

### Luke 24:36-50 “Reach out and Touch Someone”

This week, we turn back to the Gospel of Luke on the Road to Emmaus, where, on the same day as Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples seven miles from Jerusalem. As they approach the village of Emmaus, Jesus himself begins to walk alongside two disciples. Unaware of who this person is, He stands among them as if a ghost had suddenly appeared and says, “Peace be with you.” At some point, we, too, must move past the resurrection event and experience the peace of the risen Christ among us. Folks, that is the gift of Easter. Just as the disciples discovered, it can be with us. At first, we might not recognize him. Then, in the middle of a conversation, we hear a voice; “Peace be with you.” This peace, the peace of the risen Christ, is what we are called to experience and share.

The resurrected life, a concept that surpasses human comprehension of God's nature and actions in this world, is the reality for which Christ died. Luke's account reveals that Jesus enters where He is invited, underscoring the personal responsibility each of us holds—the responsibility to actively invite Him into our lives. If you have yet to extend an invitation for Him to be your Savior, He remains distant. However, for those who have welcomed Him into their hearts, a profound recognition of His presence awaits.

Although we did not cover the verses that begin the account of “On the Road to Emmaus,” we can determine that it was that way with these disciples who, after a seven-mile walk, did something quite natural. They were hungry, so they sat down with Jesus to eat something. In those days, it was also quite common to ask the host to say grace at the beginning of a Jewish meal. Instead, here was Jesus, a stranger whom they did not recognize, and they asked him to give thanks over supper as if He were the host. Listen to what Luke writes, “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?” **Let us take a moment to pray.**

**Lord, set our hearts on fire when we read Thy Word. Open our eyes so that we might see life anew and the beautiful things in your law. Open our eyes so the truth of Scripture becomes visible, and our hearts become set on fire for joy and testimony. Lord, give us the love that leads the way, the faith that nothing can dismay, the hope and passion that will burn like fire, burn rather than fade in rust. In this, we pray, Amen.**

What we learn from this story is that it was the old sign, well known to them and him, that blessing and breaking of the bread was a time for intimate fellowship. Eating around a table is a beautiful time to share the things of Christ and to have true fellowship and prayer; He must be in the midst of breaking the bread, for Jesus is our host.

You might have been tempted to think this story shares a hint of a communion service, but it does not, for there is no mention of wine. Then, what happens? Jesus vanishes. Most certainly, it would have been a strange communion service, I would think. So, there is no real reason to find anything other than the usual routine of family mealtime life. Furthermore, these individuals were not present at the Last Supper. And so, it is in this place and with this strange

mystery that their eyes are opened. God chose at this moment to make clear that this was His Son and that they were in the presence of the risen Lord Jesus. As soon as they recognize him, Jesus vanishes. But here is where it gets real, for their hearts burned within when He opened the Scriptures, how it is too when the Scriptures are open to me. I long for nothing less than when I come to the listening and reading of God's Word with that kind of expectation. It is amazing how my heart is stirred with an incomparable joy. If, by chance, any of us comes as a bystander or casual observer, or when someone comes to sleep, then there is little chance of a burning heart. Listen carefully, my friends; you might say it was Jesus, but on the contrary, it was the opening of the Scriptures that reached out and touched someone. Reaching out and touching someone reminds me of something from the past. Allow me to share.

There is an old AT&T commercial from 1987 that says, "Reach Out and Touch Someone." Maybe some of you can recall. The ad begins with a young college student named Robbie, who calls home one evening. His mother picks up the phone; his sister yells, "Hi, Robbie." Anyhow, in the background, Robbie hears Dad raiding the refrigerator, the dog scratching at the door, and his brother bouncing a basketball. Meanwhile, his mother continues to ask, between all the interruptions, "What's wrong, Robert?" Who says anything is wrong, he says. Mom in reply: "You are not the only one in this family who can hear, you know." Robbie: "Mom, you are something else." Then we listen to a voice from AT&T say, "When the people you love come in loud and clear – that's AT&T."

