



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Undercover Savior

Tim Badal | April 5, 2015 | Luke 24:13–35



Our passage today is found in Luke 24:13-35. I know that for a lot of you, Easter is a great time. Easter is a time of celebration. Perhaps many of you will gather with family and friends. It is a great Sunday. For pastors, however, Easter Sunday is a hard Sunday to get up and preach. There is a lot of pressure to make sure that we preach our best sermon on Easter Sunday. People are bringing family and friends and they want their preacher to do a good job.

On Saturday I was putting the finishing touches on my sermon. God has given me a wonderful and understanding wife. She is one of my best critics, except for yesterday. After I shared with her the importance of this Sunday, I asked her, "Can I practice preaching my introduction with you? It's an important Sunday and I want to make sure that I get this just right." In Hinckley the Word of God was proclaimed in our dining room yesterday afternoon.

When I finished I said, "Amanda, what did you think?" There was silence. I thought for sure she was mesmerized, transformed and renewed because she had never before heard such eloquence. Her response was, "Oh, are you done?" I said, "Yeah." She said without much conviction, "It was good." My heart was broken. I wanted to turn in my letter of resignation. I thought I was a failure. She tried to console me by saying that she was a bit preoccupied. I am hoping that today you won't walk away preoccupied, but that you will walk away transformed. I think that we have a great story before us this week. It is a story that many of you may not know. It isn't typically thought of as part of the Easter story. Today we will look at this account piece by piece. Hopefully, by the end of our time God will grant you a new understanding.

In 2010, CBS premiered a reality show entitled, "Undercover Boss." It was a show that featured an executive of a company who would go undercover and act as an entry-level employee. The executive would change his appearance, assume an alias and create a fictional backstory so that no one would know that he was really their CEO. The cover-story for the accompanying video cameras was that this entry-level employee was part of a documentary about entry-level workers in a particular industry. The CEO would spend a week as an undercover employee, working in various areas of the company's operations in different jobs and locations. The person learned what it meant to be an employee in his or her own company. The show's aim was to expose the boss to a series of predicaments. It was amusing to watch a CEO not be able to push a broom or do things that they pay others minimum wage to accomplish. Many times, this changed how they led people within their business. They would look at how they could help those under their care.

Today we come to a passage in Luke 24 that contains eyewitness accounts of two individuals who were on the street in Jerusalem that first Easter weekend. Jesus becomes that undercover boss. At first glance, these two witnesses don't know that they are walking and talking with Jesus. By the time their walk with Jesus comes to its end, their eyes are opened. They see and say, "Our hearts burned as He spoke with us." We are going to see how their response to this first Easter should be our response today.

Our text starts in Luke 24:13:

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes

were kept from recognizing him. 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. 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?" 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, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 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. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 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. 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." And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 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. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 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?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Luke begins with the phrase, *"That very day...."* What does he mean by that? What is Luke talking about? The answer is found in Luke 24:1. The very day that these two men were walking was the same day that the women went to the tomb to take care of the body of Jesus. When the women went to the tomb, an angel appeared to them. They were told that the tomb was empty. They saw this with their own eyes. Christ had been raised. The women were then told to tell the eleven disciples.

That same day, that first Easter Sunday, two men were heading home from Jerusalem. We learn in Luke 24:18 that one of the men was named Cleopas and the other one is not named here. We don't know much about these two guys. However, we can assume that these men were followers of Jesus. At the end of the passage these men ran to tell the eleven remaining disciples that they had seen Jesus. These men have some working knowledge of where the disciples were and who they were. We can assume that Cleopas and the other man had some connections with the other disciples. Perhaps they had some personal connections with Jesus. We don't know for sure. No doubt they were followers of Jesus during His earthly ministry.

