhere along the way

Others of you haven't really had any kind of personally compelling experience of meeting Jesus, and it's not really a part of your life

But we've all got our disappointments, and our pain,

And Jesus loves to meet us right in the middle of our pain and disappointments or our anxieties and worries or even our hopes and dreams and victories to help us to get to where we were meant to be

Because sometimes just like for these two men on the road to Emmaus, the hopes we have are too small and they need to be shattered in order for something much better to come along

Other times, the hopes we had weren't too small they were good dreams, great things, stuff that would have been good for you and for everyone around you

And when those kinds of hopes and dreams fall apart, it can harden us and make us think that God doesn't care about us or about goodness or justice or anything that's good in the world

But what we see in Jesus is that he's good enough, powerful enough, almighty enough to enter into all of our disappointed hopes, whether they were small and selfish or selfless and beautiful

The resurrected king has the power to resurrect you by reaching into your past and your present to bring beauty out of ashes, slivers of light of the darkest moments of your life to make your life into something that's bold, beautiful, strong, courageous, and wonderful

That's what happens when we're open to being on our way with Jesus, every day

*See, many of us grew up with thinking about religion as something that only mattered when you died. You were taught it was something like this*

*Put up your right arm like this, palm down—this is your life. Put up your other arm so hand flat out so that tips of fingers touching—this is the afterlife*

*Many of you were taught or think of religious stuff as covering you with this arm, the afterlife arm*

*But do this for me: move your left arm up a few inches, now put it overtop your other arm: this is what Jesus does once you trust him*

Once you trust Jesus, your whole life becomes a life lived on the way with Jesus. It's now all gathered up into God's eternal story, changing things and shifting things in real time!

He stands outside of time and all of your life is his now

And your future isn't yours to worry about, it's in Jesus's hands. Your present isn't yours to grasp for or control, it's in Jesus's hands. And once we trust in Christ our past isn't ours any more, not even ours to regret, it's all Jesus's to redeem

Are you open to that this morning?

Are you open to the Amazing Grace of Jesus's life, death and resurrection intersecting your deepest hurts, disappointments, fears and hopes and dreams and then allowing him to lead you into the new strong places of redemption of your story?

I'm going to give you a chance to make that decision in just a few minutes

Now as Jesus has been talking about the Scriptures with these two men on the road to Emmaus, something's been coming alive in them, and here's what happens next:

***28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 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.***

The last time we heard from these two guys, they were despondent and distraught

But now there's new energy and new hopes—stay with us! Tell us more! You're making sense right now when nothing else and no one else is!

Stay with us! Stay with us! Stay with us! That's the plea and prayer of a couple of guys who have had Jesus meet them exactly where they are as he begins to shine new light on their despondency and heartbreak--and Jesus stays

***<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's a journey that these two men are on and it's very simple and it starts with **Disappointment and Despair** that's where Jesus meets them, right in the middle of that, speaking their language, helping them to understand a bigger picture that leads to

**Awakening** slowly, surely, light the darkness starting to brighten as they begin to grasp that bigger picture

and that will here in just a minute lead to fullness of **Joy** which totally displaces all previous disappointment and despair and finally fresh **Purpose** and mission for their lives as they go to tell other people that they've met the risen Christ

And these two men have decisions to make at every turn to decide if they're going to allow Jesus to enter into their story or not

Jesus asks questions to get to their hearts, are they going to be Open or Closed? If they say go away? No awakening, no joy, no purpose, stuck in despair

He calls them foolish, but they listen and don't blow him off! They learn from him as he opens the Scriptures; If they blow him off? No awakening, no joy, no purpose, stuck in disappointment and despair

**And here at** this point the energy's shifting to hope and they urge him strongly "Stay with us" it's what moves them from starting to experience awakening to the fullness of joy and purpose on the other side of awakening

Jesus wants to bring them on the journey from despair to joy and purpose, but they have to be willing to let Jesus in

This morning, you and I are invited to ride this same ride, to follow this same life-changing arc—bringing our disappointed hopes and dreams honestly and fully as Jesus asks us questions

and allowing Jesus to begin to speak into them and make sense out of all of them, and as he does, we start to rise, we start to come awake, eventually we start to experience real joy and finally purpose, mission, meaning for this life and the next

And our small part in this journey from disappointment to awakening to joy is to make their prayer to Jesus your prayer to Jesus: stay with me, stay with me, stay with me

This morning, going to give you a minute of silence to borrow this **“stay with us” prayer**

**If you’re already walking with Jesus** on an ongoing regular basis, it’s simply a request for more: **more depth, more grace, more change, more presence**

The whole of the Christian life starts with **surrender**: to recognize that we need a savior, and then sometimes we start to think that the rest is up to us.

