RE

## (Luke 24:13-33)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. Today, I want to share message with you entitled RE which is a prefix meaning back or again. And so, today, we’re going to look back, we’re going to remember the resurrection, we’re going to be reminded again of the appearances of Jesus, and we’re going to return. In fact, Jesus said it this way to the church,

“Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first” (Revelation 2:5).

And so, as we turn to the gospel of Jesus Christ on this week following resurrection Sunday, we’re going to remember the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection.

This morning, I want to share with you the experience of two disciples found in Luke chapter 24, beginning at verse 13. But before I do, I want to remind you that after Jesus died and rose from the dead there are actually 13 recorded appearances. 13 eyewitness reports, where Jesus appeared to different people, at different times, and in different settings before returning to heaven. Ten of those are recorded in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the other three incidents are recorded in first Corinthians and the book of Acts.

The Bible tells us that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to some other women near the tomb, before appearing to Peter himself. Later he appeared to the ten apostles without Thomas which was followed the next weekend by a visit to all eleven apostles. He arranged a meeting on a mountain in Galilee with the apostles, appeared to 500 of his disciples at the same time, and also met with his brother James.

He joined seven of the apostles as they were fishing, before serving them lunch on the beach. Later he had a meal with the eleven and some other disciples, before going with them to Bethany on the Mount of Olives where they saw him rise up to heaven. All of these appearances took place over a period of 40 days and he gave many convincing proofs that he was alive.

The one resurrection appearance that I want to focus on today is an incident that is unique to the gospel of Luke. In chapter 24, verse 13, Luke tells us,

“Now that same day,” and so, it was the same day as the resurrection and he says, “Two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him” (Luke 24:13-16).

“He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still; their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" (Luke 24:17-18).

"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. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:19-21).

“And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see” (Luke 24:21-24).

Now, I don’t know why it is, but when we see somebody struggling, going through a difficult time, for some reason it makes us feel better about our own struggles. And maybe that’s what’s so appealing about social media, because a lot of people will show you their filtered life, the beautiful me, just living the dream. But you also get to see the other side, because someone may post, “Worst day ever! I ran over the cat backing out of the driveway this morning; or got a flat tire on the way home from work; or the kitchen sink is leaking; or I was just diagnosed with cancer.”

And for some reason we find comfort in someone else’s troubles. I just want to make an observation about human nature, that somehow there is a fellowship of suffering that makes us feel better about our own problems. And so, it’s encouraging to me that the pain in my body, or the difficulties I’m facing with my own children, can actually bless somebody else in such a significant way. And in the same way, it makes me feel better to find two disciples that had walked with Jesus, served with Jesus, heard about the resurrection of Jesus, and still doubted the resurrection after all they have seen and heard.

I don’t know about you, but I can relate to that, because sometimes I can feel so close to God, like I’m on the mountaintop with God, and then when I come down, I still have all these questions. You know, maybe you have found yourself wrestling with doubts because you prayed about this or that and God didn’t show up, he didn’t answer, he didn’t do what you asked him to do. And so, we can be in church in the presence of God, just like the 11 disciples who went to the mountain to see Jesus,

“And when they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted” (Matthew 28:16-17).

And so, that is encouraging to me, it makes me feel better, because even then some doubted. And there are so many things in the world that we can’t understand, questions we can’t answer, but our doubts don’t have to drive us away from God, because when handled properly, our doubts can actually be a catalyst to greater faith.

You see, as you come to God, seeking answers for those tough questions, spending time with him, you will find your faith increasing like these two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus. In other words, faith is not a destination, faith is actually a journey. It’s not like one day you will complete the class, pass the test, and graduate with perfect faith. And so, you will never arrive there, because faith is not a destination, it’s a journey, and the Lord promises,

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

And so, it’s not until we arrive in glory that our faith becomes sight, but sometimes along the way there are some very real, sincere, hard, and complicated questions. And so, when there are doubts and questions, it’s not a time to panic, it’s simply a time to sit down and talk with Jesus, discussing those questions with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

That is the place where we find these two disciples as they are walking down the road with Jesus. And so, he asked them why they were so downcast, what caused them to be so sad? And they began to tell him the story about how their hope for Israel had died, what they had expected didn’t come to pass, and now they were just discouraged and filled with doubt.

