

“Proclaim His Resurrection” *Seven Miles with Jesus...*

A Sermon by Father Christopher Makiej

One of the most profound passages of Scripture is the story of Jesus appearing to two men walking on a road on the day of His Resurrection. Luke and Cleopas were traveling to the village of Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. Suddenly, the Resurrected Jesus appeared and walked with them, although at first they did not recognize Him.

The events and conversation that occurred on this seven-mile journey with Jesus provide us with powerful and practical teachings that can invigorate our spiritual lives. Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Luke 24:13-35.

EVALUATE OUR ROAD

First of all, we see in verse 13 that Luke and Cleopas are *traveling on a road*. They are on a seven mile journey. And so this passage has the backdrop and image of a road being traveled.

Being a Christian is very much like being a traveler on the road. Bishop Kallistos Ware writes: “our situation, say the Greek Fathers, is like that of the Israelite people in the desert of Sinai; we live in tents, not houses, for spiritually we are always on the move. Christianity is more than a theory about the universe, more than teachings written down on paper; it is a path along which we journey” (*The Orthodox Way*).

What is the road that we are traveling? Are we spiritually on the move? What is the direction of our marriages, our children, our families? Where are we going? So many people in our society today are spinning in many different directions morally and spiritually with no real purpose.

And so the first teaching from the road to Emmaus is simply a call to *evaluate our road*. Evaluate the purpose and direction of your life.

MORE TALKING AND DISCUSSING OF JESUS

Secondly, in verses 14 and 15, we see that the two disciples are *talking and discussing* the events and teachings of Jesus. And as they were talking, the Resurrected Jesus Himself *drew near and went with them!* Jesus *always* responds when we focus our attention on Him. Immediately as the disciples conversed about Jesus, He came into their midst and walked with them.

Dear friends, we need more *talking and discussing* about Jesus! And when we talk about Him and pray to Him and meditate on Him, there He is, in our presence. A very pious Geronta on Mt. Athos once told me that no matter where you are or what you are doing, simply call on the name of Jesus, and there He will be, in your midst. It’s sort of like the song by James Taylor: “just call out my name, and you know wherever I am, I’ll come running.”

When was the last time you talked and discussed Jesus? Think about this week, your conversations with your spouse, family or friends. How many discussions do we have about Jesus and our Faith? Our children especially need to hear their parents frequently discussing and talking about Jesus, His Holy Word, and the teachings of our Church.

But it’s a challenge to talk about Jesus today. There is so much junk talk in society; so much superficial hype and spin in the news and media. No wonder so many are dazed and confused about the direction and purpose of their lives. Dr. Robert Shaw, author of “The Epidemic,” writes that “Parents find themselves enslaved by a materialistic, overachieving society that leads them to spend so many hours at work and so much money that they can’t make the time to do the things necessary to bond with their children.”

Friends, Jesus promises to give us peace and purpose, but we must seek first to shift our priorities and focus more of the attention of our lives on *Him*.

LISTENING: THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

Going forward, another teaching from this passage occurs in verses 17-19. Jesus asked them what they were talking about (He was still preventing them from recognizing Him). Cleopas answered and said, “Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?” And He said to them, “*What things?*”

“*What things?*” Jesus asked an open-ended question. He obviously knew what they were discussing, yet He wanted to *listen* to them. And they opened up and talked at length, and He listened. It is said that “listening is the language of love.” Jesus loves us and He always listens. He wants us to talk to Him in prayer. He wants to listen to our everyday concerns and issues.

Also, in a very practical way and through the example of Jesus, we can seek to be better *listeners* in our everyday relationships. We are called to love each other. And love is *listening*. Be an active and aggressive listener to others. Ask

open-ended questions. Put the other person first. Be *present* in all your relationships. And in so doing, we become more like Christ.

CORRECT OUR UNDERSTANDING.

Moving forward on the road with Jesus, we see that He clears up the confusion and misunderstanding of the two disciples who had an *incorrect* belief in who Jesus really was. Verse 21 says that the disciples were disappointed in Jesus because they “had *hoped* that He was going to redeem Israel.”

You see, some of the followers of Jesus thought He was a “military Messiah.” They wanted Him to overthrow the Roman occupation of Jerusalem. Others thought He was simply another prophet or moral teacher. Very few could comprehend the immense charismatic depth and presence on earth of the God-Man, Jesus, whose purpose was to reveal the ultimate truth of our existence here on earth, bear the sin of the world on the Cross and then to be Resurrected from the dead!

And so it is with many people today. They have an incorrect and confused understanding of who Jesus really is. They merely think of Jesus as a religious leader or prophet like Mohammed or Buda. Books like “The Divinci Code” and others distort and confuse the true nature of Jesus.

So also do many contemporary Liberal Protestant Christian Churches not believe that Jesus is God. These “churches” have become social clubs of political correctness and tolerance of any theory about Jesus. They have become places where personal immorality is viewed as a “civil right.”

Even many Greek Orthodox are confused and misunderstand the truth about Jesus. I remember a young married couple who attended a Bible Study for the first time in their lives. They confessed that they never heard Jesus talked about much in Church and had no idea what the Crucifixion and Resurrection really meant. These are people who grew up attending Church!

OPEN THE SCRIPTURE

Jesus corrects the understanding of the disciples and clears up their confusion in verse 27 as He opened the Scripture to them and “expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Friends, we need to open our Bibles and open our minds to allow the Holy Spirit to correct our understanding about who Jesus really is! Jesus demonstrated on the road to Emmaus that the only way to correct and true understanding of Himself is through His Holy Word. Through the Bible, God reveals His plan and purpose for our lives. Its astonishing to me when I see people fly through books like “Lord of the Rings” or “The Divinci Code,” yet they say they have no time to read the Bible!

I love the quote from Saint John Chrysostom: “I have always suggested, and will not stop suggesting, that you not only heed what is said in church, but also *constantly occupy yourself* in reading the Divine Scriptures *at home*.” Ten minutes a day of reading and meditating on God’s Word can open our minds, change our lives, clear our thoughts and correct our understanding of the truth about who Jesus really is and His purpose for our lives. The disciples said it themselves in verse 32, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road and while He *opened the Scriptures to us*.”

GOING FURTHER

As Jesus and the two disciples approached the village of Emmaus, verse 28 tells us that He indicated that He was *going further*. Jesus wants to take *us* further in our faith and understanding of Him. Yet many will continue to resist Him. What’s keeping *you* from going further?

Dear brothers and sisters, Jesus loves us and wants us to go further in our relationship with Him. He wants to stir a positive change in our lives. He wants us to become more like Him: kind, patient, prayerful, forgiving, loving. He wants us to truly know and experience our purpose here on earth. And He wants us to make a difference in the lives of others by being useful in service to His Church.

Also in this passage, verse 30 tells us that Jesus was made known to the two disciples as He sat with them and “broke bread.” Jesus broke bread with them in the same way as during the Last Supper. This scene is an image of the Eucharist, as Jesus is also spiritually made known to us every Sunday when we receive Him. Every Sunday Liturgy then becomes a type of “Emmaus” at which we experience the Resurrected Christ and then go and proclaim His Resurrection to the world as did His disciples (verse 33).

May we surrender and follow Him on the road of our lives now, and always and forever. Amen!

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Fr. Christopher has been the keynote speaker at various youth retreats and guest lecturer for several years in religion classes at Elizabethtown College, PA. He currently represents the Metropolis of Boston on the national committee of Parish Outreach and Evangelism. He and his wife, Katerina and their two sons reside in Methuen, MA.