

April 14 – Leader’s Guide - Luke 24:13-35 “Easter: Afternoon”

Read Luke 24:13-35

In this passage Luke is revealing the transformation that may come from an encounter with the resurrected Jesus.

1. What are the initial signs of transformation we see in the passage?

They have just been told the possibility that Jesus is alive and yet they appear to be running away – is there fear?

They are headed home. How do we know? The pattern of taking, blessing, and breaking bread was done in a home. They are headed back to the life they once knew. A life they left for hope, hope that Jesus would change their future, their nation’s future. Now there is only despair...

When asked what they are talking about they stop, and a look of deep sadness crosses their face.

Upon recognition they rush back to Jerusalem paying no thought to the dangers of the road at night. Fear has been pushed back.

There is incredible joy. Their hearts burned within them. This is a strong expression of emotion often linked to love.

They are in possession of news that cannot wait until morning. They join the disciples in the joy of reimagined hope.

2. What were the disciple’s expectations of Jesus? What are your expectations of Jesus? (How would you finish the sentence – I hope that Jesus would...)

The disciples expected Jesus to redeem Israel. To redeem is to liberate from slavery. They had one liberation in mind. We want to be free of these Romans!

Your group will likely follow your lead on the second part of this question. The more open and honest you are, the more open and honest they will be. You could likely spend a good portion of your time here but aim to hear from everyone and then keep what has been said in mind for how you will navigate the last question.

3. In what ways can our expectations of Jesus make us blind (as were the disciples) to his presence and work in our lives?

When we expect Jesus to do one thing in our lives our attention is often there and no where else. Jesus could be doing a whole lot to shape and transform and speak and yet we wouldn't notice for our attention is there and only there.

When we expect Jesus to do one thing and he doesn't we are left with disappointment and anger closing our hearts off to his direction and voice.

4. Luke deliberately draws our attention to a decision the disciples made, that is to invite the stranger to remain with them. It is by virtue of this decision that we learn the importance of community in encountering the resurrected Jesus. What role has community played in your own walk of faith?

This is simply a personal reflection question to set you up well for the next. It would be important to hear from everyone but don't linger too long as this could take up the remainder of your time.

5. Why is community necessary? How could you deepen in community?

We can never know the fullness of who Jesus is on our own.

We have a tendency to keep our faith lives private or to only open it up to a few trusted confidants. As a result, we often get into an echo chamber where we are being reaffirmed in what we already believe.

We are often quite blind to what people can clearly see in us. We need those around us who can in love call us out on our blindness and point us to the reality of who Jesus is.

How can we deepen? The last question will likely have filled your group with all sorts of ideas of how this may come about. You are in a small group which is great – but how can you deepen relationships – the trust needed to get to the core issues of life and faith?

Read Genesis 3:1-13a

Luke phrases their recognition of Jesus very distinctively – their eyes were opened, and they recognized (vs. 31). This is the very same phrase that is used in Genesis 3:7 during the meal of forbidden fruit.

6. In the sermon Tim commented that in this moment they recognized that in Jesus, in his death and resurrection all the aftereffects of this meal of forbidden fruit were dealt with. What were the aftereffects of this meal, and how does Jesus deal with them?

There are far more than what I looked at in the sermon. Some of the big things I didn't cover were a) The reality of death, and b) our letting go of our calling to be stewards of the earth for the good of all. These might be two directions to go in your discussion beyond what you'll find below.

To get you going I'll include an unedited portion of the sermon to support your discussion:

We were created in the image of God – the image of community – relationship – trinity – father son spirit - and since the beginning of the time God the relationship has been worshipping – glorifying – loving – praising – delighting in one another – and we were made out of that relationship – and for that relationship – to enter into the dance of love that exists at the very center of the universe – in other words we were made to worship – but there in the garden Satan comes into the picture and begins to undermine trust – this God you worship doesn't love you – doesn't desire your best – he's holding out on you – that one thing he asked you not to do would actually make you like God himself – we believed it – it would be better if we were the God's of our own lives

It was the English writer and philosopher G.K. Chesterton who famously said – when people choose not to believe in God they do not thereafter believe in nothing they become capable of believing in anything – I think we could in that same vein affirm – when people choose not to worship God they do not thereafter worship nothing – they become capable of worshipping anything – to worship is to ascribe ultimate worth to something – to orient our lives around it – to turn our time – our energies – our faculties toward acquiring and holding onto it – are we not worshipping creatures – worshipping – ascribing ultimate worth to such things as money – success – autonomy – beauty - sex – ideology – pleasure – comfort - I don't think it would take too long to tie every human ill – whether personal or global – to being symptomatic of something we are worshipping – ascribing ultimate worth to.

The aftereffects of a meal – a meal of forbidden fruit – their eyes were opened and they recognized they were naked – when created it was said we were naked and felt no shame – we felt no shame because we worshipped – we were caught up in the dance of love that exists at the center of the universe – we knew we were loved – known – accepted - delighted in – and good – but in that forbidden meal eyes were opened and we recognized we

were naked – and shame took its place – a disease – a dis ease at the very core of our being – they desired to cover it up – sewed fig leaves together – we still feel that shame – that inadequacy – that dis ease at the core of our being – we cover it up – with beauty – with relationship – I’m ok because a person like that loves me – with money – with success – with reputation – with pleasure – all of those things to tell us we are ok – loved – accepted – but they never seem to last...

In the beginning our creator gave us a task - steward the earth – utilize your creative energies - the material creation for the good of all – throughout human history – we’ve used our creative energies – the material creation – to accumulate for ourselves – to serve the gods we’ve chosen to worship – to produce ever more elaborate fig leaves to cover over our deep sense of inadequacy.

A forbidden meal – their eyes were opened and they recognized they were naked – a meal with a stranger – their eyes were opened and they recognized the resurrected Jesus – the one who has undone all the aftereffects of that forbidden meal – for in his death and resurrection he has defeated every false god – opening the door once more to being drawn into the loving relationship that exists at the heart of the universe – that we might be secure in the knowledge that in Jesus we are loved – delighted in – accepted – chosen - forgiven –

Our Anglican liturgical pattern deliberately follows this text. Each Sunday is seen as a mini-easter, an opportunity to encounter Jesus. We gather, embrace community, we open the word hungry to behold Jesus, we gather around a table and break bread, and then are sent out as witnesses to the hope we have encountered in Jesus.

7. How does this understanding shape how you engage worship?

This is simply a personal reflection question, but I might encourage you to try and go through each of the elements in turn reflecting on what each invites from us, what posture we are meant to take as we approach each.

8. How does encountering the resurrected Jesus shape how we finished the sentence – I hope that Jesus would...?

Here is how I navigate this question in the sermon (comments after)

I hope that Jesus would – remember how you ended that sentence – there are likely some deep desires – deep pains in how you may finish that

sentence – as there are for me – and I don't want to in any way diminish that – but likely for you as it is for me – some of those things are in worship of other gods - likely some of those things are just fig leaves to cover over our sense of shame and inadequacy – and what are those things - really in light of a renewed cosmos – his promise to make everything new – as C.S. Lewis put so well in his sermon – the weight of glory – why are we messing around with sex and money and power when infinite joy is on offer

I suspect this will cover off many of the things that we name however great sensitivity is needed here. I wouldn't name for anyone that the thing they desire is in service of another God, or a fig leaf used to cover over shame. It may very well be but let them name that themselves – we don't want to add to the hurt here. We do however want to provide space by our own navigation of this question where another can be led to question the nature of the hope they have in Jesus. Do they desire Jesus or the things that they think Jesus can give them?