

Luke 24:13-35

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognising him.

¹⁷ He asked them, 'What are you discussing together as you walk along?' They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ 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?'

¹⁹ '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. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; ²¹ 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. 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.'

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.

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

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognised

him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² 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?'

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

I have always been so happy that God gave me the ability to think. I loved to solve mental problems as a child. Riddles, brain teasers, you name it. If you knew one, I wanted to hear it. I particularly loved when a solution required "outside the box" type of thinking. I could spend hours trying to bend my brain in just the right way to be able to understand what a riddle was trying to get me to see. And if I couldn't figure out the answer, I might get a little frustrated. But I would still get to experience that "gotcha!" moment when the answer is revealed. Even now I still like to try to solve riddles by myself without any hints...though I admit I need a few more hints now a days.

The two disciples along the road to Emmaus found themselves in a similar situation. They had their own riddle of sorts. But they didn't know that they had someone to give them the answer. They felt like they were grasping in the dark for the solution to a question that could be summed up sort of like this: "What the heck just happened?!" They were followers of Jesus. They had seen him speak and act with the power of God. They knew him to be an amazing man, a mighty prophet! They were hoping that this was Israel's redeemer. And then God's providence and guidance seemed to no longer be with him. He was seized by the Jewish leaders! They delivered him to the Roman authorities so that they could crucify him. Jesus died. Clearly that meant something. Maybe this meant he did redeem Israel? Or could it have meant that Jesus wasn't actually the Christ?

And what about these new reports from other followers, that Jesus' body is no longer in the tomb? Some women were reporting that angels declared Jesus to no longer be dead, he is risen! Were all these things true? Are there any red herrings in there? Is there any hope that they might be able to figure out what

God's plan is with all these confusing things happening? Honestly no. They found themselves in a very complex situation that reached beyond the extent of their human reason.

And I think we can all empathise with this. We have some of these little riddles in our lives right now. Like...what the heck was going on with Covid? Did we do too much? Or not enough? And what about the economy and prices and such? Will prices keep going up? Will anyone be able to afford their own home anymore? And those are just a couple of questions that are close to home. Thanks to media and the wonders of the internet, we have a whole other set of questions we might ask. Like, what's this war in Ukraine all about? How did a huge floating garbage heap get into the middle of the Pacific Ocean? Why do politicians around the world keep getting away with crimes? ...I could go on. Perhaps you've got your own set of questions – a riddle about this world and why it works the way it does.

And when we come to these questions from a Christian standpoint, there's actually a whole other set of questions under each of those questions. Why is God allowing this to happen? Why must we suffer this way? Where is God's power and majesty?

We could try to face these questions as if they're a riddle, maybe try to think outside the box for an answer...but no matter how hard you, I, or the disciples try, we won't be able to find a real answer. Only God has the answers to these questions, how can we as sinful humans try to answer these by ourselves?

Praise God that we're never left alone with these questions. The Gospel text shows us this clearly. Christ drew near to the disciples; he didn't leave them to walk alone. He listened to them. He confirmed that they had heard all the pieces of this puzzle. He revealed to them the twist, the truth behind this Easter event: Christ was a prophet, yes! And they were right, he was the one who was sent to redeem Israel. He had paid the ransom for their sin. The very thing that made them question and doubt – the Cross – this was the moment when the sins of Israel and the rest of the world were paid for! And he opened their eyes to see that the resurrection the women revealed to the rest of the disciples was

true, a confirmation that Jesus was not only the Christ, but the Son of God. As God and man he had conquered sin, death and the devil once and for all.

The disciples were very blessed – they got to see the answer to their riddle. There was even an extra twist when Jesus broke bread with them and they realised exactly who it was that had been speaking with them. That moment might have been a stumbling block, because lo and behold, Jesus was the one telling them about Jesus! By human reason, certainly he'd be a bit biased about himself, right? So why should the disciples trust Jesus' words about himself?

The answer is clear: yes, Jesus is fully a human, but he is also true God from all eternity. And the beauty of this moment is that Jesus' words to the disciples - the revelation which he gave them about their eternal salvation – weren't the words of someone conceited, just puffing themselves up to look good before others. They were His words, the words of eternal life, the same words that created the world, and that even now sustain that same world. When Jesus talks about himself, he points the disciples and us to his words, to the Word of God, the Scriptures. He doesn't need to use reason or justify himself before anyone, because the Father and the Holy Spirit do that work for him. Clearly the Scriptures point to the Messiah, the one who will suffer for the salvation of the world. They point to God's forgiveness and love for his people. As far back as the Garden of Eden, God's Word tells of a redeemer, one who will crush the head of the adversary of all humanity. This is a promise God made to his people, and they clung to it through the entire Old Testament. We now have the fulfilment of that promise in Christ.

Just as the disciples discovered along the road, the entire Old Testament – God's written Word – points us to who Christ is, and what he has done for us all. We have the promise of the Old Testament with us, in flesh and blood, crucified and risen. In Christ, God has solved the puzzle of salvation for us, and he gives that answer freely to us.

And praise God, just like with the disciples, Christ draws near to you as well to reveal his power and majesty. There's no need for outside the box thinking, or bending your mind to figure out that you're saved. Because, simply, you are. You are saved, by the grace of God. Christ's salvation even covers those

moments when we try to go it alone and rely on our own reason. Jesus has drawn near to you in your baptism. The Holy Spirit has revealed to you the truth of Christ, and his work for you. And that same Spirit has bound you to the death of Christ, the death of sin, and bound you also to his resurrection and new life. God came to you and has redeemed you from all unrighteousness. God has worked faith in you. Through his Word he continues to sustain you in your most holy faith.

We look forward to the time soon, God willing, where Jesus will meet with us face to face, bring us to his table and serve us the bread of life as he did the disciples who walked along the road to Emmaus. Until that time, Jesus still serves us through the Word of God, sustaining and upholding our faith. In this way we have what we have always had: a God who loves us unconditionally. A God who walks alongside us and suffers with us. A God who can answer the riddles, the tough questions we might face. A God who reveals himself to us, and who has done all things for us so that we might live together with him forever.

Amen.