**Recognizing Jesus in times of Disappointment**

**Luke 24:13-35**

**Introduction**

Good morning! We are so happy to have some of the children and their families joining us for worship. This past week we have been learning about the love of Jesus and how we can be His disciples by showing that love to others in our lives. The five events from the ministry of Jesus we learned about were the calling of the first disciples, the transfiguration, the sending of the 72 disciples to serve others, the triumphal entry and the two disciples who talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus after He resurrected from the grave. With the time we have this morning we are going to talk about how Jesus walks with us in our lives during the times of disappointment that we all experience from time to time. I would like to ask all of you to think back to a time in your life when you were experiencing disappointment because something did not go the way you had planned, or you experienced failure in something that you tried to accomplish. All of us have had those times in our lives and so did these two disciples of Jesus who were trying to process everything that had taken place in Jerusalem only a few days earlier. These men were disappointed because they believed in Jesus as being the Messiah who had come to free the people from bondage. Rather than being victorious in battle Jesus had been crucified and the whole movement had died with Him. Their hopes were destroyed, and they did not know where they would go from here. As we discuss this account today, we will learn four ways to deal with disappointment in our lives. 1. Even though we may know all the facts about Jesus there still may be times when hope is lost that we fail to see His presence. We may not see Him, but He is there. 2. Jesus meets us where we are and walks with us even during times of confusion and despair. 3. When we experience fellowship with others and share the love of Christ with them it will open our eyes to His presence. 4. When we experience a life-changing encounter with Jesus, it will send us back to the community with a renewed sense of purpose.

**Walking Through Disappointment in Life (vv. 13-24)**

**13 And behold, on that very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, which was sixty stadia from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. 17 And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they came to a stop, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You possibly the only one living near Jerusalem who does not know about the things that happened here in these days?” 19 And He said to them, “What sort of things?” And they said to Him, “Those about Jesus the Nazarene, who proved to be a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. 22 But also some women among us left us bewildered. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 24 And so some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.”**

As we begin looking at this passage today, we find two men walking along the road heading to the village of Emmaus. Their mental condition was that of shock and disappointment. When Jesus approaches them and begins to ask about their discussion the initial reaction to His question is what we would expect from someone who was responding to a very disappointing experience. The man asks Jesus is He is the only one living in the area who did not know the things that had taken place? Now, what events is this man referring to? He is talking about how Jesus, the man whom these men believed was the One who would come to redeem Israel, had just been handed over to the Romans and executed. What we need to talk about quickly is what this man meant when he said that they expected Jesus to be the One to redeem Israel. The reason they trusted in Jesus was because he was a prophet who had done amazing things and spoken with authority in the presence of both God and all the people. His deeds and words proved Him to be a mighty prophet and so these men, like many others, expected that He was the Messiah promised by God to save Israel from its occupation by the Romans. These men were therefore expecting a political Messiah who would gather an army and defeat the Romans in battle. They were disappointed because His death ended that hope for them.

The second part of their answer to Jesus showed that the events taking place after His death confused them even more. Not only had Jesus been executed and dead for three days, but they share that they heard the reports that His tomb was found empty that very morning. In addition to the empty tomb, they heard about the angels who said that Jesus was now alive. These reports had them confused because they knew who Jesus was, but they did not have their facts straight regarding His mission and why these things had happened to Him.

Our first application today from this passage is that we too know many facts about Jesus, yet many times fail to see His presence when we are facing disappointment in life. All of us in this room have had moments in life when it seems as if all hope is lost. We look in many different directions for answers and it seems as if there is nothing that can restore our lost hope. These men were in this situation. Their hopes had been crushed, and they could not see how any of these events were going to result in anything good. It is when we face times of despair that the gospel of Jesus Christ needs to guide us the most. One such occasion in the Old Testament was when David, the future king of Israel, was being pursued by King Saul. David was running for his life and did not have many places to turn for help. Anyone who tried to help him would be punished by the king. However, we read in the Psalms that David did not lose his faith in God, and it was that faith that sustained him. In Psalm 23 we read these familiar words **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**

**I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (v. 4).** It is in the dark days that the Lord walks alongside us to guide and sustain. These men are going to realize this very soon in their interaction with Christ. He is walking with them during their most disappointing time. He also does the same with us.

