

The Stranger Who Was Jesus

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Sermon Theme

The risen Christ comes near to discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus, opens the Scriptures, and reveals Himself in the breaking of bread. What begins as a heavy road of sorrow becomes a holy road of recognition, grace, and witness.

Luke 24:13–35

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Big Idea

Jesus walks with discouraged people before they recognize Him. He meets them in their confusion, opens the Word, and turns them around with resurrection hope.

What the Passage Shows Us

Luke 24:13–35 begins with two disciples walking away from Jerusalem under the weight of disappointment. They had hoped Jesus would redeem Israel, but the cross had shattered their expectations. Even the report of the empty tomb had not yet brought clarity. They are not walking in confidence. They are walking in grief, confusion, and unanswered questions.

That is where Jesus meets them. He comes near while they are still discouraged. He does not wait until they understand. He does not wait until they are speaking with bold faith. He joins them on the road they are already walking. At first, He seems like a stranger, but He is the very presence they need most.

Jesus listens before He teaches. He lets them speak their sorrow out loud. He makes room for their disappointment and their incomplete understanding. Then He begins to open the Scriptures and show them that the suffering of the Messiah was not the failure of God's plan, but part of its fulfillment. What looked like the end of hope was actually the place where God was doing His saving work.

When they reach Emmaus and invite Him to stay, Jesus reveals Himself in the breaking of bread. Their eyes are opened, and they realize that the stranger on the road was Jesus all along. The road that began as a road of retreat becomes a road of return. They go back to Jerusalem with hearts burning and witness rising.

Why the Road Matters

The road matters because it is where Jesus meets people in real life. This is not a temple scene or a mountaintop moment. It is an ordinary road filled with sorrow, questions, and misunderstanding. Christ does not only meet people in moments of strength or certainty. He meets them in the middle of disappointment.

That matters because many of us know what it is to walk a heavy road. We know what it is to carry grief, confusion, or dashed expectations. We know what it is to say, "We had hoped." Luke shows us that resurrection hope does not erase the road. It transforms it. Jesus takes the very place of sorrow and makes it a place of grace.

The road also matters because it becomes holy not because the disciples understood everything, but because Christ was with them on it. What changed the road was His presence. The same is

still true. Roads of grief, waiting, confusion, and struggle can become places where Jesus is made known.

What This Means for Us

This passage reminds us that Jesus still walks with discouraged people. He is not frightened by our questions. He is not put off by our confusion. He comes near before we recognize Him and keeps working even when our understanding is slow.

It also reminds us that Christ is known through Word and table. He opens the Scriptures, and He is made known in the breaking of bread. The risen Lord still meets His people through the means of grace. He still speaks through His Word. He still nourishes His people through His presence.

Luke 24 also asks whether we are willing to let Jesus reshape our expectations. The disciples had hoped for redemption, but they had not yet understood what that redemption would look like. We often do the same. We want God to work in ways that make immediate sense to us. Jesus shows that God's saving work may move through suffering before it opens into resurrection joy.

This passage calls us not just to admire Jesus on the road, but to recognize Him, receive Him, and be turned around by Him. The disciples do not stay in Emmaus. They return to Jerusalem. Real encounter with Christ moves people back toward fellowship, witness, and hope.

Key Truths

Jesus comes near before the disciples recognize Him.

He listens to their sorrow before correcting their understanding.

The cross was not the end of God's plan, but part of its fulfillment.

Christ opens the Scriptures and shows that all of God's story leads to Him.

Jesus is made known in the breaking of bread.

A heavy road can become a holy one because Christ is present on it.

Real encounter with Jesus turns people back toward community and witness.

Questions for Reflection

Where do you hear disappointment in the words of the two disciples?

Why do you think Jesus listened before He taught?

What does this passage teach us about how God works through suffering?

Why is recognition connected to the breaking of bread?

Have you ever realized later that Jesus was with you on a road that felt heavy at the time?

What road in your life right now needs to be placed in Christ's hands?

Takeaway

Luke 24:13–35 shows that the risen Christ walks with discouraged people, opens the Scriptures, and reveals Himself in grace. He still turns heavy roads into holy ones and sends His people back into the world with hope.

Key Verse

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?” — **Luke 24:32**