

SERMON – 09/02/07
DESTINATION: FAITH!
Emmaus – A New Savior

I was on my way from Honolulu to Colorado... our small group of 5 Hawaii pastors were moving through the airport in Los Angeles, on our way to our next connection.

- We walked out of one wing... down a concourse... and were coming up to another security checkpoint...
 - All I noticed, at first, was a young, attractive-looking woman... who was quite short!
 - I make it a point to try, when at all possible, not to do the “mouth-open-jaw-hanging-tongue-wagging, can’t-stop-staring” thing that guys are notorious for...
 - So I averted my eyes... and gazed downward as I passed by.
- What I noticed, while gazing downward, were two things...
 - One, this woman had really fuzzy boots... the kind you’d expect someone who was on a ski vacation somewhere in the Rockies to be wearing...
 - Two, she had a mountain of matching luggage stacked on top of each other... and another woman was pushing it along.
- I heard some of my colleagues talking... but I kept walking... and when I arrived at the destination gate, I discovered what I had missed...
 - I had passed American pop singer & actress, Jessica Simpson... and I didn’t even know it!
 - (When I relayed this story to my wife, Jody, she didn’t seem too disappointed that I had missed this opportunity!).
 - Some of my buddies got a few seconds of conversation in with her... but it was most interesting that two of us had no clue whatsoever who it was we were walking alongside.

In today’s scripture reading from the gospel of Luke, the two disciples sure weren’t traveling through LAX airport... nor were they anywhere near Jessica Simpson... but they shared a

similar experience with me, in that for both of us, our “eyes were kept from recognizing” who was with us!

- Open your Bibles back up to Luke 24... or follow along on the overhead projector... as we reexamine this interesting story!
 - Welcome to the 4th week of our series entitled DESTINATION: FAITH!
 - We’ve been journeying together along various roads... England, Damascus, Canaan, and now Emmaus... and we’re moving towards a better understanding of our own faith...
 - We’ve been reminded of how God gives us new perspectives, new identity and a new vision...
 - And today, we’re going to look at how we might just need a renewed understanding of our Savior!
- In Luke’s account, this story takes place late Easter Sunday afternoon...
 - It’s been a very rough week for the followers of Jesus...
 - A week that began with what seemed like half of Jerusalem waving palm branches and cheering wildly for the Savior...
 - Yet ended with many of those same voices crying out for Jesus’ execution... and that’s just what happened. He was nailed to a cross & crucified.
 - His body was placed in a tomb, and then today... on the third day... some women had reported his body was gone. Something about “resurrection.”
 - They didn’t know what to think.
- So these particular two disciples of Jesus... (one of whom we know to be Cleopas)... are traveling from Jerusalem to Emmaus.
 - Biblical scholars are undecided as to where this town of Emmaus actually was... and why these two were traveling there!
 - Ken Gire writes, “They could take any of several roads. The road north of Jerusalem leads to Ephraim, but that it too far. The road east leads to Jericho, but that is too dangerous. The road south leads to Bethlehem, but that is too glaring a reminder of all they are wanting to forget. And so they take the road west. The road to Emmaus.”

- As they're on this road to Emmaus, they begin to rehash the events of the weekend... and how everything turned out so horribly wrong!
 - That's when he came. The stranger... or at least that's who they thought he was.
 - (v.15ff.) *“While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other, while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad...”*
 - Oftentimes when we're walking the road of disappointment, despair, & depression... our eyes are kept from recognizing important things around us... the things that matter most...
 - The presence of the Divine!
- It's Cleopas who responds to this stranger... saying, in effect, “Where have YOU been? What do you mean, ‘What are we talking about?’ Are you the ONLY one around here who hasn't been following these things?”
 - Well of course, we know he's actually the only one who has really been following these things... because he is Jesus! But they don't know that...
 - So Jesus simply asks them, “What things?”
 - And then it starts... the dam breaks, the floodgates open... and the story comes spilling out...
 - (v.19) *“The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him...”*
 - They knew the story... for they had lived it. They'd probably given close to three years of their lives following this man...
 - But this wasn't all there was to the story... there was something deeper... buried beneath the “facts” of the account...
 - This is where the pain & disappointment started to shine through...
- (v.21ff.) *“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. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 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. 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.”

- Did you catch the emotion there? Could you read between the lines?
- This wasn't just a "transition" time for them... it's not like the "Jesus thing" just didn't work out, so they're trying to figure out "now what?"
- Whether it looks that way or not, I think they were literally crushed.
- I think they were dejected, demoralized & defeated.
- ***“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel!”***
- There's the essence of their pain... they had HOPED Jesus was THE ONE.
 - They thought they knew just who it was they were following...
 - The One that all of scripture pointed to... the Chosen One of God who would come and make all things right...
 - The One who would finally free Israel...
 - As Max Lucado puts it, they'd hoped he'd kick out the Romans. That Pilate would be out and Jesus would be in...
 - (But Pilate was still in, and Jesus was dead!)
 - Now these two (and many others like them) were faced with the harsh question: did Jesus' life and death make any difference at all?
 - They weren't so sure.
 - It wasn't supposed to end with crucifixion. Not for the Messiah.

