

Community Group Discussion Questions

Easter Sunday: “Back to Life” Luke 24:13-35

Connect:

Did you do something special for Easter?

How do most Americans celebrate Easter? Good Friday is considered a holiday in 11 states (Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky [half a day], Louisiana, New Jersey, North Carolina, North Dakota, Tennessee and parts of Texas.)

There has been a White House Easter Egg Roll every year since 1878 but this was cancelled for 2021.

Which of the following traditional Easter foods did you eat this year? Easter ham, Easter lamb, hot cross buns, boiled eggs, potatoes, vegetables, Simnel cake, Easter biscuits

Pastor Jay reminded us of the centrality of the resurrection to our faith. Without it, Christianity might not as well exist.

Read I Corinthians 15:14.

[14] And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. (ESV)

Tim Keller expands this idea:

“If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn’t rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead.”

Prepare:

The events leading up to Easter Sunday occur in Holy Week. We met Friday night for an appropriately somber Good Friday service to remember Jesus’ suffering, crucifixion and burial. How does the communion service illustrate this aspect of Holy Week?

Jesus’ followers were doubtless sad, disappointed and even fearful for their own safety as these inevitable events unfolded culminating in his death. Some believers see films like *The Passion of the Christ* this time of year as a difficult-to-watch but poignant reminder of Jesus’ suffering for us (warning: definitely not for school age children; even some adults find the brutality repulsive).

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This Sunday Pastor Jay leads us through a highly personal episode in the lives of two of Jesus' followers after the events of Holy Week: On the Road to Emmaus.

Study and Discuss:

Read Luke 24:13-27.

[13] That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, [14] and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. [15] While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. [16] But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

[17] 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. [18] 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?" [19] 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, [20] and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. [21] 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.

[22] Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, [23] 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. [24] 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."

[25] And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" [27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:13-27, ESV)

1. Who were these two people?

One is named the other not. They weren't of the 12 but likely Jesus' followers who had heard his teaching, seen his miracles and discussed his significance for themselves and Israel.

2. Why were they leaving Jerusalem?

Jerusalem was the big city where all the important events of the last week had taken place. They were going to Emmaus, a tiny little village where practically nothing ever happened. Pastor Jay said it could be a picture of meaninglessness and lack of purpose. Why do you think this was they were going there? Can you think of a few possibilities?

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3. In drops Jesus.

We have a front row seat here. As readers we know he is Jesus. They do not. They were “kept from recognizing him.”

Can you think why they were prevented from knowing who was walking with them?

A number of times in the Bible people are kept from seeing. Here are two that may help us understand the current passage better.

[8] Once when the king of Syria was warring against Israel, he took counsel with his servants, saying, “At such and such a place shall be my camp.” [9] But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, “Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Syrians are going down there.” [10] And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God told him. Thus he used to warn him, so that he saved himself there more than once or twice.

[11] And the mind of the king of Syria was greatly troubled because of this thing, and he called his servants and said to them, “Will you not show me who of us is for the king of Israel?” [12] And one of his servants said, “None, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.” [13] And he said, “Go and see where he is, that I may send and seize him.” It was told him, “Behold, he is in Dothan.” [14] So he sent there horses and chariots and a great army, and they came by night and surrounded the city.

[15] When the servant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. And the servant said, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” [16] He said, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” [17] Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see.” So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. [18] And when the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, “Please strike this people with blindness.” So he struck them with blindness in accordance with the prayer of Elisha. [19] And Elisha said to them, “This is not the way, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.” And he led them to Samaria. (2 Kings 6:8–19, ESV)

Here an unseen spiritual realm was revealed to Elisha’s servant to show him that God was in control.

Sometimes our own rebellion against God can blind us spiritually. Read 1 John 2:10, 11.

[10] Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. [11] But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (1 John 2:10–11, ESV)

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Pastor Jay pointed out that the two on the road to Emmaus were looking for an earthly Messiah to overthrow the Romans and restore the political and national reputation of Israel. But the salvation Jesus brought was greater than their wildest dreams and so much more than defeating Rome. They just couldn't see it until Jesus explained.

Read 2 Corinthian 4:18.

[18] as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. (2 Corinthian 4:18, ESV)

This is one of our issues today. We often miss what God is doing by focusing too intently on what is going on that is important to us personally.

Read Luke 24:28-35.

[28] So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, [29] 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. [30] When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

[31] And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. [32] 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?"

[33] And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, [34] saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" [35] Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:28–35, ESV)

When did Jesus reveal himself to them?

What was the significance of this timing?

They were sharing a meal together. The two on the road had invited him as a weary traveler to rest and eat with them, even though he acted as though he was travelling further.

What is important about sharing food and fellowship with others? Pastor Jay shared that the language here is very similar to that used to describe the Last Supper. He was sharing who he was with his followers.

What do you think is means "our hearts were burning within us"? Perhaps something like: for the first time the Bible made sense and it all fit together in our minds.

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Response:

For us as believers there are at least two important lessons from the passage this week:

1. One of the foundational elements of our faith is believing that the Resurrection took place as a historical fact.

The documentation of this historical event is every bit as impressive (and often much more impressive) than the evidence that other event in the ancient (or even modern) world took place. If this subject interests you try reading (or browsing!) Josh McDowell's "The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict", Thomas Nelson Inc. 1999, 760 pages.

2. It is critical to know that Jesus' Resurrection saves us.

Believing that Jesus is God and died on the cross is not enough. As Jay pointed out from our study in James, even the demons believe and tremble (James 2:19).

We must believe that the miracle of the Resurrection saves us and gives us eternal life.

Read Revelation 3:20.

[20] Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20, ESV)

Jesus wishes to come into our hearts and to eat with us. As Pastor Jay speculated, it sounds like there will be a whole lot of eating going on in heaven!

Pray:

Lord, help us to understand how foundational the Resurrection is to our faith, that we have no need to feel sheepish about the rock-solid historical evidence for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and that there is no greater miracle in which we believe than that you died for us, came back to life, forgave us our sins and secured for us eternal life in heaven with you.