

Our Story and Jesus' Resurrection

Luke 24:13–35

Alasdair MacIntyre tells a story that I've adapted a bit. Here it is. Let's say that you came in this morning and found a seat. A couple minutes later a woman sits down next to you and says, "The scientific name of the Harlequin duck is *histrionicus histrionicus*." You are a smart person, so you understand the words she's said. But you have no idea why she'd say that to you.

There are any number of possibilities. Perhaps she mistakenly thought that you were the person who had approached her yesterday at the library and asked, "Do you know the scientific name for the Harlequin duck?" She's just giving you your answer. Or perhaps she is a foreign spy who had spoken the code sentence to see if you were her contact. You were supposed to say, "Well, of course it is!" Or perhaps she had been seeing a therapist in hopes of overcoming her extreme shyness; her assignment was to a complete stranger and tell them absolutely anything. So that's what she did.

The point is that ***without a story, things just don't make sense***. (An adaptation of Tim Keller's phrase, NIV Study Bible, p. 2631). A similar thing is true of our lives in at least a couple of different senses. First, unless you know the story of your life, you probably can't make sense of the things you say and do. Most of us spend a good deal of time thinking about the family in which we grew up, our hardships and disappointments, our dreams, our successes and failures, etc. Generally speaking, the better we understand our story the more sense we can make of the things we say and do.

Second, on a deeper level, unless we understand the story in which everybody everywhere in every generation is living, we can't make sense of the entirety of our lives. Sooner or later most of us ask questions like: Why are we even here? Why is there so much pain and evil in the world (violence, hatred, wars, addictions, etc.)? On the other hand, why is there so much good in the world (beauty of a sunrise, the wonder of little children, all the compassion and kindness that we experience and that we show others)? What happens to us when we die?

As you know, there are many competing stories out there that seek to make sense of our lives. Some people would say that there is no story; we live our lives and do the best we can and then "poof" we're gone.

Today's passage reveals in a rather fascinating way that there is a story and that ***the death and resurrection of Jesus are at the heart of the story in which everyone everywhere in every generation is living***. We are going to listen in on a conversation Jesus had with two of his followers. They left Jerusalem sad and discouraged on that first Easter morning. The story that Jesus tells them is the story that he also tells us. Be encouraged because if we understand that story, we will be able to make sense of our lives. And our lives will be forever changed.

On the Road to Emmaus. (*Luke 24:13-27*) Beginning in verse 13 we are introduced to two disciples of Jesus.

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

Understandably, they were talking about Jesus being crucified and about his tomb being found empty earlier that day.

15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

The clear implication here is that **God himself** kept them from recognizing him. We're going to see that God wanted to do a deep work in their hearts that might have been compromised if they had recognized him immediately. Before he opened their eyes, he would open their hearts to the larger story of what he was doing through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The way Jesus engages these two disciples is somewhat humorous. He's not letting on who he is and what he knows.

17 And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

They rightly viewed Jesus as "a mighty prophet"; they'd seen him heal and they'd heard him teach. They go on to describe his death.

20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.

Then they talk about how their hopes had been dashed by his crucifixion.

21 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 happened.

As Luke had shown earlier in the chapter, none of the first disciples were expecting Jesus to be resurrected because they didn't expect him to be crucified. The women had gone to tomb early that morning with spices so that they could embalm his body. Now it was "the third day," so they were now going home. But there was a glimmer of hope. . .

22 Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.

Speaking of Peter and others, Cleopas continues in verse 24:

24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

One commentator pointed out the irony of that last line; they looked Jesus “straight in the face,” not really seeing him and said of the women “but him they did not see” (Gooding, p. 372).

This would have been a great moment for God to open their eyes so that they would recognize Jesus. They would be stunned and amazed. . . and also a bit embarrassed that they had just accused Jesus of being less informed than anybody else in Jerusalem about his own crucifixion. But that wasn't God's timing. God was doing a deeper work in their hearts (just like he's doing in our hearts). Before they could **see** Jesus, they needed to **hear** Jesus. Faith has content; they needed to understand and believe something very profound.

Notice in verses 25-26 how Jesus confronts them with their unbelief and their spiritual dullness.

25 And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

These two disciples had been steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus expected them to understand and believe what the prophets had spoken. If they didn't understand that the Messiah had to die for the sins of the people, be raised from the dead, and then “enter his glory,” they would miss the whole point of everything that had happened the past three days. So what does Jesus do? He explains how his death and resurrection are at the center of the story of the Bible:

27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

“Moses and the Prophets” was a way of speaking about the entire Hebrew bible (what we call the Old Testament). And so Jesus walked them through the Old Testament explaining how he was the fulfillment of everything found there.

For context, I want to discuss for a few minutes the Drama/plot of Scripture, and then we'll talk about how Jesus' death and resurrection fit into that plot. One way to summarize the story-line of the Bible is CREATION, FALL, REDEMPTION, RESTORATION.



God CREATED everything good. That's why there's so much beauty in this world. The crown of creation was humanity. Man and woman were created in the image of God; if you want to know what God is like, look at humans and you will find out. That's why humans have such dignity

and such capacity to do good; it's because we're imagers of God himself.

