

TITLE: "Recognition"

TEXT: Luke 24:13-35

¹³Now on that same day two [of Jesus followers] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷And [Jesus] said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

¹⁹[Jesus] asked them, "What things?"

They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But 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 took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

²⁵Then [Jesus] said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized [Jesus]; and he vanished from their sight.

³²They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how [Jesus] had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Introduction – Recognition

Let me tell you a story.

Once there was a man named Peter O’Malley who everyone called Paddy. He worked hard all his life in the plumber’s union in Boston. He never married. “I just don’t have time for a wife and kids,” he said. In his spare time, Paddy volunteered at a food pantry, was involved in his church and supported many local charities.

One evening, in his 60th year, Paddy compared the numbers on his weekly lottery ticket to those displayed on his TV screen and was utterly amazed to find that they matched! Paddy was rich! When word got out, Paddy’s friends told him that it was about time to do something for himself.

So, he did. With visions of finding an attractive wife, he underwent hair transplant, had his face refreshed (as they called it), and bought all new clothes. On his way to a date with his new girlfriend one evening, he stepped into the street without looking and was struck by a garbage truck and died instantly.

At the pearly gates, Paddy faced the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, I don’t mean to sound ungrateful, after all I’m glad to BE here rather than down there someplace, but couldn’t you have let old Paddy enjoy his wealth a little longer before you called him home?”

The Lord peered into his face and said, “PADDY? Why, I didn’t recognize you!”

This morning’s text is all about recognition. Jesus recognized his two followers, but they did not recognize Jesus even though he was walking beside them. Sometimes we do not realize the fact that Jesus is walking with US either. But it is important to realize this. Why? Because if we recognize the fact that Jesus is walking with us here on earth, it is MUCH more likely that JESUS will recognize us when we meet after this life is over.

This morning's biblical text always raises a lot of questions.

Why didn't the two followers recognize Jesus? ...The text says that they were "kept" from recognizing Jesus. What does THIS mean?

Later, when they were describing what had been happening in Jerusalem, they referred to Jesus as a "prophet." Jesus walks beside EVERYone. But those who think that Jesus is just a prophet or just a "good teacher" or just a "moral leader" will be kept from recognizing Jesus, even though he is as close the air they breathe.

Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus always was, always is and always will be. Jesus is here this morning just as much as Jesus was with those two disciples walking down the road to Emmaus. And when we leave here and go our separate ways, Jesus will be with each of us and Jesus will be with you every millisecond of the day and night. If you start to BELIEVE this, you WILL begin to recognize Jesus more and more.

...Some may wonder HOW can Jesus be with billions of people at the same time. ...WE cannot be two places at one time, even though young children and impatient bosses fully expect that we can. Why? Because time restricts us. We can be one place for a period of time and another place in another period, but not the two at once.

Jesus is outside of time. Jesus CAN be in two places at once, ten places at once or a billion places at once. And when Jesus is with you, Jesus is with you alone. Sarah Young knows that the Lord is with her at all times, and in her book *Jesus Calling*, she writes these words that Jesus told her:

Jesus says: "Refresh yourself in the Peace of My Presence. This Peace can be your portion at all times and in all circumstances. Learn to *hide in the secret of My Presence*, even as you carry out your duties in the world. I am both with you and within you. I go before you to open up the way, and I also walk along side you. There could never be a companion as devoted as I am.

No matter what road you have to walk, if you recognize Jesus as your constant companion, you WILL be able to continually *refresh yourself in the peace of Jesus' presence*, no matter what you have to face.

After the two followers expressed their confusion over the report of the women disciples who had said they had seen the risen Jesus, Jesus said:

²⁵“Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

The two followers were confused about the events that had taken place and Jesus explained things to them and put their minds at ease.

No matter WHAT question YOU have, Jesus is very willing to explain things to you. You can TRUST Jesus. I don't know about you, but when I wake up in the morning, the demands of the day come at me like a pack of ravening wolves. There is no WAY I can possibly get HALF of what needs to get done accomplished. Left on my own, I try to plan the day, rehearse what may happen and control as much as possible. When I go this route, my day is full of frustrations because I never get enough done.

