

“Awaken... to the Road”

Luke 24:13-33

3.24.19



Reflection Questions for Personal Use or in a Group Context... (please consider the teaching notes prior to consideration of the reflection questions)

“What’s your story? Who knows it?”

“What is the story into which you are living? How do you see it informing your present lifestyle?” (e.g. the way you develop relationships, decisions about the ways in which you utilize your finances, your care for creation, etc.)

“Can you identify a time when Jesus disappointed you; when you seemingly lost him in the chaos of your life? What were you expecting? What was shaping your expectations? Is there something you now know of God that is helping you to live with hope?”

Prior to Easter, make time to hear another’s story.

Listen for ways that they are evaluating/assessing their present circumstances based on their past. Listen for ways that their belief about the future is impacting their present choices.

Teaching Notes...

I’m intrigued by movies/shows which offer us the protagonist in “real time”, then, in an unexpected pivot, it takes you back to episodes in their past which help you to better understand their present response.

There have been instances where I have been DVR’ing a sporting event for future viewing. Someone texts me and congratulates me on the “big win” for my team and now I’m face with a quandary: “delete now” or “watch”?

I already knew the outcome, but I noticed that from that perspective, I watched the game differently. There were times in the game when the outcome was not apparent. It didn’t look as if victory was inevitable, but there was an ‘ease’ that had never accompanied my viewing experience.

It kind of feels that way in this story of the folks on the Emmaus Road. We're watching the drama unfold, but we're watching it differently. We're seeing it with eyes and perspective based on "knowledge".

Perhaps it would be good to watch a game without the stress of an unpredictable and uncertain outcome. Perhaps it would be beneficial (and less stressful) if we lived today as if God's good world had already arrived.

There is a significant portion of Luke's biography of Jesus that theologians have identified as the "Travel Narrative". It is book-ended with, "*leaving Galilee*" (9:51) – "*and arriving at Jerusalem*" (19:11). Between the two is the journey through Samaria.

"The Travel Narrative" creates some issues for folks concerning the timing and supposed discrepancy between accounts provided by the other biographers. Luke doesn't seem to pay strict attention to the order of events but is focused on the "themes" which they represent.

Jesus has the (12), the (70) and hundreds of FB friends with him in his entourage. Jesus believes that the events to transpire will alter the course of history, therefore, the call-response much be commensurate with the significance of the events. Everything is about to change. We must change.

Jesus knows that Jerusalem is the place of confrontation. It's where Kingdoms will collide. There are no empty professions in Jerusalem, only costly companionship or betrayal. But, Jesus doesn't seem panicked. He's never reduced to loud ultimatums or lectures.

In most of the segment you see Jesus speaking in rather "informal" ways: at the dinner table, with friends, walking along the path. There will be conversations, healings, stories, direct challenges and the disciples will consistently prove to be "slow". "Dense".

Jesus is preparing his followers to live out the intent of the Kingdom in the context of people with common challenges and, in some sense, common hopes, but with very different ways of understanding themselves, understanding God, understanding the way to the life-well-lived. In and amongst the Samaritans.

Christianity takes its shape from a particular story. Jesus' life and teachings only make sense as they are tethered to and interpreted through the lens of this Story.

(3) big themes that capture the essence of the Story and the heart of the 'mission-dei' (mission of God):

God's personal presence: the biblical narrative is centered in the Presence of God with and among his creation. His people. The bible frequently refers to heaven as "God's space" and the earth as "human space", but, in Jesus, we see that the two were never meant to be understood as disconnected. They intersect.

God's rightful rule: the "kingdom". It brings the (2) realms (heaven and earth) together. They interact in ways that validate both.

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"

— Abraham Kuyper

"The heavens belong to the LORD, but he has given the earth to all humanity." Psalm 115:16

We were meant to govern (rule; kingly, kingdom terms) on his behalf; with him. We forfeited, not our role as image-bearers, but our influence. We gave our rule to the Adversary. God's will, God's desires, God's dreams are now being contested. Jesus comes with "good news": the Kingdom has arrived. The King is here! Re-think and re-direct your life (Mark 1:15)

God's new world: peace. The bible envisions a day when the world gets restored to its Edenic status: God is present and ruling over his good world; people take their place as grateful stewards of all that rightfully belongs to God. Everything the way it's supposed to be!

Now, living with an understanding of the end of the story, we are able to live amidst all the twists and turns in the plot, without feeling that the resolution to the story is un-secure.

"Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore."

Isaiah 65:17

The "future" we envision ("telos": end; outcome) will greatly determine the life we live, "presently".

If you want to be an Olympic swimmer, you're going to have to spend some time in the pool!

Our hopes inspire some expression of thoughtful and determined action. The, *"Everything happens for a reason"*, approach, makes for a good Twitter post or rubber-bracelet slogan, but it doesn't make for 'good faith'. It often paralyzes us into complacency. And, when things go 'sideways', I can always point the accusing finger at God because, obviously, I'm not responsible. Our faith version of "plausible deniability".

There are some premises to this narrative:

The real Jesus--- formerly known as ‘dead’--- has been resurrected and desires to interact with us in ways that are lovingly-restorative and which result in “life”. This relationship with him, then, is a bond to be formed, not a theory or proposition to be argued.

Assuming Jesus’ *“live-liness”* means that I have different expectations of him. Our relationship is never thought of as static. I experience him. He experiences me.

He is able to communicate his thoughts and intentions in ‘real time’. He can sit with us in surgical waiting; accompany us into that difficult meeting. He can sit with you and your spouse at the kitchen table as you speculate about the viability of your marriage. He can show up beside you on the road. He can meet you at the place of your disappointment and disillusionment. He can hear your story. He can re-tell your story in his.

Believing in Jesus never eliminates the really unsettling circumstances of our lives. In fact, sometimes it simply complicates matters. It’s easy to lose Jesus in all the chaos.

Troubling life-events unsettle us and challenge us to re-evaluate our assumptions: about God, about life; about what we know and what we thought we knew; about what we believe and what is limiting our belief.

There is always the story we are “living in” and the story “into which we are living”.

The story we live in: our ‘reality’. It’s paying bills and meeting quotas and shuttling kids to dance lessons and soccer practice. In many ways, it’s ‘unremarkable’, but it is uniquely “our story”. Many of the experiences we would consider favorable. Some we would label detrimental. For some, it’s too early to tell.

The story into which we are living: the way(s) that we interpret the events, relationships, experiences of our reality. Often, we feel we have less control over the story in which we are living, but we do have the capacity (barring some level of mental or physical disability) to re-interpret those events in light of a better God-Story.

The story that currently orders your life derives its power from your willingness to believe it and your determination to pursue it as reality. It doesn’t need to be true, it just needs to be ‘believable’.

There are plenty of aspects in our lives for which possessing erroneous beliefs is fairly inconsequential. But, there are many instances in which distorted patterns of thinking/believing can be life-threatening. Devastating.

Our claims on Jesus as the “truth” can become ‘hypothetical’ if we are not consistently adopting the ways of Jesus--- which are true.

The **way** of Jesus is a story to be entered--- a person to be followed. "*I am the way*", Jesus says (John 14:6) He doesn't begin with the mere exchange of truth.

"Repentance" and "re-direction" are the pre-requisites for participation in the "God-rule" (Kingdom). It will not be easy.

The **ways** that Jesus is going about saving the world are always personal and geographical. It always "*takes on flesh*" (John 1): real families, real people with names and faces, real jobs and struggles, seeking a viable resolution.

- Christian spirituality is our increasing experience of Jesus (through the person of the Holy Spirit), which helps to ensure that our "ways" don't become detached from the "way" of Jesus.