

FROM DESPAIR TO HOPE

(from Apr 20/03, Apr. 12/09)

Luke 24

Introduction

→ Illust. – Which Way to Go?

Dr. Seamands tells of a Muslim in Africa who became a Christian. Some of his friends asked him, “Why have you become a Christian?”

His answer was simple, “Well, it’s like this. Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and you didn’t know which way to go. But there at the fork in the road were two men. One was dead and one was alive. Which one would you ask for directions?”

-Warren Webster, April, 1980, HIS, p. 13

The fact is, Christianity is the only religion in the world that has a living Saviour.

On this Easter Sunday morning, I would like to take you on a short journey into the minds and thoughts of the disciples as they went through that first day after the resurrection of their Lord. I believe that there are a number of things which we can learn as we look at their experience. You see, Easter is a time of new life, but often before new life begins, there must first come a period of death, of dormancy, of brokenness. E.g. – a kernel of wheat.

Turn with me to Luke 24. – read vv. 13-27. As we look at the disciples in those first hours following the resurrection, if we could find one word to describe their feelings and the situation they found themselves in, I believe it would have to be “bewilderment” – they simply did not know or understand what was happening in their world.

This morning I would like to look at their shattered dreams and how their broken hearts were turned into new hope.

I. The Despair of Shattered Dreams

Describe the feelings of these two disciples as seen in vv. 19-24 – confusion, bewilderment, disappointment. Note the jumbled confusion of thoughts as Cleopas describes the events of that day in vv. 21-24.

There are a couple of factors which led to all of this confusion. The first is a lack of faith.

What is faith? How do we see the concept of faith?

→ [From Illy]... WHITE QUEEN FAITH

In Lewis Carroll’s book, “Through the Looking Glass” two of the characters, Alice and the White Queen, had an interesting conversation one day. It is part of a larger conversation, but this is how it goes:

“How old are you?” asked the White Queen.

“I’m seven and a half, exactly,” replied Alice.

“You needn’t say ‘exactly,’” the Queen said. “I can believe it without that. Now I’ll give you something to believe. I’m just one hundred and one, five months, and a day.”

“I can’t believe THAT,” said Alice.

“Can’t you?” the Queen responded with pity in her voice. “Try again. Take a deep breath, and shut your eyes.”

Alice laughed. “There’s no use trying,” she said. “One CAN’T believe impossible things.”

“I dare say you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast!”

Some people’s concept of faith is like the White Queen’s. They see it as a rather nonsensical belief in impossible things. Their idea of faith is like that of the little boy who said, “Faith is believing what you know ain’t true.”

[Voice, Jul/Aug 1997. Page 10.]

Real faith however, is not about believing what you know isn’t true. Real faith is believing what you know is true, even though the evidence at the moment seems to suggest otherwise.

This is where these disciples were having a problem. Look at vv. 11, 25 – in spite of the years spent with Jesus, under his teaching and ministry, somehow, the disciples had not yet come to fully believe the words of the prophets, or even the words of Jesus himself. The words were true, but the evidence indicated otherwise, and they were having trouble believing it. Their faith was still shaky.

The second factor is a lack of understanding – perhaps this was the cause of their lack of faith – see vv. 12, 26-27. They simply could not understand what had happened. All they knew was that Jesus, the one who had guided and taught them for the past 3 years, the one who they looked to as their master, the one they thought was the Messiah, had

been put to death, and now his body was gone, and there were rumours about him being alive, and angels, and they just didn't know what to think.

Lack of faith, lack of understanding – all of this led to something else for these disciples – shattered dreams – look at v. 18-21. What haunting words those are – “But we had hoped...” They had hopes, they had dreams, they had a vision of great things for the future, but now with one terrible tragedy all of that came to a horrible, abrupt end. Their dreams were shattered, their hope was gone, and nothing made sense any more.

But you know what happened – let's read on – vv. 28-32

II. The Joy of New Hope

One writer described the experience of these two disciples with the words, from heartbreak to heartburn. Everything changed when they suddenly realized that their master, their Lord, their Messiah, was alive after all. It wasn't all over. Their dreams, which had been shattered, and lay in ruins, only hours before, suddenly had new life. They had hope.

Read on – vv. 33-35 – I am sure their return trip to Jerusalem was much quicker than their journey to Emmaus.

Read vv. 36–45 – What an experience that must have been – discuss the surprise, the excitement, the wonder of the disciples as they met face to face with their risen Lord.

What a transformation – from discouragement, shattered dreams, hopelessness to the realization that Jesus was alive. Not only Jesus was resurrected that day. So were their hopes and dreams.

Conclusion

Easter is a time of new beginnings. It is a time of new life – discuss spring – new growth from roots that seem dead. It is also a time of new hope for all of us.

Discuss – “But we had hoped ...” Have you ever had dreams that were shattered, perhaps life has dealt you a blow that seems to take all the wind out of your sails, you feel like the future has nothing to offer.

Let me remind you that we have a risen Saviour. And with that living Saviour we have hope.

➔ [From Illy]... THE RESURRECTION PLANT

H. G. Bosch tells the following story about a brief visit he made to Florida a number of years ago: “While going through the lush gardens there, I saw an amazing perennial called the resurrection plant. Some of them had been dehydrated, bagged in cellophane, and were offered for sale. The one I purchased was as dry as dust and seemed good for nothing but the trash can. However, a short time after I put it into a bowl of water, the fronds uncurled into a lovely, fernlike plant.”

What a reminder of the fact that death is not the end. There is a resurrection.

When you are like these disciples and you are facing a lack of understanding, and a lack of faith, and your dreams and hopes are lying shattered on the ground, remember the resurrection. Jesus wants to take your shattered dreams and turn them into a new hope.