

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

FEBRUARY 13 - 17, 2023

Book of Luke • Jesus' Invitation to Hospitality

WELCOME TO THE TABLE

Epiphany Series
January 8 - February 19

MONDAY

Read **Luke 24:13-35; Jeremiah 29:13; Isaiah 59:1-2**

Our unbelieving nephew, Greg, sometimes complains much like others: “Why doesn’t God just reveal Himself clearly, making it easier for everybody?” In today’s post-resurrection “Road to Emmaus” story, we see God the Son initially unrecognized by two disheartened followers (Luke 24:16). This is not the only instance wherein a believer initially misidentified the risen Lord: John 20:11-16 shares how Mary Magdalene mistook Jesus for the gardener outside of His tomb and John 21:1-7 reveals His disciples not recognizing Jesus as He prepared a meal at the shore while they fished. Why did even Jesus’ faithful followers struggle, at least occasionally, in identifying Him post-resurrection?

There are potential natural explanations. The Emmaus-bound followers, like Mary, were distraught over Jesus’ execution—despair may have blurred their vision. Moreover, Jesus now appeared upright and robust—very different from His bloodied, beaten countenance at Calvary. Though Jesus’ fishing disciples had experienced the risen Christ previously (John 20), the distance from their boat to the beach may explain their initial misperception.

There are also supernatural explanations. In His post-resurrection, glorified body, Jesus was now “unveiled.” Peter, James and John had glimpsed something like this earlier at “the Mount of the Transfiguration,” wherein “[Jesus] was transfigured before them ... [His] face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as light” (Matthew 17:2).

John 1:14 indicates “*the Word became flesh and dwelt (‘tabernacled’) among us*”—“Immanuel” veiled Himself in a “tent of flesh” as a Man amidst His first Advent mission. Perhaps a foreshadow, centuries earlier Moses’ “*face shone ... [after] talking with God ... [so] he put a veil over his face*” to make himself approachable to fearful fellow Jews (Exodus 34:29-33).

Perhaps Jesus chose to “veil” Himself differently post-resurrection, compelling His followers to work harder in seeking and “searching” for Him.

Whatever the reason(s) for Jesus’ periodic, post-resurrection unrecognizability, there is a key principle here for us: whether one is His critic or a Christian, God desires a meaningful relationship, one with those earnestly seeking Him “*in spirit and truth*” (John 4:23). Superficiality, empty religiosity, and sinfulness are obstacles to knowing the true and living God.

QUESTIONS

Why doesn’t God just reveal Himself clearly, making it easier for everybody? Which of the various explanations from today’s devo resonates most with you?

PRAYERS

For GTi HOPE

GTi HOPE brings the light of literacy and the message of peace to vulnerable and underprivileged people in India. Pray for the Vision Trip from February 13-26 to visit our partner and local ministry programs. Pray for safe and uneventful travels and prepared hearts during our flights. www.gtihope.org.

TUESDAY

Read **Luke 24:17-20; Matthew 22:41-46; John 21:15-17**

When accompanying the two approaching Emmaus, was Jesus being shifty when inquiring, “*What is this conversation ... [about]?*” and following with “*What things?*” (Luke 24:17-19)? Does this exemplify the “elusiveness” of God addressed yesterday?

Some maintain that God chooses not to know some future things, “making room for our free will.” They dismiss God’s omniscience, citing Scripture that indicates God “*changed His mind,*” “*relented*” or “*repented*” (Exodus 32:14, Jonah 3:10, etc.). Others embrace a contrasting extreme: our sovereign, all-knowing, all-powerful God personally causes and micro-manages everything (Proverbs 16:19, Isaiah 14:24, etc.). The Bible teaches that God knows all things—if not, how could we trust His promises or explain amazing, fulfilled biblical prophecies? As well, everything that happens is permitted by God, used by Him for good (Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28, etc.)—however, knowing and permitting are different than causing.

Almighty God and Jesus of Nazareth asked questions some might characterize as “playing dumb.” However, the purposes were not manipulation nor deceit, but to prompt self-examination and reflection—spurring the listener(s) toward deeper truth. An example: “*Jesus asked [the Pharisees] ... ‘Whose son is [the Christ]?’ They [replied], ‘The son of David.’ He [responded], ‘How is it then that David ... [called] Him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord ...?’ ...*

If then David calls Him Lord, how is He his son?" (Matthew 22:41-45). Jesus challenged them to grasp the Messiah's eternal deity.

