

Luke 24:13-35

April 30, '17

“SEEING & BEING...”

I RECENTLY HAD OCCASION TO TALK TO A YOUNG MAN WHO HAD ATTENDED BIBLE STUDY CLASSES IN SUCCESSIVE WEEKS IN TWO DIFFERENT CHURCHES.

HE SAID WHEN HE WALKED INTO THE FIRST ONE, THE TEACHER BEGAN THE CLASS BY SAYING, IN A SOMEWHAT DEJECTED & FRUSTRATED FASHION, *“WELL, OUR LESSON TODAY IS ON THE STORY OF CREATION IN GENESIS. I KNOW I’VE TAUGHT THIS LESSON AT LEAST 8 TIMES & I KNOW ALL OF YOU KNOW THE STORY BACKWARDS & FORWARDS AND HAVE STUDIED IT BEFORE. BUT, SINCE THAT’S WHAT IT IS, LET’S LOOK AT IT AGAIN & SEE IF WE CAN FIGURE OUT SOMETHING NEW IN IT.”*

**THIS YOUNG MAN SAID THE CLASS WENT
DOWNHILL FROM THERE – WITH EVERYONE JUST
BEMOANING THE FACT THAT THEY HAD TO STUDY
SOMETHING ALL OF THEM ALREADY KNEW.**

**A WEEK LATER, THOUGH, HE WENT TO A
DIFFERENT CLASS IN A DIFFERENT CHURCH WHERE
THE TEACHER, WITH GREAT ENTHUSIASM, OPENED
BY SAYING, *“TODAY, OUR BIBLE LESSON IS THE STORY
OF JOSHUA & THE BATTLE OF JERICHO. NOW, I KNOW
YOU ALL THINK YOU KNOW THIS STORY BUT THERE’S
SO MUCH HERE THAT I THINK WE’LL ALL BE EXCITED
TO READ IT AGAIN & HEAR WHAT NEW THINGS GOD
HAS TO SAY TO US TODAY.”***

**THAT YOUNG MAN SAID IT WAS ONE OF THE
MOST INVIGORATING & EXCITING HOURS OF BIBLE
STUDY HE’D EVER EXPERIENCED.**

**HEARING A STORY LIKE THAT ALWAYS
REMINDS OF SOMETHING STUDENTS EXPERIENCED
ONE DAY WHEN I WAS IN SEMINARY.**

**DR. FRANK STAGG WAS A NEW TESTAMENT
PROFESSOR AT THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST SEMINARY
IN LOUISVILLE.**

**DR. STAGG WAS ONE OF THE PREMIER NEW
TESTAMENT SCHOLARS IN THE WORLD, THE
AUTHOR OF MORE THAN A DOZEN BOOKS.**

**IN ONE OF HIS FINAL SEMESTERS OF TEACHING,
AFTER A CAREER THAT HAD SPANNED MORE THAN
40 YEARS, DR. STAGG CAME BOUNDING INTO THE
LECTURE HALL ONE DAY, THREW BOOKS & NOTES
ON THE PODIUM, AND SAID, *“LET’S OPEN OUR BIBLES
& GET INTO OUR SESSION FOR TODAY BECAUSE WE
DON’T HAVE A MINUTE TO SPARE. LAST NIGHT AS I***

***WAS READING THE PASSAGE WE'LL BE STUDYING
TODAY, I NOTICED SOMETHING I'D NEVER NOTICED
BEFORE!"***

**ONE OF THE MOST HIGHLY-RESPECTED NEW
TESTAMENT SCHOLARS IN THE WORLD WAS
SAYING, AFTER MORE THAN 40 YEARS OF TEACHING
SEMINARIANS, THAT HE NOTICED SOMETHING IN
THE BIBLE THAT HE'D NEVER NOTICED BEFORE!**

**THE OLDER I GET, THE MORE MEANINGFUL
THAT HAS BECOME TO ME.**

**I MUST CONFESS THAT THERE WAS A TIME
WHEN I WOULD LOOK AT A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE
THAT WAS SUGGESTED FOR A PARTICULAR SUNDAY
& TAKE THE ATTITUDE OF THAT FIRST BIBLE STUDY
TEACHER THAT YOUNG MAN TOLD ME ABOUT –**

“OH, NOT THAT AGAIN! WHAT ELSE CAN I POSSIBLY SAY ABOUT THAT PASSAGE!?”

BUT NOW I FIND THAT THE MORE I LOOK AT A PASSAGE, THE MORE I DISCOVER HOW LITTLE I REALLY KNOW ABOUT IT.