The text also tells us where they were going: Emmaus. Emmaus was a town about seven miles southeast of Jerusalem. These men didn't have cars. It would take time to journey back home. In Luke 24:14, these men were talking and discussing together. The idea here is that they were having a pretty lively debate. They were amped up by what they had seen. Others, no doubt, would have been able to hear their every word. What was the reason for this heated discussion? These two men had just witnessed one of the craziest weeks in Jerusalem's history. They had seen Jesus worshipped when He entered Jerusalem and what we call Palm Sunday. Men, women and children lined the streets of Jerusalem and welcomed the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ, ushering in His coming Kingdom. Perhaps they were witnesses that Thursday of the hasty betrayal, arrest and trials of Jesus. They may have witnessed how Jesus was beaten and flogged. They may have seen the crown of thorns placed on His head. They probably saw Jesus carrying a cross up to Golgotha—the place of the skull—a hill outside of Jerusalem where heinous criminals were crucified, which was a slow and laborious death. They would have learned that on Friday afternoon Jesus would breathe His last. Perhaps they were there when Jesus committed His Spirit to the Father.

For them, that last breath meant the death of a dream. They had followed Jesus and now things were going back to normal. It was time to go home. After being part of an amazing week—not a good week, but an amazing week—these men made their trip home. On that trip, Jesus came and met these men on the road to Emmaus. He shared some things with these men, and us as well. I want you to notice three things about Jesus' message:

1. The Broken

Look at Luke 24:15-17:

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

These men were discussing with great passion what had taken place. Without any mention of where He came from, all of a sudden Jesus appeared. Whether He was following behind them or just appeared, all we know is that He showed up. He chimed in and asked, "Hey, what were you guys talking about? What is the reason for your conversation?"

On this journey to Emmaus:

The men were greatly disappointed

Notice what their response was. Luke 24:17 says that they stopped walking and they looked sad. For some time these men had heard of Jesus. They had heard of His preaching and His miraculous signs and wonders. Perhaps they had even been healed by Jesus. Maybe they knew someone who had been transformed by Him. They had seen Jesus and how He embraced the crowd and cared for the hurting; how He engaged with the disenfranchised. They had seen Him share the Word of God and speak the words of the prophets in a way that no other rabbi had ever done before. They had seen Jesus do amazing things.

There had been talk that Jesus might have been the long awaited Messiah. He was the One for whom the nation of Israel was waiting. The prophets had promised a Messiah Who would rescue the nation from captivity. He was supposed to bring abundance and peace to the entire nation, and even the entire world. These two guys had thought that Jesus had a lot going for Him. Jesus was a man from Nazareth Who had shown so much potential. He seemed to be more than a man. His miracles were God-like.

Now this Man was dead. He was another victim of Jewish infighting and Roman tyranny. This Jesus Who showed so much power over nature and demons succumbed to a Roman crucifixion. This Man, Who had debated the Pharisees with such authority and skillful rhetoric, Who fended off critics with a few sentences, had nothing to say before His accusers.

Reminiscing on what they had seen must have crushed the spirits of these two men. What made them sad? There are two things that caused their disappointment:

1. **Their hopes were crushed.** One of the saddest times in American democracy, in my opinion, is the night of a major election with two groups of people who have spent years working to elect their candidate into office so that that man or woman can change the nation for good. At the end of that night, one group will go home broken-hearted. Each group had put their hopes and dreams into their candidate. They worked hard. They thought things were going to be different. When you look at the losing campaign headquarters and see the brokenness, the time wasted, all of the energy expended over something that failed, it is a sad picture. The sadness of these two men goes deeper than losing an election. For them, Jesus was the hope of the nation and He showed how men and women could have a deeper relationship with God. Jesus showed them how God wanted to pour out His forgiveness and favor on His people through a Spokesperson; One Who would come in the power of the Spirit of God. He would change and transform lives and bring people back to their God and King. Jesus inspired people to repent and be made right with their God. Now He was gone. Now these two men had no idea what their relationship with God looked like. Their hopes were crushed.
2. **They were humiliated.** Perhaps these men had shared Jesus with others. Their excitement during the three-and-a-half years of Jesus' ministry may have led these men to share their experiences with their co-workers, families and circles of friends. At some point, they probably told people, "He's the real deal. I put my trust in Him." These men had traveled seven miles to Jerusalem. In the first century, people didn't normally travel that far from home. However, these two men had been acquainted with Jesus' ministry. Because of their acquaintance with the eleven disciples, they may have been sold out for the ministry of Jesus Christ. Perhaps they were part of an inner circle of disciples. Now, however, Jesus was dead. They would have to return to the friends and family with whom they had shared Jesus. They had believed that He was the One, that He'd never lose and now they would have to tell everyone that they were wrong. "This Jesus Whom I was hyped up about, this Jesus Whom I was telling you to come and see, this Jesus to Whom I gave my money, time and energy, is dead. I bought into a lie. I believed something that wasn't true. I got caught up in the hoopla. I believed in a Guy and it's the biggest mistake I've ever made."