Can anyone relate to that? (*Oh wait... we're not supposed to admit that to other Christians, are we?!*)

- Well, since I've put it out there... why don't we talk about it for a moment!?!
 - Isn't there anyone else here today who's felt, at least one time or other in their life, a little bit disappointed in Jesus?
 - I know... it sounds almost blasphemous, doesn't it?
 - But what I'm trying to ask is... has anyone had some expectations about Jesus that never came to pass?

- Like why he hasn't protected you from all the pain you've experienced?
- Why the Master Physician didn't heal your loved one?
- Or why you lost your job, when you thought you were doing what God had called you to do?
- Or why your marriage crumbled... or your children haven't turned out the way you hoped...
- Or why Jesus didn't answer that prayer you've had for so many years?
- Surely, if Jesus is the Messiah, he won't sleep during my storms, right!?!)
- UNMET EXPECTATIONS of our Savior... it's okay to admit it... we're in good company... we've all had them, haven't we?
 - That's exactly what Cleopas & his buddy were going through on that road to Emmaus.
 - The only thing is, they were about to find out their unrealized expectations were actually **unrealistic expectations!**
- (v.25ff.) *"Then (Jesus) said to them, 'Oh how foolish you are, and how 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 all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures."*
 - This is great... Jesus doesn't scold them for not believing the Easter morning account of the women... nor for the testimony of the other disciples that the tomb was empty...
 - Jesus scolds these two disciples because they didn't believe the Scriptures!
 - So he gives them their very own, personalized Bible study right there on the spot!
 - And starting from the beginning... Jesus goes book by book through the Bible... prophet by prophet... helping them to see just what the expectations of the Messiah were!
 - Barbara Brown Taylor, one of my favorite contemporary preachers, puts it this way: "Jesus says In other words, 'You idiots!' If you had read your Bibles, none of this would come as a surprise to you! It is right there in black and white: the Christ is not the one who wins the power struggle; he is the one who loses it. The

Christ is not the undefeated champion; he is the suffering servant, the broken one, who comes into his glory with his wounds still visible...

- “Those hurt places are the proof that he is who he says he is, because the way you recognize the Christ – and his followers – is not by their muscles but by their scars.”

You know when it clicks for these two dejected disciples? When Jesus sits down at the table to eat with them...

- Luke tells us that Jesus looked as though he was going further, but Celopas and his companion invited him to join them for the night...
 - After all, they might not have been in their right minds when it came to issues of faith... but they knew how to show hospitality!
 - They arrived at the location they were traveling to... some unnamed place in Emmaus... and then it all came together, so to speak.
 - (v.30) *“When (Jesus) was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.”*
 - They realized it was Jesus... when he broke bread with them.
- And we, like those two disciples, are transported back to that fateful night... just a few days prior... when Jesus was in that upper room with his followers...
 - And he knew his time on earth was coming to a close...
 - So with his closest friends gathered ... Jesus took a loaf of bread...
 - Lifted it up and gave thanks to God... then broke the bread and gave it to those around him...
 - “This is my body... broken for you... eat in remembrance of me!”
 - Jesus seems to prefer working with brokenness... broken people, broken dreams, a broken world... even his broken body.
 - Believe it or not, amazing things often come out of brokenness... life-giving things!
 - “Then their eyes were opened,” it says...

- I don't know all of what's happening in your lives today...
 - I don't know all of your struggles... or the many places you've been hurt...
 - I'm not privy to everyone's spiritual journey... how close or distant you and God have been over the years...
 - I don't know what expectations you've had of the Savior...
 - But there is One who does know all those things... and more!
 - He's big enough to handle even our unrealistic expectations...
 - He's the One with the scars... who in His brokenness takes our brokenness and brings new life!
 - The One who's made known every time we gather around the table, like we did today... and break bread together...
 - The One whom we see in the faces of each other when we share in that holy meal.
 - The One who knows us through and through... and loves us nonetheless!
 - He is the Messiah... Jesus the Christ!
- We're all on this journey together, my friends... this journey whose destination is FAITH!
 - It's a journey where we discover new perspectives... new identities... new vision... and have a new understanding of our Savior.
 - It's a journey that lasts a lifetime... a journey that's never complete... because Jesus comes to us on our roads to Emmaus... and accompanies us along the way!
 - Are you able to recognize this Savior?
 - Are your hearts ready to be led by the Scriptures?
 - Are you open to where He might take you?
 - Next week we'll look at where the leaders of this church believe God is leading us... as individuals and as a congregation...
 - I look forward to your being here!
 - In the meantime... take heart, my friends... the One who gave all He had for us... for us... is here and available to us all!
 - Thanks be to God. AMEN.