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The Road to Emmaus
Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,

14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,

16 but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.

18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

19 He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over 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 took place.

22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,

23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed 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 they did not see him."

25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!

26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.

29 But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

31 Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

32 They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Four little words in the middle of this story capture the hearts of those who followed Jesus but didn't yet understand he had been resurrected. Four little words that are, **honest, real, and heartbroken.**

But we had hoped

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 took place.

When Cleopas and his friend start their 7 mile journey to Emmaus from Jerusalem, it is Easter morning...

but they don't know the meaning of Easter just yet.

The tomb is empty, the women have come and told the rest of the disciples that Jesus is alive, but **not everyone is convinced.**

These friends leave Jerusalem at the end of Passover, **crushed** by the knowledge that their Lord Jesus has been crucified, and his body removed from the tomb.

As they are discussing everything that has happened,

Jesus comes walking beside them...

but they don't recognize him.

So Jesus, the stranger asks them what they are talking about.

They can't help but **be shocked and saddened** by his question.

They stop and ask if he is the only stranger in Jerusalem who doesn't know what has happened to Jesus!

The arrest, the crucifixion....then they say those four little words, that heartbreaking phrase that every person can identify with:

But we had hoped.

Their hope **HAD been** in Jesus.

They had hoped he was the Messiah,

And then, all that hope was lost.

This story starts with that **brokenness.**

The friends are full of doubts about these 'idle tales' of the women who claim Jesus is alive,

they are overwhelmed with grief,

they are questioning everything they thought was real.

The story starts with **broken people, and broken hearts.**

Ernest **Hemingway**, when challenged to write a whole story in just six words, reportedly took a napkin and wrote:

For sale: Baby shoes. Never used.

Six little words describing a world of heartache.

We all come to place in our lives when our hearts are broken,
We come to worship and fellowship, ***as broken people, right?***

All too often we are the ones full of ***doubt***,
and ***questions*** about God and faith.
Thankfully doubt is not a lack of faith or unbelief,
it is an ***important part of our faith. It's real and honest.***
And it's one of the broken pieces that we bring with us.

We are all on our ***own journeys*** of faith,
just like they were on the way to Emmaus.
And We can all say about something....***well, I had hoped...***

What if it's just that kind of brokenness ***that brings Jesus into our lives, with hope?***

Jesus knows exactly who the friends are and what they are feeling.
It's no accident that he joins them on their journey.
Because they need the hope that ***only he can bring.***

But at first ***their eyes are kept*** from recognizing him.
Isn't that true of our lives sometimes?
Sometimes we can only see so far down the road,
our eyes can't fully understand what's right in front of us.
But....God reveals it in due time.

Jesus joins these friends, and then,
beginning with Moses and all the prophets,
he interprets to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.
Wow.

Talk about ***bringing hope*** into some broken hearts!
He tells them about himself—all about God's plan for him,
for his mission, his salvation for all people.
They would later say ***their hearts burned within them*** as he spoke!

Wouldn't yours?
What if Jesus came into your life like that?
Well, you know what?
Jesus does that still today!
Every time we ***call*** upon his name,

every time two or three of us are **gathered** together in his name,
every time we ask for **help** from Him—Jesus is with us.

He is in the **people** around us,
in the **beauty** we see,
in the **music** we sing,
in the **prayers** we pray,
and the **fellowship** we share.

And just like these friends on the road to Emmaus,
our hearts burn within us as we learn what God's word really means,
as we **hear the hope** that our broken hearts and lives so desperately need.

Have you ever **had your heart filled** with God's hope?
Ever had an experience of hope--in worship? In quiet time?
What about when you read the Bible, or meditate on God's word?
I know that sometimes when I'm studying the Bible
and I have one of those 'aha' moments,
it's like Jesus is sitting beside me explaining the whole thing!

This week while I was thinking about the **meaning of hope**,
I thought of so many **Bible verses**.
The word hope is found 97 times in the OT, and 83 times in the NT,
and the Greek word elpis means **joyful and confident expectation**.
Isn't that great?

One of my favorites is **Romans 5:3-6**:
*... suffering produces endurance,
4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,
5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*

Romans 15:13 says **May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that
you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

There is **so much hope** in the Bible.
In the stories of our ancestors in the faith,
in the Words of the prophets,
the songs of the Psalms,
all throughout scripture we find hope—that **joyful, confident expectation** that God is going
to do something great!

But do you ever wonder what the **root of hope is**?
I think that **Biblical hope** is **different** than the hope the world has.
In the world, hope often refers to just optimism,

or superstitious wishful thinking,
or something you would just like to see in the future.