I THINK THAT’S CERTAINLY TRUE OF THIS PASSAGE WE’VE JUST READ FROM LUKE’S GOSPEL.

AS IS TRUE ON ANY GIVEN SUNDAY, I THINK YOU COULD PROBABLY GO TO LITERALLY 50 CHURCHES WITHIN A TEN-MILE RADIUS OF EASTMINSTER & HEAR A SERMON ON THIS VERY SAME PASSAGE THIS MORNING.

SERIOUSLY.

YOU COULD HEAR 50 DIFFERENT SERMONS THIS VERY DAY FROM THIS VERY PASSAGE.

**AND EVERY ONE OF THEM WOULD BE
DIFFERENT.**

**EVERY ONE OF THEM WOULD TAKE A
DIFFERENT APPROACH.**

**EVERY ONE OF THEM WOULD OPEN YOUR EYES
TO A NEW WAY OF UNDERSTANDING THESE WORDS
OF SCRIPTURE.**

**THAT, OF COURSE, IS ONE OF THE BEAUTIFUL
THINGS ABOUT THE BIBLE.**

**ITS MEANING FOR OUR LIVES WILL NEVER BE
EXHAUSTED.**

**I TELL YOU ALL OF THIS BECAUSE I HAD A DR.
STAGG MOMENT THIS PAST WEEK IN READING THIS
FAMILIAR STORY.**

**IT SPOKE TO ME IN A WAY THAT I DON'T THINK
I'D REALLY CONSIDERED BEFORE – NOT
COMPLETELY.**

**THIS IS A PASSAGE THAT IS SO HEARTWARMING,
POWERFUL & UPLIFTING.**

**YOU PROBABLY CAN'T READ IT WITHOUT
GETTING A PICTURE IN YOUR MIND.**

**THE ONE THAT PROBABLY COMES TO MIND FOR
MOST PEOPLE IS THE ONE PAINTED BY ROBERT
ZUND IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY.**

**IT'S A SERENE PASTORAL SETTING WITH LUSH
GREEN TREES AND A BEAUTIFUL BLUE SKY & WE
LOOK AT JESUS & THE TWO TRAVELLERS FROM
BEHIND AS THEY'RE ABOUT TO CROSS A SMALL
STONE BRIDGE OVER A PEACEFUL CREEK.**

**THAT’S THE WAY WE THINK OF THIS EVENT,
ISN’T IT – SERENE, BEAUTIFUL & PEACEFUL.**

**SO OFTEN, WHEN WE THINK OF THIS PASSAGE &
WHEN WE CONSIDER WHAT IT MEANS FOR OUR
LIVES, WE THINK OF IT IN TERMS OF JESUS BEING
WITH US – WALKING BY OUR SIDE IN OUR TIMES OF
SORROW & SADNESS, JUST AS HE DOES WITH THESE
FOR TWO DEJECTED DISCIPLES.**

**WE THINK OF IT AS BRINGING COMFORT TO OUR
OWN LIVES.**

**WE ARE THE LONELY TRAVELERS, MAKING OUR
OWN TROUBLED JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE’S
DIFFICULT TWISTS & TURNS.**

**WE ARE THE ONES WHO NEED TO SEE JESUS IN
OUR MIDST & OFFERING US A WORD OF COMFORT &
ASSURANCE.**

**THAT'S THE WAY I'VE ALWAYS SEEN THIS
PASSAGE, READ THIS PASSAGE & PREACHED THIS
PASSAGE.**

**AND, PERSONALLY, I LOVE THAT ABOUT THIS
STORY.**

**I LOVE THE WAY IT SPEAKS TO ME IN MY OWN
TIMES OF CRUSHING DEFEATS & HEARTBREAKING
BLOWS.**

**I LOVE THE ASSURANCE THAT IT OFFERS IN
TELLING ME I'M NOT ALONE IN THAT JOURNEY.**

**I DON'T EVER WANT TO LOSE THAT
UNDERSTANDING OF THIS BEAUTIFUL STORY.**

**BUT I THINK THERE MAY BE SOMETHING ELSE
HERE THAT'S WORTHY OF OUR CONSIDERATION.**

**I WONDER IF WE CAN'T SLIGHTLY ALTER THE
WAY WE VIEW THIS STORY SO THAT IT'S EQUALLY**

**MEANINGFUL, BUT IN AN ALMOST COMPLETELY
OPPOSITE FASHION.**

**OUR TRADITIONAL VIEW OF THIS PASSAGE
ALLOWS IT TO BRING PEACE & COMFORT TO OUR
OWN LIVES.**

**WE'RE THE TRAVELERS – CLEOPAS & HIS
COMPANION – AND WE'RE THE ONES WHO RECEIVE
THE BENEFIT OF THIS STRANGER WHO
ACCOMPANIES US ON OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THE
TROUBLES & TRAUMAS OF LIFE.**

BUT WHAT IF WE LOOKED AT IT IN REVERSE?

