

***The Third Day* by Tom Berlin**
Chapter 4: *Emmaus*
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After I graduated from college, I was very disciplined about walking for exercise. At that time, I had a good friend who also wanted to get into shape by walking so we decided that early morning would be the best time for us to take walks together.

We lived on opposite ends of town so one of us would have to pick up the other along the way. I am sure we benefited physically from our regular walking routine, but what was even more beneficial for me were the conversations about life and faith that we shared. If we were reading or studying a certain portion of Scripture, then that is usually what became the main topic of our walking conversation.

The Bible says as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. We need each other. Not a single one of us will grow in life and faith without a stimulus or challenge from outside of ourselves. The problem for us today is that we are all in such a hurry. Taking walks with friends isn't so common anymore and I miss those early morning conversations.

In Luke 24:13-35, we read of an account of two travelers returning to their home in the village of Emmaus. Travel by chariot, ox cart, horse or donkey was uncommon. The method of transportation, because of necessity and economic status, was by foot.

These two travelers were returning from Jerusalem where they had spent the last few days celebrating the Jewish Passover. Their return trip was about a seven-mile journey. That distance is about the same distance between Bismarck and Mandan, North Dakota, where I now live. To walk this distance at a leisurely pace takes a couple of hours. Plenty of time for a good conversation!

Luke tells us, in verse fourteen, that the two were talking with each other about everything that had happened. All of it was so confusing. None of it made sense to these two. They were as puzzled as anyone. They tried to understand why Jesus died such a cruel death on a cross. And now they had just heard Jesus' body was missing from the tomb.

Right in the middle of their confusion Luke tells us that Jesus himself came up and began walking with them. Isn't that just like Jesus? We are confused and bewildered and He comes to give us answers as we walk along.

This is another resurrection appearance of Jesus. And, once again, the two did not immediately recognize it was Jesus who came up alongside of them. God prevented them from

knowing it was Jesus right away because, I believe, they needed more instruction before they could understand why He was alive.

In verse seventeen Jesus asked the two travelers a question.

"What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one living in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked.

Jesus had been put on the cross Friday morning and died Friday afternoon. This was Sunday. The way Cleopas reacted was like he was talking to someone who had been asleep for years.

Think about it like this. If you were living in the United States on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, I am sure you'll never forget what happened that day. My guess is that the events of that morning affected you deeply for several days after. Let's say a few days later, on the Thursday of that week, September 13, you were visiting with a friend when all of a sudden, a stranger came up to you and said, "Hey, you guys seem a little down. What's wrong? What are you talking about?" You might have been strongly tempted to say, "Where in the world have you been? What do you mean what are we talking about? Are you the only person alive who hasn't heard about the things that have happened?" It would seem impossible that anyone living in the United States, at that time, would have been unfamiliar with the events of September 11.

And so, in the same way, Cleopas and his traveling companion were surprised that anyone could be so out of the loop concerning what had just taken place in Jerusalem. In verses 19-24 they explained it all to Jesus who, of course, already knew the whole story. It didn't hurt them to retell the story. In fact, it helped them sort out the whole thing a little bit more.

"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. 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."

Going back to verse seventeen, Luke tells us that the two travelers' faces were downcast. By the look on their faces, we know their hope had been shattered. In verse twenty-one they said directly, "But we had hoped..."

So much of humanity can be written around those words. "We had hoped..."

"We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."

They had believed Jesus was the promised Messiah. They had hoped for a political Messiah. They had hoped for a Messiah who would deliver their nation from the oppression of Roman rule. And now their Messiah was dead. And so was their hope. In the matter of just a few hours on Friday, their hope was shattered.

Shattered hopes are something we can all identify with from time to time. Maybe some of your hopes have been shattered. Maybe some of your greatest dreams have turned into nightmares.

- Have any of you ever had a marriage that shattered? You had hoped when you said 'til death do us part...
- Anyone have a serious dating relationship come to an end? You had hoped this person might be the one...
- Know anyone that was a couple of weeks from retirement and the doctors found advanced stages of cancer? Given a year and a half to live? We had hoped...
- Maybe your adult children haven't embraced your faith in Jesus. We had hoped...
- Maybe you showed up for work on an ordinary day when the boss met you at the door and told you to clean out your desk. That day you went home without a job. We had hoped this might be the job that led to financial security....

Hope can be represented by a light bulb. Hope is bright and promising. Full of potential. But it is also fragile. Something unexpected happens and hope is shattered. It usually happens so quickly that we hardly know what hit us.

That's these two travelers on the road. Their hope was shattered. So, here's what Jesus said to them.

"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."

He explained what the Scriptures said about Himself! What an experience that must have been! A Bible lesson from Jesus on Jesus. I would love to have heard it. I would imagine he told them about:

- Deuteronomy 18:18 – where Moses said, "The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me from among your brothers."

- Isaiah 9:6 – For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
- Isaiah 53:5 – He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities.
- Isaiah 53:11 – After the suffering of his soul he will see the light of life and be satisfied.

Luke 24:28-31 continues,

“As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But 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. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.”

What allowed the two people to finally recognize Jesus? The answer is that God opened their eyes. Verse 31, *“Then their eyes were opened.”* Then they recognized him. Then they knew Him. The same supernatural power that prevented them from recognizing Jesus now opened their eyes to who this man really was.

Has God done that for you? Has he allowed you to get a glimpse of the Resurrected Jesus? To see who He really is. It is powerful when it happens. It changes your life. God does the same today for those who seek Him.

In Luke 24:32 following their eyes being opened to Jesus these two had quite another conversation and response! *“They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”* This is what someone has called having Divine Heart Burn! I don't know about you, but I need to have my heart burning daily as I encounter and experience the Resurrected Jesus.

As Tom Berlin says in his book [The Third Day, Living the Resurrection](#), “If the church today is to be vital, it must help others find a transforming relationship with Christ. This was the desire of the first disciples who brought the news of Jesus’ resurrection from Emmaus to Jerusalem. It is the persistent theme of the Book of Acts and the letters of the New Testament. Congregations are always at their healthiest form when their members can joyfully claim their own testimony of transformation and recognize that others would have a better life if they found Christ as well. The joy of sharing faith with others arises from the hope we find in Jesus and his identity as the Christ, the recognition that he is already on the road with us, and that his power is greater than anything we have done or will face.”