

Sunday, January 20<sup>th</sup> 2007

Rev. Andrew Rock

### Walk with Me, Talk with Me

The last week of Jesus' life before his crucifixion and resurrection takes up nearly a third of each of the gospels. A crescendo has been building in the story of Jesus. And during the Passover week in Jerusalem the tension only increases. Jesus confronts the religious leaders. People start to wonder and speculate that Jesus really might be the Messiah. The crowds love him. The elite and powerful despise him. A plot is hatched for his death and then a dear friend betrays Jesus. The crescendo of the Jesus story reaches its peak during the trial and crucifixion and then Jesus gives his life by being crucified on the cross. But the story has not ended. Mysteriously, amazingly, fantastically, the entire gospels become in focus

*after* the resurrection. Jesus has risen. Now the real story begins, because the power of the living God has now defeated death and the living Christ is walking on this earth. Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Mary mother of James see an angel and the empty tomb. The disciples can't believe it. And Peter is amazed. Can you catch just a little of the power of where we are in the story? We should all be jumping up and down. It's kind of like that moment when the home team, who was down by four touchdowns later in the fourth quarter has come back against all odds to win the game. It's that moment when all seems to have been lost, indeed all was lost, and then we get it all back again and more.

Have everyone read along in Luke 24:13-49

What an amazing story! What a wonderful passage of Scripture! You could read this passage from Luke

20 times and every time see something different because there is so much here. Remember, we're reading the one, true, unique and authoritative witness to Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, our Lord and Savior. We don't approach Scripture by giving it a once over as though we're reading a novel or newspaper article. These pages are soaked with the truth about who we are, about who God is, and about the most radical, defiant, revolutionary, beautiful, and amazing thing we could ever do- follow Jesus. We hear messages every day about who we are- not good enough, not skinny enough, not rich enough, hopeless, rotten, shameful, terrible, forever stuck in misery, worthless- but they're not true. Only in Scripture do we find the truth that can set us free. Thus when we read Scripture we must pay attention to the details because they mean something. We must listen to Scripture just like we listened to our spouses on the date after we knew we were falling in love with them, or just like we

listen to a parent or friend who is blessing us with their kind and loving words. We must be attentive to this story and listen with the perspective that there is something here for us. We do this by inviting the Holy Spirit to help us understand. Let's do that.

Pray.

Back to the story.

The disciples hear the news of the women proclaiming the risen Jesus and they just can't believe it- except Peter. Peter runs to the tomb to find the linen burial cloths lying by themselves and he went home absolutely amazed- read 'tingling, jumping up and down, shock and awe'.

Follow along with me in your Bible. In verse 13 it says, 'Now on that same day..' which would be Easter

Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection. Verse 13 is a literary shift- Luke is telling two stories at the same time. There is the story of Jesus' close friends who find the tomb empty, and while they've locked themselves behind closed doors in fear of the authorities they send the women out to prepare the body of Jesus. Luke then changes cameras, if you will, and tells of the rest of disciples, who at the same time are hightailing it out of town on a road leading to a small, out of the way town called Emmaus. Passover has ended and their Rabbi has been executed. But the reader knows something these disciples don't- Jesus is risen! This tension of our knowing something the characters in the story don't is fantastic drama. The disciples are walking and talking about such a confusing and heart-wrenching week and then Jesus shows up to walk with them. Do you ever yell at the TV, telling the guy about to get hit with the piano to watch out, or yelling at quarterback to pass it to

the open receiver? This is that moment in Scripture.

In Luke's gospel there is a Greek word that keeps on popping up in very important places in the narrative- epiginosko- it means to perceive, recognize, or know something. It's that 'AHA!' moment that we get when the light bulb is illuminated over our heads. Luke uses it in great moments in his narrative- and always when the characters figure out the truth that's staring them right in the face.

Listen to it again. This is Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of Scripture called The Message.

**13-16**That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of

their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

**17-18**He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?" They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?"

**19-24**He said, "What has happened?"

They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn't

find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus."

**25-27**Then he said to them, "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?" Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

**28-31**They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. 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. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread,

he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him.

They epiginosko'd him. They realized it was Jesus. They perceived and became aware of the living God right in their midst. They thought they had the whole story figured out and they got it all wrong. Maybe you've stopped reading scripture because you think you already know the story or maybe you've given up trying to figure out what this all means. Maybe you've stopped praying because you've already summed up the outcome of your life or maybe because you're afraid of the answer you'll receive. Maybe you've stopped asking for forgiveness, stopped forgiving others, or stopped changing your life because maybe you believe it's too hard, impossible, or pointless anyways.