Some of the great questions asked by Yahweh and Christ: "[Adam] (hiding from God after disobeying), where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" (Job 38:4). "Is the LORD's hand shortened (making Me unable to solve this)?" (Numbers 11:23). "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13). "Why do you ask Me about what is good (when God alone is good)?" (Matthew 19:17). "Do you want to be healed?" (John 5:6).

Effective witnessing includes asking good, caring questions and listening actively. Like Jesus, we must meet people where they are. We might then help them answer the destiny-setting question, "Who do you say that I (Jesus) am?" (Mark 8:29).

QUESTIONS

Why did Jesus ask seemingly naïve questions as He was coming alongside the two walking toward Emmaus? What thoughtful, loving questions will you ask unbelieving family members, friends and neighbors as you draw alongside them?

PRAYERS

For GTi HOPE

Glenkirk is helping to transform the Madiya people in Maharashtra, India. This three-year project is in its second year. Glenkirk has sponsored six People Group Projects. Over 3,200 people have discovered hope and over 500 home fellowships have been formed! Praise God! Pray for open ears and hearts among the Madiya people.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Luke 24:19-29; Psalm 22; Isaiah 52:13-53:13; Zechariah 12:10**

As Jesus walked toward Emmaus alongside unwitting followers, we learn, “*Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted ... in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (Luke 24:27). Matthew’s Gospel, likely the first circulated, wouldn’t be issued for years. The Messiah’s story courses throughout the Old Testament, the only Scriptures then available.

The first Messianic prophecy is issued in Eden where God is judging the deceitful serpent: “*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel*” (Genesis 3:15). This verse poetically prefigures Satan’s opposition to Christ, including Jesus’ crucifixion (wherein God “turned the tables” on the enemy). Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his promised “*only son Isaac*” (Genesis 22:3-14) foreshadows God’s sacrificing Jesus centuries later. Golgotha (Calvary)—where Jesus was crucified—is in “Moriah,” where Abraham took Isaac.

God’s Passover instructions to the Jews abound in Messianic significance: the lamb’s spotlessness (Exodus 5:8), none of its bones were to be broken (Exodus 12:46), etc. Jesus was called “*the Lamb of God*.” For more here, revisit the Glenkirk January 31, 2023 devo (www.GlenkirkChurch.org/Devotions).

Amidst the exodus from Egypt, the Hebrews complained regarding thirst. Moses struck the water-producing rock at Rephidim. The “striking” pictures crucifixion; the “water” pictures abundant life in Christ. Paul commented, “*they drank from the spiritual Rock ... and the Rock was Christ*” (1 Corinthians 10:4). Jesus proclaimed, “*If anyone thirsts, let [him] come to Me and drink ... [and] out of [his] heart will flow rivers of living water*” (John 7:37-38). Moses later fashioned a bronze serpent on a pole, upon which trekking, snakebit Jews needed only gaze for healing (Numbers 21:4-9)—the serpent represented sin, Jesus “*made ... sin for us*” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Accordingly, “*as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up*” (John 3:14).

Contemplate today’s supplemental passages, each rich in Messianic imagery. Jesus appealed from Calvary’s cross, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Matthew 27:46), declaring His Messiahship while prophetically fulfilling Psalm 22:1. Do not forsake the Word of God—His story spans the entire Bible.

QUESTIONS

What did Jesus mean when declaring, “*The Scriptures point to Me!*” in John 5:39? Which Old Testament Messianic Scripture do you find most compelling? Which do you find most perplexing?

PRAYERS

For GTi HOPE

Pray for courage, perseverance, and grace for believers and seekers in the face of increasing persecution. Pray for ministry taking place in states which have passed anti-conversion laws. Pray for protection from harassment, oppression, beatings and worse from radicals. Pray that the persecutors will witness the love of Jesus and be changed.

THURSDAY

Read **Luke 24:21-24; John 20:24-29; Romans 1:18-22**

I'm often amazed at how far unbelievers go to reinforce their disbelief. My friend, Brad, concluded a faith dialog with "I believe in science." Ironically, the macro-evolutionary theory he embraces is not science—it's neither observable, measurable, nor repeatable. With another friend, I asked something expecting to highlight non-creationism's folly: "So, you believe that nature is self-creating, nature being your 'god'?" Jason's response: "Yes."