**Jesus Comes Near in the Dark Times (vv. 25-27)**

**25 And then He said to them, “You foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to come into His glory?” 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures.**

When Jesus approached these men, He first asked what was troubling them. Then after they explained this to Him, He took the time to tell to them why all those events had to happen. He begins His explanation with a rebuke because He wants them to know that even though the prophets and the Scriptures explained clearly everything that had to happen, they had closed their eyes to that truth and allowed doubt to dominate their hearts. He then explains how the prophets and Scriptures explained that He had to come to earth, live the perfect life that none of us could live, give His life to atone for the sins of man and then resurrect from the grave to defeat death and pave the way for all who trust in Him as Savior to eternal life with God in heaven.

In this encounter we come to our second application this morning. Even when we are walking through a time of confusion, disappointment or despair this is when Jesus meets us where we are. We can lean on His everlasting Word, our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as commune directly with God in prayer. Wherever we are in this life God is with us and walks with us along the way. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the writer encourages his readers with these words **“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as we are, yet without sin” (4:15).** Jesus has experienced all the situations we have in this life. He was happy, sad, rejected by His family and town, betrayed by one of His closest friends and faced persecution for speaking the truth. Our Lord knows what disappointment and despair feel like. When we seek Him in His Word, through His people and through prayer we are provided with the encouragement we need from One who understands our trials. Therefore, we can say with full confidence that we do not face these times of trial alone.

**His Word Burns in Our Hearts (vv. 28-32)**

**28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He gave the impression that He was going farther. 29 And so they strongly urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them. 30 And it came about, when He had reclined at the table with them, that He took the bread and blessed it, and He broke it and began giving it to them. 31 And then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, “Were our hearts not burning within us when He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”**

When the men invited Jesus to stay with them, He reclined at the table to have a meal with them. It was when He broke the bread and blessed it that they were able to recognize Him. After Jesus vanished from their site, they make the statement that their hearts were burning as He was sharing the Word with them. What was it about the breaking of the bread that made them realize it was Jesus? This leads us to our third application today. It is during fellowship, hospitality and sharing with others that often opens our eyes to the presence of Jesus.

This is the perfect time to look back on this week of VBS. Every night we shared the good news of Jesus Christ with each other so that we can now go out into the community and share that good news with others. In what ways can we serve others? On Wednesday we talked about Jesus sending out His 72 disciples to share the good news with the towns that He would be visiting. Their job was to prepare the way for Him. He sent them to teach, heal, and bless those who welcomed them into their homes. When we are willing to give up something for others and serve them that is when the presence of Christ enters the lives of others. Jesus said that being a servant is the best thing we can be in this life. In Matthew 25:40-45 Jesus shares the scene of the last judgment. Those who fed the hungry, gave water to the thirsty, invited in a stranger, clothed the naked, visited the ill or prisoners and did that for anyone in His name were welcomed into the kingdom of heaven. We are called to care for others who need our help as well as give them the truth of Jesus Christ which will do more than just take care of their immediate need, it will prepare them for eternity. Let us be faithful to that call!

**This Encounter Changed These Men! (vv. 33-35)**

**33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, 34 saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon!” 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road, and how He was recognized by them at the breaking of the bread.**

The reaction of these men after having this experience with Jesus shows us what God can do with anyone who chooses to trust in Him. We read that the men return to Jerusalem to meet with the eleven disciples and then shared with them their experience. When someone has an experience with Jesus the first thing they want to do is go tell others. That is the impact of the good news on the lives of those who once walked in darkness but have now seen the light. This is the reason why the gospel is so powerful. Not only is the Bible a book full of wisdom and rich history, but it also is the Word of God that has the power to change lives.

Our fourth and final application this morning is that when we have a true encounter with Jesus, it will send us back into the community with a renewed purpose. All the volunteers and children who shared the good news of Jesus this week are now able to take what has been learned and take it back to the community. This good news of salvation that has been purchased with the sacrifice of Christ is such good news that we should never want to keep it to ourselves. We see in Scripture that after someone is healed by Christ they immediately want to go and tell everyone what the Lord had done for them. May this be the same thing said of all of us. After experiencing the life-changing power of the gospel we need to share that with others because this is where the gospel changes lives. When we leave this building today let us take the good news of Christ which has the power to change lives. Share it with others because when we do so it will make a difference for eternity.

**Conclusion**

As we conclude our time together today, I would like to ask all of you to refer to the thank you sheet provided in the bulletin. At this time, we will pray to thank the Lord for the service that has taken place during VBS week. We pray that the seeds that have been planted in these lives will sprout and lead to other seeds being scattered in our community. May we never forget that in those times of life when we don’t see God He is still walking with us. God reveals Himself in Scripture, fellowship and worship. Just like these men on the road may we invite Jesus into our life and let His Word ignite our hearts so that we can tell others the good news of the gospel. Amen.