

History's Cry: He Is Risen! Luke 24:13-32

Intro: "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you" (Isaiah 26:3).

"To **him** who is able to **keep** you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—" (Jude 1:24).

Here God keeps them from knowing Jesus.

I. Kept from Recognizing Jesus: *But they were not able to recognize who he was—Luke 24:16.*

Jesus joined them on the road. He walked with them. He talked with them. And they had no clue who he was. What kept them from recognizing him?

And what keeps people today from recognizing who Jesus is? Are the reasons related?

A. Maybe they did not spend enough time with him. These are not two of the Twelve, as far as we know. They are disciples, but maybe they always sat on the back row during his teaching. Maybe they didn't pay attention like they should have.

Some people think they are acquainted enough with Jesus to give their final answer when they have not even read the gospel accounts or really taken notice of him at all. Were Jesus to walk beside them on the road and discuss their lives with them, they would not recognize him.

B. Maybe they are preoccupied by thorny issues. Their minds are spinning as they try to work out why a very good man, innocent of all crimes, would be executed. Maybe they are speculating on what happened to the women who made this strange report.

Some people spend their entire lives with perplexing questions: Why do bad things happen to good people? They never get beyond the grizzle in the meat. They are always chewing on a bone. They would rather gather to hear and discuss some new thing, like the philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens, than to actually discover life's deepest answer.

C. Maybe they are blinded by prior assumptions. They cannot recognize the risen Christ because their minds cannot go there. They assume, despite any and all evidence, that the dead do not rise. And so, no matter how like the Lord this stranger may look, it cannot be Jesus, because he is dead.

Many people in the world are kept even from contemplating the notion that Jesus could be the One, the Promised One, the Savior of the world. They are prevented by prior assumptions like, "There is no Savior." They simply do not believe in the possibility of spiritual and moral rescue even though they may feel a deep personal need for forgiveness and salvation.

D. Maybe they are kept from recognition because God wants to teach them something. How about that? If they had recognized Jesus immediately, they would have been overwhelmed. They would have turned right around and headed back to Jerusalem to tell Peter and the disciples.

Or they might have diverted the conversation. They might have decided to ask Jesus the one question that was sticking in their craw—Why do bad things happen to good people? If there really is a good God, why is their pain and suffering in the world?

Many a human being has been diverted and detoured from their encounter with God because they had questions that have no simple answers in this life or this lifetime.

Jesus wanted to talk with them, but he was not going to spend these precious moments focusing on THEIR questions. He wanted them to learn something much more importance. He wanted them to see how the Old Testament predicted the suffering and death of the Messiah.

Jesus is going to deal with suffering and pain. But he will not do it philosophically. He will deal with it historically and biblically. The Messiah is going to suffer. That is the key.

II. Kept from Understanding the Scriptures: *So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?* (Luke 24:25-26).

A. Maybe they were simply ignorant of the Scriptures, of all the ways in which the Old Testament predicted the coming of the Messiah. Maybe they had never been students of the Bible.

Many people do not realize that Jesus fulfilled, depending on how you count them, more than 300 Old Testament prophecies. We saw last week how the gospel of Matthew quotes the Old Testament to help people make the connection between what was spoken prophetically and how Jesus fulfilled those prophecies.

The OT prophets said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, that he would be born of a virgin, that he would come out of Egypt, that he would be from Nazareth, that he would be a light in Galilee, that he would have a prophetic forerunner, that he would speak in parables, that he would heal the sick and make the blind see, that he would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, that he would cleanse the temple, that he would be rejected by the religious authorities, that his hands and feet and side would be pierced, that no bone of his would be broken, that he would die like a criminal, be buried in a rich man's tomb, and that his body would not be abandoned to the grave or decay.

B. Maybe they were blinded by faulty interpretations of Scripture, interpretations that were politically correct for their day but not biblically correct. That happens to people in the here and now. They cannot confess that Jesus is risen from the dead and become Lord and Christ because they must allow for all religions to be equally true.

C. Maybe they were blinded by false expectations. They were expecting the Messiah to "deliver Israel," and Jesus did not do this, so he couldn't be The One.

D. Maybe they were simply kept from recognizing Jesus and understanding the Scripture by UNBELIEF. Their God was not big enough or personal enough or interested enough to intervene in human history and raise a single person, Jesus of Nazareth, from the dead. They just couldn't believe it. Even though it happened in their own time and right under their nose, they couldn't receive it. Even though they had already heard the report of the tomb being empty, they were still making explanations that made more sense to them. Even though Jesus was walking beside them and talking to them, they could not recognize him because they were blinded and hardened by their unbelief.

III. Kept from Final Parting--*He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them* (Luke 24:28-29). Jesus almost left. He acted as if he intended to leave. He was on his way out the door, so to speak, when they pressed him to stay. Why did they do this?

A. They did not want even a stranger on the road at night. It was almost dark.

B. They wanted to hear more from this stranger. They were open to further conversation. Their hearts were burning within them as they heard his exposition of the Scriptures.

C. God gave them grace. He was at work in their lives. He wanted them to know who Jesus was. Now that Jesus had delivered the message that was burning in HIS HEART, and now that their hearts were set on fire by that message, God was ready to reveal his Son to them.

D. God wanted them at the table with Jesus. As disciples, I imagine that they had been in this position before. They had seen Jesus break the bread. Perhaps they saw this at the feeding of the 5,000. Maybe they witnessed it at Matthew's party.

Here was Jesus, breaking the bread. Perhaps they had not noticed his hands before. Now, in the breaking of the bread, they see his hands and realize who he is.

His hands tell the tale. They complete the discussion about who he is and what he is doing on Planet Earth. Those hands, forever scarred by the nails driven through them, tell us about his suffering. They tell us about his terrible death on the cross. They tell us that he was not aloof or distant from us. They tell us the extent to which he expressed his love for us.

Jesus is known at the table, in the intimacy of table conversation, as he breaks the bread and reveals his heart.