These men were greatly disappointed. No doubt this may remind you of your own disappointments in life. We have all experienced this disappointment at some point in our earthly lives. When things haven't happened the way we want, when our hopes and expectations are eradicated in one fell swoop. Blue skies of joy and peace are rapidly replaced with storm clouds. We've all been there at some point or another. I don't have to speak hypothetically about this. As my family has to come to grips with my wife's breast cancer, we understand the moments when you feel cheated and wronged. Many times it feels as though you have given so much, and so little has been given in return. Those feelings of hopelessness and helplessness can easily overtake you in those moments. These are the feelings that these two men faced.

Jesus drew near to them

In that moment of great disappointment, and in our own moments of disappointment, they were given good news. The good news is found in Luke 24:15 in the phrase, *"Jesus himself drew near and went with them."* While these two men were filled with sadness and left with unanswerable questions, they knew one thing: they were not alone. While they were reeling from what had transpired in Jerusalem, now a stranger had appeared with them asking questions.

In Luke 24:16, the text tells us that when Jesus appeared, their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. What does that mean? How could they not know that it was Jesus? Scholars help us answer this question. There may be four reasons why these men didn't recognize Jesus.

1. **It may have been dark.** Luke 24:29 says that this story took place toward evening. The day was spent. It was later in the day, perhaps early evening. Because of a lack of light, the road may have been a dark one. Perhaps Jesus wasn't recognized because they couldn't see His face.
2. **They were distracted by their distress.** They weren't thinking about their Savior and Lord, but about their destroyed hopes. In their distress their emotions had blinded their eyes. They weren't paying attention to what was around them.
3. **They were distant followers of Jesus.** Perhaps they had never spent a lot of time close to Jesus. We know from the Gospels that tons of people followed Jesus wherever He went. Even the day that He served the 5,000, that number only refers to the men in the crowd. The number could have easily been 15,000–20,000. In a group that size, people could have heard Jesus, but weren't close enough to see His face. Maybe these men had never seen Jesus' face.
4. **Jesus disguised Himself.** Being the God-man in His resurrected body, Jesus may have looked different. This isn't something that we can be sure about. At other times, Jesus comes face to face with the disciples. After their initial fear, they recognize Him right away. In Luke 24:4, even Mary doesn't recognize Jesus.

This is all that we can imply from the text. Each of these four options is a plausible explanation. Here's the important thing: Jesus was with these men right where they were and He engaged with them. He didn't pull away from them saying, "Until you get your lives figured out, until you stop crying, I'm not going to hang out with you. I'm going to wait for you to come and find Me. You know what? I was on the cross. I was buried in the tomb. I have been raised from the dead. You come find Me. I'm done going out and looking for you people." He doesn't say anything like that. Jesus draws near to them. Jesus does what He said He was going to do: seek and save the lost. He did this the first Easter and He's done that every Easter since.

Jesus is drawing near to you. He is coming to you right where you are now. This means that Jesus hears your cries. He knows your pains. He wants to dispel your fears. He wants to see you up close and personal. When He looked out at humanity, He saw that the crowds were harassed and hurting. They were like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36; Mark 6:34). When He saw that, the only emotion He felt was compassion. This is why 1 Peter 5:7 tells you to cast all your anxieties on Jesus because He cares for you. This is why Psalm 34:8 says, *"The Lord is near the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit."* Perhaps Easter is not a time of celebration for you, but a time of great disappointment and sadness. Take solace that the risen Savior and Lord has a special place in His heart for you. He loves you. He wants to draw near to you. He wants to walk and talk with you no matter how difficult your journey is. He loves the broken and He loves...

2. The Bewildered

Little did these men know that their brokenness would be changed, their hopes would be renewed and the answer to all of their problems was right before their eyes. Jesus started talking to them. When He does, we see that their brokenness is a result of their bewilderment.