Luke 24:21-24 shares the related "I have to see it to believe it" mindset per Jesus' travel companions. Despite colleagues' reports of the empty tomb—one even citing angels there—the two were skeptical and disheartened. They seemed to share "doubting" Thomas' wiring: *"Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and ... my hand into His side, I will never believe"* (John 20:25).

Among the problems with naturalism and its headstrong "prove it to me" position: it often leaves no room ("at the inn" or otherwise) for the eternal, transcendent Creator. Its proponents must then default to belief that this world, with its flaws and evils, is "as good as it gets." Associated purposelessness can prompt narcissistic hyper-humanism ("I'm my own 'god'"), vain existentialism ("I create meaning"), or fatalism (an impersonal "force" that dictates everything). The logical

extremes are selfish, exploitative “Look out for #1” or depressed “What’s the use of living?” attitudes. Such viewpoints please Satan, who aims to undermine God’s plan of salvation.

Fortunately, Jesus humbly endures many people’s skepticism. In Thomas’ case, Jesus later met him and invited an examination (John 20:27). With the Emmaus travelers, Jesus revealed Himself first scripturally and then physically.

I am progressing, slowly, in becoming more graciously Christlike. I try to avoid “winning an argument while losing a soul,” a particular challenge when I’m in my flesh. I aspire to be like Jesus—meeting people where they are, in fallen creation. Each of us needs to lovingly help others discover the Savior who will destroy sin, pain and death, the One able to redeem them. Help them share the blessings of “those who have not seen and yet ... believed” (John 20:29).

QUESTIONS

What are some of the problems with the “I have to see it to believe it” mindset? How did Jesus deftly handle such an orientation with His two fellow travelers walking toward Emmaus?

PRAYERS

For GTi HOPE

Praise God for the publication of the *Tamil Study Bible*. After four years, the project is complete, and the dedication ceremony is today! Pray that it is a powerful resource for Tamil-speaking pastors. Pray for the Vision Team as they take part in the celebration and visit a VBS program.

FRIDAY

Read **Luke 24:13-16, 26-35; Luke 22:14-20**

This week, as I'm finishing these devos, we celebrated my birthday. My 7-year-old granddaughter, Marlee, brought the first gift. I broke the tape all around a folded sheet on which she'd drawn a heart and expressed her love. Inside was three dollars. I nearly cried at the gravity of this, her expression of loving sacrifice—these three dollars were extremely significant to her, reminding me of the widow commended by Jesus for offering her “*two small copper coins ... all she had to live on*” (Luke 21:2-4). Marlee's generosity touched me deeply!

As Jesus joined the two Emmaus-bound travelers, we witness profound hospitality. The two insisted that the yet-undiscerned, risen Savior join them out of their concern for Him. He returned their kindness as they dined later: “*He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him*” (Luke 24:30-31).

So why did Jesus “vanish” (v. 31) upon their recognition of Him? Perhaps because He had completed His purpose, having opened their eyes while stirring them to share the experience with others. The Bible does not say. As Pastor Tim Peck once reminded me, “There is room for mystery (as we consider God's infinitely higher ways).”

The “Road to Emmaus” story is richly meaningful. It conveys three keys to abundant life and joy: Walk with Jesus: “*While they were talking ... Jesus Himself drew near and went with them*” (v. 15). Contemplate and

know the Bible: “[Jesus] interpreted ... the Scriptures ... [and] ‘Did not our hearts burn ...?’” (vv. 27, 32). Share the Gospel’s good news enthusiastically: “And they ... returned to Jerusalem ... [and told others], ‘The Lord has risen indeed ...!’” (vv. 33-34).

My granddaughter’s gift could not have been more hospitable—“warm, friendly, generous” (Dictionary.com). And Jesus offers definitive hospitality “in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus welcomes all to come to Him, as should we. We experience the presence of the risen Christ—the ultimate Source of hospitality—as we welcome others into relationship. Hospitality to a stranger is hospitality to Jesus Himself.

QUESTIONS

Why do you believe Jesus “vanished” after being recognized by His travel companions upon breaking the bread? Which of the three “keys” to an abundant, joyful life—walking with Jesus; knowing the Bible, or sharing the Gospel—is most challenging for you? How will you “step up” more in this area in 2023?

PRAYERS

For GTi HOPE

Pray for the Vision Team as we fly and drive to several ministry sites over the next week. Pray for good health, safe travels, and energy. Pray that we are an encouragement and blessing to those we meet, and pray that we experience God’s love for all people in a fresh, meaningful way.

Sources

- The Dictionary.com definition for “hospitality” is from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/hospitality>.