The idea behind the commercial was that there was someone who cared. Here, in the story of Luke, we see the Good Shepherd calling His sheep to reach out and touch Him! Jesus cared enough for them and us that He died an agonizing death so we might be able to live an abundant life! Although we cannot touch him physically (at least not yet), we can "stay in touch" with Him loud and clear through His Word and our prayer.

"See my hands and my feet," Jesus says. "Touch me and see." Although Thomas was not present on this occasion, Jesus did this to calm his disciples. To assure them that He was not a ghost. Songwriters sometimes mention the scars on Jesus' hands and feet, but Luke's account says nothing about scars. Last week, I read from 1 John. Listen as I read. "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands concerning the Word of life." Friends, we say "seeing is believing," but the disciples not only saw but touched the physical body of Jesus. Yet, they could not believe it. They were not convinced. Then, he said this: "Peace be with you." Then, the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. I love this part. Jesus asks: "Do you have anything to eat?" What did they give him? A piece of broiled fish! We could end the sermon right here! A real person of flesh and bones demonstrating Christ's victory over sin, the purpose of God in humanity, and, most significantly, proof that God was satisfied with the sacrifice of His son, affirming that God raised Him from the dead.

"Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." Jesus's words remind me of the song we sang: "Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me; place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free." Spurgeon also reminds us that "the best interpreter of any book is generally the man who wrote it." If God does

not open our eyes, we will not see the wonder of the Word, for when we read the Bible without the help of God, the glory of God in the teachings and events of the Bible is like the sun shining in the face of a blind man.

I could have thrown another song into today's order, "Open the Eyes of My Heart." We cannot see the spiritual beauty of God and his risen Son in the world's work without opening our hearts. Sure, we can see historical facts and sense an author's rational intention, but what about spiritual enlightenment that will change us? When we read the Bible, there is no other book one can read in which the author who wrote it is present within us, ready and willing to explain what He wrote! Friends, the one who has the Holy Spirit in their hearts and the Scriptures in their hands, has all they need.

Maybe I have shared this story with you before. There is a colleague of mine whom I met along the way during some of my training. Last year, while in Minnesota, Walter offered me a ride to the airport. He asked, "While we are driving to the airport, do you mind helping me out? I have been memorizing the Psalms. Really? How many? Well, he said, I'm working on all of them! I do not recall which Psalm I listened to him repeat to me that day, but I was amazed by his capacity for spiritual illumination! What a reminder that many Christians go through the motions of bible reading without the slightest idea of the actual meaning of the text, not to mention to rattle off an entire book or section of Scripture.

As we read verses 45 through 49, we see a summary of Luke's version of the "Great Commission" declared by the Lord. Thus, it is written that Jesus had to suffer, rise, and be preached. As a result, the Messiah would be slain and raised, and a message about repentance would go out into the world. "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

We are all born in sin and naturally love to sin. We take to sin as soon as we can act and think, just as birds take to flying and fish take to swimming. From the time of a child, there never was a child who required schooling to learn selfishness or foolishness, nor did they gradually learn from bad companions or tedious instruction. Nope, it has only been a natural product of the heart since the fall of humankind. When this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit and this natural love of sin is cast out, then that change that the Word of God illustrates as genuine repentance takes place.

In closing, the Lord Jesus began His ministry when he began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." We all need to know how to obtain forgiveness from God. The God who answers that sinners will be forgiven when they trust in Christ's blood that was shed on the cross. Nothing can separate us from God's great love in Christ. All ought to be told the necessity of repentance, for without repentance and conversion, no one can enter the kingdom of God. All ought to be reminded of God's readiness to forgive everyone who believes in Christ. To belong to a pure Church, to hear the Gospel, and to receive the sacraments are great privileges. But are we converted? Friends, We are to go in Jesus' authority, proclaiming who He is and what He has done. Jesus is the subject of our mission, who offers forgiveness of sins to every repentant sinner. It is an overwhelming task, but as faithful witnesses, we have the power of the Master's Gospel with us. With the promise of the Father and the love of Christ by our side,

won't you consider blessing others with the crucified and risen love by reaching out and touching someone? Amen