Then came the FALL. The man and woman sinned, choosing to disobey God instead of trusting him. Their sin introduced everything that is evil and painful in this world: pride, greed, hatred, violence, deception, etc. From then on, every human would sin by nature and by choice. Several years ago I was driving across town with a friend, and he asked me, "Why do you think this world isn't getting any better?" I told him, "This is the preacher answer. . . but it's sin."

But God, in his mercy, set in motion a plan to REDEEM humanity and to make all things new. And this is where Jesus would have "interpreted to them all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." We don't know, but he likely would have explained that he was the promised descendant of Abraham through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. And that he was the promised descendent of David who would reign on the throne forever (which requires you to come back to life if you've died).

I think it's very likely Jesus talked them through Isaiah 53 which spoke about the Messiah as a Suffering Servant. Isaiah 53:5–6 we read an account that would describe the death of Jesus on the cross:

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities. . . 6
All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus wanted them (and us!) to know that everything he had experience the past three days had been planned by God long ago. Jesus' life hadn't been taken away from him; he had laid down his life for our sins. Then he was raised bodily from the dead as vindication of everything he said and did and so that he could reign on the throne of David forever.

Eventually he would bring about the RESTORATION of all things. There would be a new heaven and new earth that will be inhabited by all who want to be there - by all who want Jesus to be their King/Lord/Master. These two disciples needed to know that the death and resurrection of Jesus are at the heart of God's REDEMPTION and RESTORATION of all things.

Luke is masterful in describing what happened as they got close to the village of Emmaus.

28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 29 but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.

They had been moved so deeply by the things Jesus had told them that they convinced him to stay the night with them. Notice in verse 30 that even though Jesus was the guest, he acted as if he were the host.

30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

On at least two other occasions Jesus had taken bread, blessed it (or given thanks for it), broken it, and given it to his disciples. He did this in Luke 9 when he fed the 5,000. He also did this only a few nights earlier when he ate the Passover meal with his inner circle of twelve disciples. These two disciples weren't present, but perhaps they had heard what happened. We read in Luke 22:19. . .

19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When we read in Luke 24:30 that Jesus "took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. . ." Jesus was signaling unmistakably that his body was broken for them.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

At that moment they realized that Jesus' body was also raised from the dead. What's fascinating is that Luke doesn't mention how astonished they were that Jesus vanished. He mentions that their minds went back to their conversation on the road when Jesus opened the Scriptures:

32 They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

When Jesus explained how his death and resurrection were at the heart of God's story, they had sensed something stirring deep within their hearts. One thing that was stirring within them was faith. Paul would later write, "Faith comes from hearing . . . the word of God." Their eyes were opened to recognize Jesus only **after** they heard that the Messiah was going to die on the cross to pay for their sins and then be raised up on the third day! The Scriptures have done the same thing for people down through the centuries.

This should be a powerful encouragement to each of us. Maybe you've thought, "If only I had seen Jesus raised from the dead. . . then I would believe and never doubt." Maybe or maybe not. But that experience isn't available to us. But the thing that IS available to us is the thing that stirred the hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus: the Scriptures, both the Old AND the New Testaments. The story that Jesus described to them is available to us!

These two disciples did what people normally do when something amazingly fantastic happens to them: they shared the good news with others.

33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Next week we'll look at the last passage in Luke when Jesus talks with this larger group of disciples. Spoiler alert: Jesus will again explain how his death and resurrection has fulfilled the Scriptures, Jesus will again open eyes/minds to understand, and Jesus will again use food to make his point.

We started this message by talking about how ***without a story, our lives just don't make sense***. After considering today's passage, I hope you will see that ***with a story our lives do make sense!*** Think about it with me:



1. Creation. Not only was this world created by God. You were created by God. What David said in Psalm 139 is true of you: you were formed in your mother's womb. You were created in his image.

2. Fall. Your sin is no surprise to God. The fact that you feel guilty over some/many of the things you've thought, said, and done. . . is no surprise to God. He understands the things that cause you shame.

Your deepest, darkest secrets.

3. Redemption. God has provided a way of redemption. God loved you so much that he designed a plan to pay for your sin at great cost to himself. Your sin fell upon Jesus on the cross. He so loved the world that he gave his unique Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. This is how you enter into God's story - by placing your faith in Jesus.
4. Restoration. If you receive God's redemption, you will one day be part of the restoration of all things. Every part of you - including your body - will be transformed. Because Christ was raised from the dead, you will be raised bodily from the dead and will live with him eternally.

We've only scratched the surface of the story of Scripture this morning. My encouragement to you longterm is to ***immerse yourself in Scripture***. The better you understand the Scriptures the better you will understand your life. Maybe you've heard it said that the Scriptures are like an ocean: shallow enough for a child to wade into but deep enough that you can never plunge its depths. That's been my experience.

One more encouragement: ***immerse yourself in Scripture in community***. In other words, don't try to "go it alone"; that isn't God's plan. Here at Faith we want the Scriptures to be at the center of everything we do. We teach it on Sunday mornings, we encourage you to read and study it privately, and we meet in groups to discuss the Scriptures and the implications for our lives. Instead of Scripture being like a sprig on parsley on the side of the plate, we want Scripture to be the entree - the main thing that shapes our lives. If you're not part of a church, we would love for you to jump into this community and learn alongside us. There are actually lots of great churches in town that teach the Scriptures. Please know that you're welcome here.