In Luke 24:17, Jesus said to them, *"What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk? And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him..."* Jesus could have made it easy. When He appeared to these two men on the road to Emmaus He could have said, "Tada! I'm back! Can't you see Me?" But He doesn't. Why does Jesus do this? Why is He wasting His time not telling them? He starts with a question. This question helps us understand what these two guys were thinking. It gives us a window into their minds and hearts. We see that they are bewildered for two reasons:

Believing half of the story

Cleopas begins to speak in Luke 24:18:

"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And [Jesus] 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, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 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. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 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. 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.

In this story, Cleopas says the most ironic words in all of human history: *"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"* Do you know how ironic that statement is? Jesus uniquely knew what happened. He had been there. He wasn't only an eyewitness; He endured every single one of those things. Here's the irony of Cleopas' statement: in his moment of sadness, he spoke to Jesus as if He was the ignorant one. We do this all the time with God. We think that we have the corner on the truth in our circumstances. We shake our fist at God and say, "You don't know what's going on! You don't know how I'm feeling! You haven't been around." God replies to us, "I am the Omnipresent One. I was around before anything was in existence. I AM. I am the Alpha and Omega. I am the One Who was here yesterday, Who is here today and will be here tomorrow." These two men will later discover that Jesus was not the dense one, they themselves were.

Jesus says, "Tell Me what was going on." There are a few things about the story that we should take note of:

1. Cleopas and the other man have all the right information. What they say about what happened in Jerusalem is absolutely true. We have no contention with anything that they've said. They have the facts down.
2. They were keenly aware of the plans and purposes of Jesus' ministry. The text says, *"He was the one to redeem Israel."* They got it.
3. They were aware of the details from the women who went to the grave. They knew that the women saw that His body was gone and that they saw an angel. They knew that the angel said that Jesus was alive.

Here's the problem: they only knew half of the story. After they gave the women's account, the text says, *"...but him they did not see."* At some point, because the disciples didn't see Jesus on that Easter Sunday, they figured that all hope was lost. They thought the women were hallucinating. These men gave up hope and headed home and because of that, they had not heard the rest of the story. What were they missing? They missed the resurrection.

The Easter story is not just about a cross or a great Teacher, but it always involves the empty tomb and our risen Savior and King. Without that, all we have is a story of a great Teacher and Martyr Who died too soon. We need to affirm the whole story of Easter. Martin Luther did this when he, along with other reformers, said that all of Christianity is hinged upon the resurrection. Our whole faith is bound up in the symbol of the empty tomb. Jesus Christ is not in a grave, but He has risen just as He said. If Jesus is in a grave, Christians are wasting their time. Paul said that if we do not believe that the resurrection is true, and if Jesus was not resurrected from the grave, Christians should be people pitied above all others (1 Corinthians 15:19). We are wasting our time and energy on a dead King Who said that He would be raised from the dead. The Bible talks about this truth over and over again. Jesus is alive. Jesus is alive. Jesus is alive! It is a truth that we must hold to tightly. Without it, we have nothing.

Consigning Jesus to history

Notice how these men talked about Jesus in this passage:

- Luke 24:19 says, *"And they said to him, 'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was...'"*
- Look at Luke 24:21, *"But we had hoped..."* past tense.
- At the end of Luke 24:21, *"...it is now the third day since these things happened."*

Skeptics have no problem saying all the same things as Cleopas. "Jesus was a good Man. A Man Who was attributed great power. A Man Who was a great Teacher. He was a great model. He was a deep thinker and an amazing humanitarian. He was a great Man. History is defined by people like Jesus." With all those accolades, they will always speak of Jesus in the past tense. "He was a great Teacher. He was a great model. He was a deep thinker. He was an amazing Man. But He is no more. This

makes Jesus one of the most perplexing individuals of all time. He was all of these things but now He's dead. He's just as the rock star sang, 'dust in the wind.' " That homage to Jesus doesn't add up.