Jesus replies to them in verse 25, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

In other words, Jesus goes back beyond the genealogies, beyond the son of David, beyond the seed of Abraham, beyond Adam and Eve, back to his strategy before the foundations of the world. And he explains what was said in the Scriptures concerning himself, because he’s not making it up as he goes, he is God all by himself as he said,

“I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

He is sovereign in authority, absolute in power, and when he wants to move, he moves, because he is God and he does whatever he wants to do. And so, he has the conclusion before you go into the crisis, he has the answer before you ask the question, because he is God and there is no other.

He said to the disciples, "How foolish you are, how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! In other words, he says, it is written, and so when he goes to the cross, it was all part of his plan to redeem us from the curse of the law, setting us free from sin and death. And if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

And so, he asked, “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And “He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). In other words, he revealed himself to them, he said, “I am the I am of Israel, the wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of peace.” He says, “I am in every drop of blood that fell as they flogged me and hung me on the cross.”

As they were walking down that narrow path, he was talking about the Word, and he explained himself to them saying,

“In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1-2).

He was telling them how the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. How Immanuel, God with us, divinity with humanity, the supernatural with the natural, the very God who said, “Let it be” and it was, stepped down into a young girl named Mary and became flesh.

He explained to them what had been written, he gave them revelation of the Almighty God, taking them to the pinnacle of understanding as Job once said,

“I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19:27,

NKJV).

And so, he was revealing himself to them as the incarnate God, God wrapped up in flesh, God sitting on the circle of the earth with all power in his hand, as they approached the village.

When they arrived at the place where they were going, coming to their destination, interrupting this monologue, this litany of praise, verse 28 says,

“Jesus acted as if he were going farther” (Luke 24:28).

Continuing on as if he were trying to keep a schedule. Certainly, he was aware of the time, because the Bible says,

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

And so, his life had order to it, structure to it, and he wasn’t just walking down the road for the sake of walking down the road. He knew,

“There is a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7).

And so, Jesus acted as if he were going further, but the Bible says,

“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” (Luke 24:29).

I love that because it suggests that every now and then God is willing to break the rules, to break the rhythm, to do something off schedule. In other words, every now and then, he will do something that wasn’t on his day planner just to bless you. Every now and then he will bend the rules and do it just because you asked.

Jesus went into the house with them and verse 30 says,

“When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them” (Luke 24:30).

Now, this is unusual, I don’t know why Jesus, why the guest was serving the host, except that maybe they were so captivated by what Jesus was saying that they had lost interest in eating. You know, maybe they had forgotten to serve their guest, and Jesus was so hungry that he takes the initiative, picking up the bread, giving thanks, breaking it, and giving it to them.

I don’t know why it happened, but anyway, somewhere in the process of the taking, in the giving of thanks, the breaking of the bread and giving it to them. Somewhere in this process of Jesus saying, “I might as well do it myself,” as he gave it to them something happened. The Bible says,

“Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight” (Luke 24:31).

Again, I don’t know why they were kept from recognizing him until this moment, maybe he was just making sure to complete the download of all this information about himself before he opened their eyes. But suddenly there was a familiarity, their eyes were opened, and it dawned on them who this stranger was.

We don’t know if God simply let them recognize him, or maybe it was because he chose at that point to expose himself as he stretched out his hands to them in the flickering candlelight and they saw the wounds on his wrist? Maybe it was cumulative, maybe it was a little bit of each, but suddenly everything clicked; the graceful words, the profound wisdom, the depth of understanding, the prayer, the breaking of bread, the fresh wounds on his wrists, but no sooner did they recognize him, did he disappear from their sight.

