

## On the Road to Emmaus

Luke 24: 13-35

Rev. Philip Parker

April 27, 2025

Christ appeared on numerous occasions during the forty days following His resurrection and before His ascension into heaven. Beginning this morning and continuing in the coming weeks, we will be examining these accounts in the four Gospels. One of those accounts which has always had a special place in my heart can be found in the Gospel of Luke. It takes place on the very day Jesus was raised from the dead. It involves two of His followers. One of them is named Cleopas. He and his companion were followers of Jesus, but they were not among those who had been most closely associated with Jesus. They were not among the twelve, those disciples whom Jesus had chosen at the beginning of His ministry. Rather they were a part of the larger gathering of individuals who had become His followers. In fact, they may have come to Jerusalem to greet Jesus when He entered the city on Palm Sunday. Clearly shaken by the events that had transpired during the past several days, they were now on their way to Emmaus, a little village about seven miles outside of Jerusalem. It may have been their home. Regardless of why they were going to Emmaus, their journey started off on a very sad note. Fortunately it ended on a much happier one. Today, let's take a look at what happened. That which transpired can best be described by four words, each beginning with the letter "d"—**distress, discussion, discovery and declaration.**

As stated just a moment ago their departure from Jerusalem was filled with an overwhelming sense of **distress**. They were heartbroken. They may have been among that crowd witnessing the death of Jesus. They would have seen Him taking His last breath around three in the afternoon. They may have even witnessed those who took down His body from the cross and hastily buried it in a borrowed tomb. Everything they had hoped for had been destroyed. There would be no dawn of the Kingdom of God. All of those hopes and dreams had died on a cross and had been buried in a tomb. Even as the women were preparing to go and anoint the body of Jesus on Sunday, the first day of the week, they decided to go home. They could not bear the thought of lingering in the city. Their response to the stranger who met them on the road to Emmaus pretty well sums up the remorse that gripped their hearts, "We had hoped that Jesus was the one who would redeem Israel."

These words bring us to that second word which begins with the letter "d," **discussion.**

Walking sadly down the road leading out of Jerusalem, heads bowed in grief, neither Cleopas nor his companion noticed the man who began walking beside them. They were so consumed by their ongoing discussion of what had taken

place in Jerusalem that they didn't even notice this stranger until He asked, "What are you fellows talking about?" Cleopas responded, "Are you the only person in all of Jerusalem who doesn't know about the things that have happened?" "What things?" the man replied. They proceeded to tell this stranger the whole sad story—that Jesus was a mighty prophet in word and deed, that He was executed by the Romans, that it was now the third day after His crucifixion, that the women in their group went to the tomb but did not find His body and finally that they had seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. Still no one had reported that they had actually seen Jesus. If He was alive, some of those who knew Him best would have certainly seen or met Him. Confused, anxious, distraught, they decided the best thing to do was to go home and try to sort out all of this confusing mess.

Much to their surprise, this stranger then gently admonished them. He said, "Oh, how foolish you are, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and referring to a whole host of prophets in the Old Testament, the stranger explained how all the pieces of this great big jig saw puzzle about the Messiah fit together. Before they realized it, this time of eye opening discussion had come to an end. They had arrived at Emmaus.

That's when the third word beginning with "d" presented itself—**discovery**. It was late in the day. The sun was beginning to set. They had now arrived at Emmaus. Walking on beyond them the stranger appeared to be on His way to another destination. "Please stay and spend the evening with us," both men asked. "Let us have dinner together so that we can continue our discussion and enjoy each other's company." The stranger agreed and entered their home with them. Hastily gathering a loaf of bread and jug of wine, they asked their guest if He would offer a blessing. Taking the loaf in His hands, He blessed, broke and gave it to them. In that very moment even as the bread was placed in their hands, they realized that the stranger was no stranger at all. He was the risen Lord. Disappearing from their presence as suddenly as He had appeared, the two of them said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us as He was speaking to us on our way to Emmaus, sharing with us what the Scriptures had to say about Himself." Cleopas and his companion had made a discovery that would forever change their lives.

It was also a discovery that they could not keep to themselves. It was a **declaration** that had to be shared. They almost ran all the way back to Jerusalem. Bursting into the Upper Room which had become the gathering place of the disciples and the followers of Christ, they were informed that Jesus had appeared to Simon Peter. Then they told everyone what they had experienced and how the risen Lord had made Himself known to them as He blessed and broke the bread of the evening meal. It was almost too good to be true. Jesus really had defeated death for Himself and for all of those who would entrust their lives into His care. It was a declaration that needed to be proclaimed to all the world.

So what about you and me? Is there a message here in this post-resurrection account that we need to apply to our own lives. There are a number of passages of Scripture that we could examine. There are also a number of individuals whose lives have been touched in a similar fashion to that which transpired on the road to Emmaus. On this day, however, a more personal approach may be the better choice and once again those four “d” words are uniquely appropriate. Like Cleopas and his companion, there are times when every Christian faces distressful situations. It can be the death of a friend or loved one, a personal loss of something which is near and dear to us, like those who have lost all of their possessions in the various natural catastrophes that continue to sweep across our nation. It can even be the loss of that furry friend that has meant so much to us. It can involve the loss of employment and yes it can also involve the loss of friendship when a dispute has arisen between us and someone for whom we care so very deeply. Whether we like it or not there will be times of **distress** and even **despair** in our lives. Personal relationships which were so very important can be torn asunder and it will hurt. We’ve all been there and if we haven’t, it’s only a matter of time until we will feel just like those two men walking down the road to Emmaus. We will be walking right beside them saying some of the same things they said.

It will also be a time for **discussion**. It may be an internal discussion, as if we are talking to another side of ourselves, asking, “Why or how could this have happened?” It may be and probably should be a discussion that involves others. One of the most important things that we can do when facing a great loss or tragedy is to find someone with whom we can share our grief, our disappointment, our heartache, our feelings of despair. That is what took place in the lives of those two followers of Christ as they conversed with one another on their way home. It’s also a good time to speak with that fellow traveler in our lives as Christians, the resurrected presence of Christ. Reach out in prayer to Christ. He promised to walk beside us through those hard times in life, comforting us through the presence of His Spirit within us.

Along the way and at those crucial moments when He opens our eyes, our minds and our hearts to a reality that is much deeper and wonderful than we could ever imagine, there will be times of **discovery**. We’ll still feel the hurt and pain of the loss, but a deeper awareness of what it all meant and how it can transform and redirect our lives will become apparent. A sense of resolution and determination can begin to well up inside of us. I’m thinking of all those worthy movements and charitable causes that have been born out of the catastrophic tragedies and losses which people have experienced.

Finally, there is that word **declaration**. When our eyes and our hearts are opened to a new reality, we need to find someone, in fact we need to find a whole lot of someone’s with whom to share it. One of my favorite authors over the years has been Catherine Marshall, the wife of the beloved pastor and Chaplain of the Senate, Peter Marshall. After his death, she discovered the comforting presence of

Christ even as she mourned the death of her husband. She did not keep that discovery to herself. She shared it with the world in a book named *The Man Called Peter* and it didn't stop there. It continued in a whole series of books about the presence and power of God's presence at work in our lives, even a novel about a young school teacher in the mountains of North Carolina, a best seller named *Christy*.

You may not acquire such a wide audience with whom to share your experiences. Few of us ever will, but all of us have the privilege and indeed the opportunity to declare to others what has happened on our journeys down the road to Emmaus, times when we met the resurrected Christ, the Lord of our lives.