In order for us to be swept up in the life of faith- in order for our heart to be lifted out of it's apathy- in order for us to give up our

cynicism- in order for us to be filled with hope, joy, and peace - in order for us to know in our bones that God is real and see God working all around us we must hear what God is up to from Jesus himself! And this scripture tells us that Jesus is right here and right now walking with us. I want for myself, and for all of us, to be the church who brings our entire life to Jesus in prayer, in reading Scripture, in fellowship, in tears, in laughter, and in service. I want for us to experience that moment of epiginosko all the time as we see God's faithfulness each and every day because we are the kind of church who takes seriously that Jesus the Christ has risen from the dead and he indeed walks and talks with us.

Jesus doesn't hang around for long after the disciples figure out that their fellow traveler is Jesus.

The scripture says, And then he disappeared. Now that's just funny. Come on. Maybe Luke is messing with us, here. Can you imagine Luke? Maybe he thought, "Ok, Cleopas and his friend told me they figured out it was Jesus and then they said he left. What's that greek work for 'he left', uhh, dang it I forget, I'll say 'And then he disappeared'. No, Luke is not messing with us. But what drama! Jesus is there and then he's not.

Jesus reveals himself and then we're left to make a decision, aren't we. Isn't that how the life of faith is? Jesus says we're forgiven and then we have to decide whether or not we believe it. Jesus shows us an area of our life that needs change and then we must decide to obey. Jesus believes in us, doesn't he? He doesn't redeem and forgive us in order to tease us with a promise that will only be fulfilled at our death. No, Jesus trusts us to respond to his saving Word because we matter, we're important, and what we think and

believe matters. God is interested in you knowing the truth, and God is interested in you doing something about it. Never forget that.

Back to the story. Are you with me still in the passage? Look at vs 32.

**32**Back and forth they talked. "Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"

**33-34**They didn't waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: "It's really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!" **EMPHASIS**

**35**Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

**36-41**While they were saying all this, Jesus appeared to them and said, "Peace be with you."

**DIFFERENT VERSIONS** They thought they were seeing a ghost and were scared half to death. He continued with them, "Don't be upset, and don't let all these doubting questions take over. Look at my hands; look at my feet—it's really me. Touch me. Look me over from head to toe. A ghost doesn't have muscle and bone like this." As he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. They still couldn't believe what they were seeing. It was too much; it seemed too good to be true.

**41-43**He asked, "Do you have any food here?" They gave him a piece of leftover fish they had cooked. He took it and ate it right before their eyes. **BBQ**

**44**Then he said, "Everything I told you while I was with you comes to this: All the things written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms have to be fulfilled."

**45-48**He went on to open their understanding of the Word of God, showing them how to read their Bibles this way. He said, "You can see now how it is

written that the Messiah suffers, rises from the dead on the third day, and then a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in his name to all nations—starting from here, from Jerusalem! You're the first to hear and see it. You're the witnesses.

When Mary, Martha, and Mary mother of James saw Jesus alive from the dead they ran to tell the disciples. They were the first witnesses. When Cleopas and his friend broke bread with Jesus and had their epiginosko moment they ran back to Jerusalem to tell their friends- they were witnesses. And while Cleopas and his friend are telling their amazing story Jesus shows up right in their midst.

Jesus has to convince them that he is not a ghost- he shows them his body with the wounds of crucifixion. He shows them he can eat. In John's

gospel we read that Thomas touches Jesus' wounds just to make sure. And the disciples had good reason to be a little freaked out- it's not everyday you experience resurrection.

We are witnesses to the resurrection. We are witnesses to the truth that the love of God, seen in Jesus Christ, cannot be defeated. I said earlier that the resurrection of Jesus puts into perspective the rest of the gospel; resurrection defines the entire life, suffering, and death of Jesus. Indeed, resurrection defines what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

When we learn about who Jesus is and what he has done on the cross for our sake, having that knowledge- that epiginosko- must be acted upon. We must follow Jesus into a resurrection life- this is the life of a witness.

Resurrection life is radical. It's revolutionary. Resurrection will shake up your life. You won't be the same. You'll give away more of your money. You'll love more and will be able to receive love. You'll be challenged like never before. You will find less in common with this world than you do right now. You will really be able to feel emotion. People will think you're different and that's because you will be. And you might find life finally worth living.

The resurrection life is a journey. It doesn't happen over night. It's tempting to believe that all God wants for us is to say the sinners prayer. That's important- but it's not **all** that God wants for us. God wants us to really live, to be really free, to be healed from past wounds and to join others as God heals them. God accepts you just as you are and he loves you way too much for you to stay that way.

Where are you on your journey of resurrection this morning? If you are sitting on the road, tired, exhausted, or wounded this morning, then by the power of the Holy Spirit may you be revived. If you have been walking with Jesus in this resurrection life but you're not quite sure where to go next, then by the power of the Holy Spirit may you be given wisdom. If you are carrying a heavy load and feel burdened this morning, then may you feel safe enough to give that to Jesus, the one who brings freedom and life. And if you are not quite yet sure about Jesus and this life of faith, then may you be given all the information you need and may your heart be filled with the wonder and awe of seeing the resurrected Jesus so you too can decide.