In that moment, this out-of-the-way, off the beaten path encounter with this strange visitor begins to make sense. These two disciples are still sitting there in amazement, looking at one another, with their bread still in their hands. They are overwhelmed by all of this, trying to process all of this information, as they consider the arrest of Jesus, his body beaten and flogged. They are replaying all of this in their minds, the crucifixion, their Savior hanging on the cross, breathing his last, dead and buried, but then gloriously raised to life.

They themselves testified, “It is the third day since all this took place” (Luke 24:21). And here they are looking at one another in amazement, looking at the bread in their hands, recognizing that his words are bread and life, and their hearts are burning within them. Just like Jeremiah said,

“His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones…” (Jeremiah 20:9).

My prayer today is that your eyes would be opened, that his word is burning in your heart, and at this moment you are understanding the Scriptures in a deeper and more profound way than you ever had before. Maybe for the first time, you are able to recognize Jesus, recognizing him in this moment, and saying like Thomas did, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28).

These two disciples, “asked each other,” in verse 32, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32).

For seven miles they had walked with Jesus, and it wasn’t because of his great expository skills as he explained the Scriptures to them, it wasn’t because they heard that the stone had been rolled away, it wasn’t even that they had heard that he appeared to Peter, they recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. Realizing what had just happened, verse 33 says,

“They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them assembled together” (Luke 24:33).

Realizing what had happened they returned, they turned around and went back to where they were before. They got up and went back to where the church was gathered, back to where their brothers and sisters in Christ were waiting.

Today, there are some of you that need to turn around and go back because God is not done with you either. I know we’re not very good at waiting, but we’ve got to learn to put the word that we hear into practice. As Jesus said,

“Repent and do the things you did at first” (Revelation 2:5).

And so, we need to be people who are actually living out our faith, who are doing what the word of God says.

There are some of you who thought you were going to hear a message today, but it turned out that you heard a word from God, and he is going to turn your life completely around. Not 360 degrees, but this is what he asks us to do, to do a 180, to return, to turn 180 degrees. That’s what he wants you to do in your life, he wants you to turn in a completely different direction, and that’s why he says,

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like” (James 1:22-24).

I want to encourage you today not to go away and forget what God has revealed to you. It may have started out as a meal but it’s going to turn into divine revelation. It’s going to start out as bread and become salvation. It’s going to start out empty and end up full. It’s going to be turned completely around. It’s going to be a 180, a complete turn of direction. You are just going to be walking along doing what you do and God is going to turn everything upside down.

As we close, I want you to prepare yourself to allow God to change your mind. I want you to look at yourself, looking within yourself, but viewing yourself through the eyes of God himself. Not through your eyes or the eyes of our culture, but to honestly ask yourself, “What have I done?” I want you to consider what you have done to the heart of your Savior?

And then, I want to encourage you to turn away, the Greek word is translated repent, it’s a change of your way of thinking, it’s a change of your worldview, it’s a change of your behavior, a complete change of direction. You see God wants you to change your mind, he wants to help you see differently, that’s why the Bible says,

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

In other words, it’s not just a change in mind, it’s a renewed mind, it’s a change in action, a change in direction, and a change in your life trajectory. A God changed the mind will not yield to culture, yielding to the pattern of this world, but it will stop, turn 180 degrees, and march in the opposite direction.

Today I want to encourage you to do it and never look back. Don’t do what so many do, don’t show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, “Not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance” (Romans 2:4).

And so, let’s talk practically, what does this look like in our lives?

My prayer is that God would open your eyes. For some of you, you are in a relationship which is causing you to make choices that break God’s heart. Others of you are struggling with your thought life and so you need to be very radical about what you look at. Some of you need to consider what you are feeding your mind and you just need to say no. And so today, whatever it is, whatever God reveals, you just need to confess it, repent, and turn away from it.

The Bible promises that, “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

You see, it’s a change of mind that we need, a change of heart, because that’s what brings about this godly sorrow. It’s the kindness of God that leads us to repentance, it’s his mercy and grace that makes the work of repentance perfect when you recognize what he has done for you. Let’s seek him together in prayer.

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