

Finding Myself In The Resurrection Story

On Easter Sunday, we concluded our sermon series on “Eight Epic Bible Passages” by studying one of the most intriguing resurrection stories – Luke 24:13-35.

1. Warm up question: When you were a kid, what was your favorite thing to find in your Easter basket?

2. Today’s Scripture takes place on the third day after the crucifixion. Early that morning, several women who were part of Jesus’ inner circle found his tomb empty, then saw angels telling them he was risen. But so far, no one had actually seen Jesus, and most were skeptical. Our story takes place that afternoon. Read Luke 24:13-16.
 - a. As they walked the road to Emmaus, the two disciples featured in this story – one named Cleopas [Clee-oh-pass] and the other unnamed – were “talking with each other about all these things that had happened.” What kinds of things do you imagine they might have been saying to each other?

 - b. As they’re talking, a stranger joins them. The stranger is Jesus, but “their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” Why do you suppose they failed to recognize him? What are the possibilities?

 - c. Read I Corinthians 15:40-44. Jeff speculated that maybe Jesus’ resurrection body looked more like it had when he was in his prime in his early 20s, rather than the way it looked when he died in his 30s. How do you imagine your resurrection body? What insights does I Corinthians 15 offer?

3. Now read Luke 24:17-24. When he joins them on the road, Jesus asks, “What are you discussing?” They tell how they had hoped that Jesus was “the one to redeem Israel,” i.e., the Messiah. Like most of their fellow Jews at the time, they believed the Messiah would become King of Israel, subdue all Israel’s enemies, and usher in a golden age of peace and prosperity. They thought they had it all figured out. They had an elaborate plan in their head about how Jesus’ life would unfold, and how that would affect their lives. When it didn’t happen, they were devastated – and convinced that God’s presence and power could not possibly be in the tragedy that had taken place. The essence of the mistake they made, Jeff suggested, is captured in the phrase, “We had hoped” (vs. 21).
 - a. In your own life, what are some things you “had hoped” would happen, and when they didn’t, you were tempted to doubt the presence and power of God?

 - b. After their hopes for Jesus were dashed, the mood that seized the disciples is summed up in the words of verse 17. “They stood still, looking sad.” In other words, when our hopes are dashed, we can easily get stuck in paralyzing sadness. Is there an area of your life right now where it feels like you are just “standing still, looking sad”?

4. Now read Luke 24:25-27. The disciples were trapped in despair because they were convinced that God's presence and power could not possibly be at work in the tragedy that befell Jesus. Here Jesus challenges them by insisting there's another way to see it. He suggests that God was actually at work in and through the tragedy. So he completely reframes the tragedy for them from a situation of despair to a situation of great possibilities. Think back to the area of personal challenge you mentioned in response to Question 3.b. above. See if you can articulate a positive vision of how God might be at work in and through that challenge. Tell us that positive vision.

5. Jeff shared the story of how God's work in the life of David Smallbone has unfolded. In the early 90's, David felt called to sponsor and organize Christian concerts in Australia, but failed miserably, losing his home to creditors. When he was finally offered a job organizing concerts for a Nashville recording artists, the offer was rescinded after Dave moved his family to Nashville, leaving them even more financially devastated. Soon thereafter, though, Dave's daughter, Rebecca, was given a recording contract, and went on to become a hugely popular Christian recording artist – Rebecca St. James. Dave ended up promoting and organizing his daughter's own smash concerts. With the benefit of hindsight, Dave realized that God's great power was at work through all the bitter disappointments.
 - a. Does this remind you of anything you've experienced in your life – times when, with the benefit of hindsight, you've seen God's mighty hand at work?
 - b. The road to Emmaus is symbolic of the places of sadness and disappointment in our own lives. Jeff said, "Maybe the reason we never encounter the Risen Christ is because we're looking for him in all the wrong places – spending all our time looking for him in the way we wish things were, instead of discovering him in the way things are – out in the wild, where life is crazy and chaotic." Do you buy the notion that we are more likely to encounter the power of the Risen Christ in our disappointments than our triumphs? Why or why not?

6. Now read Luke 24:28-35.
 - a. Verse 35 says, "He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread." What do you suppose might have happened to cause them to recognize Jesus in this way?
 - b. When they realized it was Jesus, he vanished from their sight. Once they finally realized they had spent the whole afternoon with Jesus, that he had been with them all along the way, how do you think they felt in that moment?
 - c. What do you think we're supposed to learn from all this?
 - d. In your own life, have you ever felt like you encountered the Risen Christ in a special way? Tell us what happened?