LET ME EXPLAIN.

**I MENTIONED IN THE NEWSLETTER THIS WEEK
THAT I CONSIDERED COMPLETING THE PHRASE
THAT SERVES AS THE TITLE OF THIS MESSAGE.**

**I OPTED FOR AN ELLIPSIS – THOSE THREE DOTS
THAT TELL YOU SOMETHING’S MISSING – “SEEING &
BEING –DOT-DOT-DOT.”**

WHAT’S MISSING IS JESUS.

**THAT’S RIGHT – THE COMPLETE TITLE IS
“SEEING & BEING JESUS,” BUT I WAS AFRAID THAT
MIGHT SOUND INAPPROPRIATE & BE
MISUNDERSTOOD BY SOME PEOPLE IF THEY SAW IT
ON OUR SIGN OUTSIDE.**

**I’M A BIT SENSITIVE TO THAT KIND OF
MISUNDERSTANDING.**

**MY SENSITIVITY STEMS FROM AN EARLY
CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE.**

**IT’S ONE OF MY EARLIEST MEMORIES OF
FEELING GUILT & SHAME & FEELING I’D DONE
SOMETHING HORRIBLY WRONG.**

I WAS PROBABLY ONLY 4 OR 5 YEARS OLD AND I WAS LYING ON MY BED WITH MY ARMS STRETCHED OUT ACROSS THE BED – AS FAR AS A 4 OR 5 YEAR OLD’S ARMS COULD STRETCH.

MY OLDER SISTER WALKED INTO MY ROOM & ASKED, “DENNIS, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?”

I THINK IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE WEEK BEFORE EASTER BECAUSE OF THE RESPONSE I GAVE MY SISTER.

WITH MY ARMS STRETCHED OUT ACROSS THE BED, I SAID, “I’M BEING JESUS.”

SHE WAS MORTIFIED & WENT RUNNING FROM MY ROOM, SHOUTING, “MUMMY, DENNIS SAID HE’S BEING JESUS!”

OF COURSE, I DIDN’T UNDERSTAND WHAT I’D DONE WRONG, BUT THAT EXPERIENCE HAS ALWAYS

MADE ME A BIT SENSITIVE ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA OF “BEING JESUS.”

WE’LL COME BACK TO THAT, BUT LET’S START WITH THE FIRST PART OF THAT PHRASE – “SEEING JESUS.”

ORDINARILY, WHEN WE THINK OF THIS PASSAGE, WE THINK OF THE JESUS WHO COMES TO US TO OFFER COMFORT, PEACE, STRENGTH & SUSTENANCE.

WE THINK OF HIM FEEDING THE MULTITUDES – AND FEEDING US.

WE THINKING OF HIM HEALING THOSE WITH INFIRMITIES – AND HEALING US OF OUR OWN INFIRMITIES.

**WE THINK OF HIM WALKING ON THE WATER
TOWARD THE DISCIPLES TO RESCUE THEM FROM A
DEADLY STORM –AND WALKING TOWARD US IN OUR
OWN DEADLY STORMS OF LIFE.**

**BUT JESUS HIMSELF TELLS US THERE’S
ANOTHER WAY OF SEEING HIM.**

**IN MATTHEW’S PARABLE OF THE FINAL
JUDGMENT, HE SAYS THAT WHEN WE OFFER
SUSTENANCE & AID TO THOSE AT THE LOWEST
RUNGS OF SOCIETY – WHEN WE FEED THE HUNGRY,
CLOTHE THE NAKED, VISIT THE SICK & IMPRISONED
– WHEN WE REACH OUT TO OTHERS IN THEIR
DEEPEST NEED – WE HAVE FED, CLOTHED, VISITED
& REACHED OUT TO NONE OTHER THAN JESUS
HIMSELF.**

**MAYBE WE NEED TO SEE THIS PASSAGE & SEE
JESUS HIMSELF AS NOT ONLY SOMEONE WHO
COMES TO US IN *OUR* NEED, BUT AS SOMEONE WHO
COMES TO US WITH *HIS OWN* NEEDS.**