When I start out the day in prayer, and listen for my directions from Jesus, I develop a rhythm of grace that remains constant throughout the day. I don't panic or become worried or anxious. Although much of the seemingly URGENT stuff doesn't get done, all the IMPORTANT stuff does. AND, I find that peace that surpasses all human understanding during the day and a sense of satisfaction at the end.

Here's another question: Why was Jesus planning to walk on when the two followers had reached their destination? ...Jesus will not stay around where He isn't needed or wanted. When we face challenges, we often try to build ourselves up in order to feel capable of accomplishing the task. With Jesus, the weaker we are, the more we NEED Jesus, the more Jesus will come near and help us. These two disciples needed encouragement and hope and when they asked Jesus to stay, he did. Jesus will do the same for you.

Toward the end of the text, we read:

³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

Many Christians tell me that they know the Lord is with them, but they are not AWARE of the Lord's presence with them. ...Well, no one is all the time ...certainly not me. However, Jesus IS there whether we are aware of Him or not. And the more HUMBLE you are, the more AWARE you will be of Jesus' presence. If YOU want to be #1, if YOU want to be the center of attention, if YOU want to succeed and receive the adulation for your labors that you feel you deserve, you may even become rich and famous, but you will never be aware of the Lord's presence.

We are to be medicine bottles. Here's one of those orange plastic containers. No one ever takes an antibiotic to get rid of an infection and then thanks the bottle that contained the medication. No. We thank the DOCTOR and we appreciate the MEDICATION.

GOD is the Great Physician and JESUS is the medication that heals our diseases and forgives our sins. WE are the humble plastic bottles. That is why Jesus says: "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted" (Mt. 23:12). The more humble before the Lord we are, the more aware we will be of the Lord's presence and the more we will be exalted by the Lord in the life to come.

Conclusion – "I wants to see Massa Jesus fust of all"
(from *Moments for Pastors* by Robert Strand)

John Jasper was a former slave, and following the Civil War, he became the pastor of the Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia. This was a huge church. One Sunday morning, he was preaching about heaven and the joys that await us on the other side. He made an attempt to describe the joy of heaven. His imagination and emotion were so caught up in his image of heaven that he opened his mouth, but could not speak. He tried again, but he was so overcome by emotion there was still no sound.

Then tears began to roll down his cheeks. Still, as he would attempt to articulate, nothing would come out. Finally, he just shook his head and waved the crowd toward the doors. But everyone still continued to sit. Then he walked to the side of the pulpit, with his hand on the door that led to his study and again waved the crowd to go home. Again, no one moved.

Then, he moved back to the pulpit and with great effort composed himself and said:
 “Brothers and sisters, when I think of the glory which shall be revealed to us, I can visualize that day when old John Jasper’s last battle has been fought and his last burden has been borne. I can visualize that day, when this tired servant of God shall lay down his burdens and walk up to the battlements of the City of God. I can almost hear the Mighty Angel on guard say, ‘John Jasper, you want you shoes?’

“And I’s gonna say, ‘Course I wants ma shoes, ma golden slippers to walk the streets of gold in the City of God, ...but not now.’”

“Then I can hear the Mighty Angel as he says, ‘John Jasper, don’t you want your robe?’”

“And I’s gonna say, ‘Course I wants ma robe, ma robe of clean white linen which are fo’ the righteous saints, ...but not now.’”

“Then the Angel would say, ‘John Jasper, you want your crown?’”

“I shall say, ‘Course, Mighty Angel. I wants all the reward that’s coming to me, this poor black servant of the Lord, ...but not now.’”

“Then the Angel would say, ‘John Jasper, wouldn’t you like to see Elijah, John the Beloved, and Paul?’”

“I’ll say, ‘Course Mighty Angel. I wants to know and to shake hands with all the loved ones over here, ...but not now.Fust, I wants to see Massa Jesus ...I wants to see Massa Jesus fust of all.’”

...If you walk with Jesus and talk with Jesus and listen to Jesus in this life, you too WILL want to see Jesus “fust of all” ...and, if you do, Jesus WILL recognize you and you will walk with Jesus and talk to Jesus and listen to Jesus forever and ever and ever.

Amen.