In the Bible, **hope is** based on God's power, **not ours**.
It is so much more than thinking, *I hope that such and such works out*.

Christian hope is rooted in **who God is, and what God does**.
Not what any human may or may not do.
Which is great news, isn't it?

Our hope is in 2 things: **God's grace, and God's new life**.
Because we have those two gifts,
we have real hope—that no one can ever take away!
Ever thought of it that way?

We have hope because our God offers us a **clean slate**—
we are completely, totally forgiven through Christ's death on the cross.
It doesn't matter who we are
or what we've done,
when we welcome Christ, we receive the gift of grace.
A clean slate. Forever.
As we say in our **assurance of pardon** sometimes,
God separates our sins from us as far as East is from West!
When was the last time you thought about that great news?

We also have hope because of **Jesus' resurrection**.
Because he was raised, we believe in new and everlasting life.
We believe in this new life anywhere where we find death.
We believe that death is not the end of any story.
Life is what comes after death for those who follow Christ.
And that's pretty amazing, isn't it?

1 Corinthians 15:17-22 talks about this hope:
If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.
19 *If for this life only we have hoped in Christ,*
we are of all people most to be pitied.
20 *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, ...*
22 *... so all will be made alive in Christ.*

On the road to Emmaus,
the **hope grows after Jesus explains** who he is from the scriptures.
When they arrive at their destination,
Jesus does something significant.
He acts like he is going on.
This is important,

Because **Jesus doesn't force his way** into our lives.
 We have to invite Him.
 He waited for their invitation.
 And imagine what happens when we invite people into our lives today?
 We've all heard of entertaining angels unaware...
 well, what if the person we welcome is **actually Jesus?**

They did invite him in,
 and it was during the **breaking of bread**,
 the same actions as his last supper,
 that their eyes are opened and they recognized him!
 He does what he did when he told them it was his own body and blood—When he was at
 the table with them,
he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

This week on Wednesday night
 I had a special lesson about the **meaning of the Lord's Supper**.
 We sat around a table in the kids room,
 I sat in the middle, and I passed a large piece of bread around
 for each of them to take a piece.
 Then we passed the cup where we dipped our piece of bread,
 all the while I was saying the words of communion to them.
**This is my body broken for you, this cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed
 for the forgiveness of sins.**

We talked about how we don't believe that the bread and juice actually change during
 communion,
 we believe that **WE are the ones who are changed**.
 We are fed **spiritual food and drink** by Jesus himself in that meal.
 We aren't just remembering the last supper,
 we are **re-enacting** it, and allowing our hearts to be changed.
 And we are doing it with everyone who celebrates the same meal.
 Do you realize the significance of the meal we share today?

I read a great quote this week about communion.
"the broken bread nurses our broken faith" (Feasting On the Word, Year A, Vol 2, pg.
 422).
 And that I believe.

There is so much hope in the Lord's supper,
 because no matter how broken we are,
 the **broken bread reveals the power and presence of Jesus** in our lives—
 right here, right now.

It's the same with our only other sacrament we celebrate, baptism.
 Baptism is also about hope,

for it is all about the new life we receive from Jesus.
The Lord's Supper and Baptism are both sacraments:
visible signs of God's invisible grace.

In our story, **Jesus vanishes** once they recognize who he is,
which is important for us to remember.
We don't need to have him in the flesh to believe in Him.
We don't need to be in his physical presence,
Because we always have his presence in our hearts,
through the power of the Holy Spirit!

The Emmaus story doesn't end with the breaking of bread.
It continues with the **sharing of hope**.
That last part is so important!
These friends cannot keep the news of Jesus' resurrection to themselves.
They can't contain what they have seen and experienced!

That same hour they got up and **returned to Jerusalem**;
and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together, saying, "The Lord has
risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"
Then Cleopas and his friend told what had happened on the road to Emmaus, and how
Jesus had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

What if God fills our hearts with hope,
So it overflows to the hearts of those all around us?
What if we are the **messengers of hope**?
2 Corinthians 5: 20 says we are *ambassadors for Christ*
What if we are **ambassadors of hope**?

How **do you share your hope** in Christ?
When was the last time you spoke about your hope?
Or **invited** someone to join you in worship, or Bible study?
When and where can you share your hope?
Because that is part of who we are as believers.
People who **share the hope!**

Friends, hear the **Good News of the Gospel** today:
We don't have to say **but we had hoped**.
The four words that describe our life are this:
But We HAVE Hope!

We have been given new and living hope—
Jesus meets us on the **road**,
shows us his power in the **Word**,
and reveals himself in the **Lord's Supper**.
When we come together, **He is with us**.

And He comes to us *to bring us hope.*
Amen.