**MAYBE WE WOULD SOMETIMES BE BETTER OFF
NOT WHINING & MOANING ABOUT OUR *OWN*
TROUBLES BUT SHOULD INSTEAD, TAKE A LOOK AT
THE TROUBLES OF THOSE *AROUND* US.**

**MAYBE THIS PASSAGE CAN TEACH US TO SEE
JESUS – NOT AS THE ONE WHO COMES TO THE
RESCUE – BUT RATHER AS THE ONE WHO NEEDS TO
BE RESCUED.**

**I THINK THAT’S WHAT HE MEANT IN THAT
PARABLE OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.**

**SOMETIMES WE NEED TO QUIT WORRYING
ABOUT OUR OWN STRUGGLES & FOCUS MORE ON
THE STRUGGLES OF OTHERS.**

**WE NEED TO “SEE JESUS” IN THOSE AROUND US
IN NEED.**

**AND THAT NATURALLY LEADS US BACK TO
“*BEING* JESUS.”**

**WHAT DID JESUS DO IN THIS STORY?
HE MET THESE TRAVELERS ON THEIR ROAD OF
PAIN & SORROW.**

**HE WALKED WITH THEM ON THEIR JOURNEY.
HE TOLD THEM THE STORY OF GOD’S LOVE &
REDEMPTION.**

**HE SHARED A MEAL WITH THEM & STAYED
WITH THEM UNTIL THEIR EYES WERE OPENED &**

**THEY SAW THAT A BRIGHTER FUTURE WAS
AWAITING THEM.**

**YES, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE NEED ALL OF
THAT OURSELVES.**

**THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE NEED JESUS TO
MEET US ON OUR OWN ROAD OF SORROW – TIMES
WE NEED HIM TO WALK WITH US ON OUR JOURNEY
– TIMES WE NEED HIM TO ASSURE US OF GOD’S
LOVE & REDEMPTION AND TIMES WE NEED JESUS
TO SHARE A MEAL WITH US & STAY WITH US UNTIL
WE CAN SEE A BRIGHTER FUTURE THAT AWAITS US.**

**YES, SOMETIMES WE NEED THE ASSURANCE OF
THE PRESENCE OF JESUS WITH US.**

**BUT SOMETIMES, WE NEED TO BE THE
PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE LIFE OF SOMEONE ELSE.**

**SOMETIMES – DARE I SAY IT – WE NEED TO BE
JESUS.**

**WE NEED TO OPEN OUR EYES TO BE ABLE TO
MEET SOMEONE IN NEED ON THEIR OWN ROAD OF
SORROW.**

**WE NEED TO WALK WITH THEM ON THEIR
JOURNEY.**

**WE NEED TO ASSURE THEM OF GOD’S LOVE &
REDEMPTION.**

**WE MAY EVEN NEED TO SHARE A MEAL WITH
THEM & WE SURELY MAY NEED TO STAY CLOSE TO
THEM UNTIL THEY’RE ABLE TO SEE THAT A BRIGHT
FUTURE AWAITS THEM.**

**IN OUR LIFE OF FAITH, I THINK WE NEED TO
STRIKE THE PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN GIVING &**

RECEIVING, FEEDING & BEING FED, COMFORTING & BEING COMFORTED.

MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, IF THAT BALANCE IS OFF KILTER, IT'S ON THE SIDE OF THE FOCUS BEING ON WHAT WE "GET" OUT OF OUR FAITH RATHER THAN WHAT WE "GIVE."

WE COME TO WORSHIP WITH A DESIRE TO BE COMFORTED, FED & NURTURED OURSELVES RATHER THAN TO BE INSPIRED & CHALLENGED TO COMFORT, FEED & NURTURE OTHERS.

I THINK THIS BEAUTIFUL STORY OF THE EMMAUS ROAD CAN OFFER A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE OF THE WAY IN WHICH OUR LIFE AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST CALLS US TO EXPERIENCE BOTH.

**WE'RE CALLED TO SEE JESUS AS THE ONE
WHO'S THERE FOR US IN EVERY NEED WE
EXPERIENCE ALONG LIFE'S TREACHEROUS
JOURNEY.**

**BUT WE'RE ALSO CALLED TO "BE" JESUS FOR
SOMEONE ELSE ON THEIR OWN EMMAUS ROAD OF
LIFE. AMEN.**

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