I have family and friends who think it is great that I am a preacher of the great Teacher Jesus. However, when I ask them, "Do you believe that He is the Son of God? Do you believe that He is your Lord and Savior?" usually they get angry with me and say, "No. Great Man? Yes. Savior and King? No." Herein lies the problem: if you believe that Jesus was a great Man and a great Teacher and had profound impact on the world and history, that this same Man Who said, "Love your neighbor as yourself," and did such wonderful things, then do you believe that He also said He would judge the nations? This Man said that He would come back and bring the world into submission under His feet. He said all of this! There are only three conclusions that you can come to. Jesus was either:

1. A liar. He must have lied. He was a great Man and a great Teacher, but He also invented the greatest lie in human history.
2. A lunatic. If He wasn't a liar, then He was a lunatic. He did all of these amazing things, yet like other brilliant people, He was crazy. He believed that He could do things that weren't true.
3. Your Lord. What He said was absolutely true. This creates a problem for people who are bewildered. You can't say that Jesus is good and also think that He is crazy or a liar. He must be Lord.

These men are bewildered. They didn't know what to make of the things that have happened. They were disappointed. They had only heard half of the story. They had consigned Jesus to history. They thought He was great, but now He was dead. By the end of the passage, they believed that everything was over.

However, Jesus shared the Easter story with them so that they might:

3. Believe

The men have shared their thoughts on what has happened but it's incomplete. It's flawed. How did Jesus respond to them? Luke 24:25:

And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 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. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 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?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

They went from skeptics and saddened individuals to believers. How? The same way that we do. How do we become believers? It involves:

1. **Being changed by Jesus.** Their encounter with Jesus changed them. In a moment, they went from bewildered, broken people to believers. Today is no different. The Easter story changes people's lives. It takes the broken and bewildered and moves them to believe in the Savior. It begins with conviction. Jesus says, "*Oh foolish ones...*" They were foolish because they had chosen sin over a Savior. They were stubborn. They weren't quick to hear. They chose their own way instead of believing the promises of God. We are like them: proud, not wanting to follow God's ways, but our own ways. Even though God has spoken through the prophets and through the written Word, we choose to go our own way. In the midst of all that sin, God loved us and demonstrated His love for us. While we were sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Jesus shares the totality of that Scripture through one amazing truth. Jesus is the Savior of sinful men. By His death, burial and resurrection He gives new life to all who turn from their sins and believe. How do we know that we believe?
2. **Communing with Him.** Belief leads to a desire to commune with Jesus. The men hear things about Jesus and even before they know Who He is, they are awestruck. They want to spend time with Him. Their story isn't done. They

want to know more. They want to learn more. They want to commune with Christ. They share a meal around the table. This is the same meal that Jesus shared on the night that He was betrayed. They took bread and a cup and said, "This is My body and this is My blood, do this in remembrance of Me." It is that moment that they find out that they aren't communing with a stranger, but their Savior. You want to know if you're a believer? It isn't about merely knowing the story. What is your deepest desire? Is it to walk and talk with Jesus? Is it to be close to Him? Is it to live for Him each and every day? That's what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. It doesn't mean carrying big Bibles or knowing a lot of Bible facts. It's about communing with the One Who has given us the answer to our broken hearts.

3. **Celebrating Him with others.** Why do they celebrate? They run to the eleven and when they find them they say, "You're not going to believe what happened. We were walking to Emmaus and a Stranger came. We told Him everything that had happened and how brokenhearted we were. And then He started telling us all that the prophets said about the Messiah. Then we sat down for a meal and He broke the bread and gave us the wine. We saw that it was Jesus. As soon as we realized that it was Jesus, He disappeared! We have seen the risen One! Did our hearts not burn as He spoke the words to us?" They went and did what every believer should do. They told the story to others.

Are you broken this Easter? Are there trials and troubles in your life that leave you helpless and hopeless? Are you bewildered? Is Easter a perplexing celebration because you only believe half of the story or you have consigned Jesus to a place in history? If so, my greatest desire is to implore you to take a second look at Jesus. He is alive. He is the Savior and Lord. These two men were in your shoes and their hearts were burning. Perhaps as you've heard this story, your heart is also burning by the Spirit. I pray that you will experience that heartburn. Yield yourself to the claims and control of Jesus Christ. If you don't, then Easter is no different than any other Sunday. You have wasted your time. Be careful. Your eternity hangs in the balance. If you believe, He will change your life forever. He'll be with you and walk with you in the darkest journeys. He'll give you the hope for today and for eternity.

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