But what if this posture of surrender really is the core of our walk with Jesus? The moment-by-moment recognition that we need Jesus to stay with us, stay with us, stay with us

That’s one way you might pray if you’ve already got an ongoing walk with Jesus

Some of you have called yourself a Christian, maybe you were baptized or went through confirmation classes

but there’s really **not-yet integration of faith**, no ongoing engagement, no relationship with Jesus--Then the stay with me prayer might sound like **“I’m ready to walk with Jesus”**

It’s a move from Jesus off in the margins to saying that I want Jesus to be the center of it all.

Many of you haven’t experienced that arc from disappointment to awakening to joy to real purpose because you’ve not given Jesus permission to bless you with that trip

Going deeper looks a lot like what Jesus did on the road to Emmaus:

starts with our hearts and surfacing whatever’s in there and giving it all to Jesus in prayer; it includes looking at the Scriptures and allowing the Scriptures to shape your understanding of what God’s up to in the world; it’s being open to being instructed and taught even when there are things that get said that are hard to hear or you might not like initially.

It’s praying for your eyes to be opened as you meet Jesus on the way in surprising ways and then embracing his purposes and mission in the world

That’s one way “stay with us” might sound if you don’t have an ongoing, integrated life of faith

Finally, some of you have **never prayed a ‘stay with us’ prayer** before to Jesus. You’re in the same place as these men in the story were

Your version of the “stay with us” prayer might be just that **“stay with me. Don’t leave me. I want your awakening. I want your joy. I want to offer you my pains and disappointments or my struggles and heartaches or even my sweet season and my victories”**

My friends, you do not want to walk out of here without Jesus staying with you.

He's ready, he's here, he's willing to walk with you to bring a resurrection resilience to work in your life, to forgive whatever needs forgiveness, to heal whatever needs healing, to redeem whatever's been broken; to bless you with his joy and direct you in his paths

The same resurrected Jesus that met the two men on the road to Emmaus is here at Woods Charter school to meet with you

And he wants to bring you on the same journey he brought these men: from whatever's on your hearts and in your hearts, into a gradual awakening, to fullness of joy and a life lived full of purpose and meaning

This morning, we're going to give you a chance to take their prayer and make it your own Underneath your chair, there's a little card and a pen:

"Stay with us" is the springboard, up here are some options for how you might make this prayer your own

We're going to play some quiet music here and give you a gift—just a minute of silence to write out a prayer in response to and in keeping with the prayer here 'stay with us'

This is some time for just you and Jesus, nobody else will see this card or look at it, it's just a chance for you to write out a brief prayer, to take the "stay with us" prayer and make it your own

[MUSIC: 90 seconds or so]

If you've made a significant decision or if you're on the verge of one and you need some help, in just a few minutes we're going to have people from our prayer team available for you in the back of the room, they'll be glad to pray for you and with you

Jesus meets us where we are in order to get us to where we were meant to be.

From disappointment and despair to the gradual awakening that eventually bursts onto the scene like the first ray of sunlight

Now they've woken up to the joy available to them in Jesus and they've got fresh energy, fresh purpose, fresh meaning—they gotta' go tell people what's happened

My friends, if your heart is burning or even if you've just got a nagging sense it's time to make a change, then I want to encourage you to allow Jesus to take you on the same journey he's taken these two men

To allow Jesus to meet you where you are and to bring you to where you were meant to be

PRAY

Offering disclaimer: prayer in the back

**Benediction:**

Thanks for being here today to celebrate Easter with us, we've got a parting gift for all of you as you leave

On the back of some of your chairs, backpack. We've got about one per family, so if someone around you needs one, please pass it down the row

Inside this bag, there is a kit that will equip you to explore life on the way with Jesus for yourself.

Earlier I mentioned the idea of different sacred pathways, that God has wired us up to connect with Jesus in a variety of different ways according to our personalities and make-up

In this bag is your very own introduction to the nine sacred pathways  
and a kit to help you to explore and experiment until you find your own sacred pathway,  
the way that you might connect with God more personally and in a more integrated and  
ongoing way

There's an explanation about the different sacred pathways and we've created a bit of a game that you can play to track over the next 5 weeks how many and how often you take steps down your own sacred pathway

There's very short exercises that you can try and then there are more involved exercises that you can try; there's a little maze that you can post on the fridge and some stickers and a little treasure chest with some ideas of things to try

Our goal here is to equip you to be able to leave here and be on your way with Jesus, in this kit is a tool that just might unlock some things for you if you're willing to say to Jesus "stay with us"

And included in this little kit is information about our five-day-a-week podcast that we'll be doing, our first episode is dropping today so take a listen and share it with your friends and family

And over the course of the next 5 weeks, we're going to be talking about what doing life on the way with Jesus looks like—we'll be talking about that in the podcast and here on Sunday mornings

So come back next week as we continue to work this out in our lives

Guests