

“Awaken”: The Resurrection
4.21.19
Luke 24:13-32



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

Get online and find the painting, **Supper at Emmaus** (Caravaggio). Dialogue about what you notice about the characters in the image.

“Do you (or your family) have any Easter weekend traditions?” If so, share them with the group.

“If someone were to inquire of you, ‘Why did Jesus die?’, what would be some of the storied-factors you would include?”

“How do you see this pattern embedded into reality: suffering--surrender--death--resurrection life?”

“From what tomb--- from what place of death--- are you walking? Where is the lifeless place in you (circumstance/relationship) that invites resurrection hope?”

Teaching Notes...

Easter is not simply the “feel-good story of the year”, or the anticipation of a “utopian afterlife”. It is God’s decisive “no” to sin and chaos and dysfunctionality and corruption and death--- all that stands in the way of shalom, and a decisive “yes” to forgiveness and order and meaning and beauty and life--- all that God dreams for us.

I suppose that if you are here and you are unfamiliar with the resurrection story, I’ll **say too much**. The implications of the “Jesus Event” are worked out in a lifetime. For you, there is an implicit invitation to journey with us.

If you are here and you’ve heard it all before, **I won’t say enough**. I won’t be able to cover all the ‘atonement theories’ and satisfy your need for apologetics.

I suppose, either way, you should want this story to be true. Real life is making it increasingly difficult for fantasy and medications to keep up!

The biographers of Jesus had (2) things upon which they could all agree: **first**, he was **dead**. Not metaphorically dead, not 'figure of speech' kind of dead ("You're so dead to me, Jesus"): clinically, biologically dead. (3)-days dead (when the spirit left the body, dead). Stinking dead. **Second**, *none of them saw it coming!*

"How did the early followers of Jesus go from the abject failure and abandonment to movement-makers? People who were lit on fire, fed to large animals, tortured, imprisoned, martyred?"

The Jews didn't believe in resurrection, at least not in the way that Jesus manifested it. It would be for a large number of people at the end of time, not for one person in the middle of history (John 11).

The Greco-Roman world didn't believe in resurrection because the "road to the underworld" involved freedom FROM our bodies. Coming back from the dead was the worst thing that could happen to you.

Something inexplicable would be necessary to transform them from fear to courageous followers. Not an apparition, but a visible, touchable Jesus. It is, for me, one of the strongest evidences of the reality of the resurrection.

Resurrection is what makes crucifixion memorable.

"Is Jesus dead or alive?" Perhaps the real question today.

If Jesus died, but was not resurrected, he is simply another delusional peasant-boy from the Galilee who got caught up in all the "Passover hype". If he's dead, we could quote him. We could be inspired by his life. We could offer a "*Crucifixion Fun-Run*", in his honor. But, we could never hope to "relate" to him.

If Jesus is still dead, none of this matters. Paul says that we are "*pitiful*" (1 Corinthians 15) for giving ourselves to such a delusion.

But, if Jesus is alive, you'd have to admit--- that's a game-changer! I have to re-think everything: God, the world, my world, my marriage, my friends, my enemies, my vocation, my finances, my suffering, my sickness, my frailty... death.

Jesus lived, loved, taught, healed; was betrayed, tortured, executed "Roman-style", and was resurrected. We begin with the events of the story before we attempt to formulate an explanation or theory.

"Why did Jesus die?", is almost too simplistic.

~ You could say that the claims of his kingship were a threat to the Roman empire and he needed to be eliminated, *and you would be right.*

~ You could say that Jesus was executed under the orders of a Roman authority, and in “collusion with” some of the Jewish, religious leaders (claiming blasphemy), *and you would be right.*

~ You could say that in the crucifixion, we see the lengths to which humanity is willing to go in order to preserve their autonomy and self-directed lives, *and you would be right.*

~ You could say that no one really “*took his life from him but that he willingly laid it down for others*” (John 10), and *you would be right.*

The cast of characters: Cleopas, a friend and an annoying, road mate who got in their personal space.

It’s late afternoon. They are debriefing the day’s events and are joined by Jesus. Luke plainly tells us it’s Jesus, but they don’t recognize him.

He doesn’t try to offer any explanations; he just journeys with them, asking questions, but most listening.

“We had hoped that he was the one who would redeem Israel...”

Jesus is activating everyone’s hopes that he is the long-awaited rescuer. Israel’s King. The “Messiah”. But, crucifixion was the tragic end of the story, for them.

“Beginning with Moses and the prophets...”

We cannot assume that Jesus attempted to “**proof-text**” his death and resurrection. He is revealing to them how the Jesus Event only makes sense as it is told as the climax to the story being told by Moses and the Prophets.

The “Jesus Event” affirms that God doesn’t view creation as a ‘failed-experiment’ to be discarded, but a ruined piece of craftsmanship (Ephesians 2) to be restored.

In Jesus, God demonstrates the lengths to which he will go in order to expose (name) the evil, allow it to do its worst, absorb its implications (distance and death), and demonstrate the power of **forgiveness** (indiscriminate, self-sacrificing love) to restore order.

“forgiveness”: We could all agree that something’s not quite with our world... not quite right with us. The biblical narrative boldly names it as “**sin**”: the universal failure to live into God’s dream for the world. It’s who we are in light of who we were created to be.

In order to understand its gravity, sin must be understood not simply as a legislative term, but as a relational one. People who find themselves distanced and disconnected from God do some pretty foolish and self-destructive things.

We understand that when there is a relational breach, someone suffers. You can either resort to victimization--- stewing in the hurt caused by another (and creating your own prison), create victims of others who have wronged you, or you can forgive. It’s the “death” that leads to “resurrection”. Identifying the issue is the only means of restoration.

No matter how many 'sub-plots', they all converge on one main theme:

"...that God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:14-21)

"Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer at sin's every beck and call! If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. Think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did."

Romans 6:6-11

This is God, taking back all that rightfully belongs to him. This is God dying **"with"** us; God dying **"for"** us; God dying **"instead of"** us.

In order for the "Jesus Event" to be appealing, it must not simply be a "punitive" act, but a "restorative" one.

I am not questioning the reconciling work of God. **"Guilty"**. I get it. But, it was not until I *"gazed"* at the Christ of the cross (John 19:37) that I realized that there was something other than a judicial transaction taking place. It was a demonstration of transformative love.

I can say that I never really loved Jesus until I realized that he died for me, not because he had to, but because love left him no choice!

Resurrection life is something available only after you have considered yourself dead to everything else.

"What things?"

How would you answer Jesus? "You know what things! Where have you been?!"

"Why don't you recognize Jesus?"

Distracted? So focused on the apparent ease of our lives that it seems unnecessary.

Stuck in the narrative of a predictable past? This is the way it will always be.

Suffering? It's the last place we expect to experience Jesus. Experience hope. We don't really recognize Jesus until he shares with us his own suffering. Jesus explains why Messiah would have to suffer. Why suffering always precedes life and hope.

"When did hope die, for you?"

It's the hope that makes the pain so acute.

“I had hoped she was the one...”, “I had hoped that this job would be...”, “I had hoped the treatment would prove effective, but”

“Stay with us, Jesus.”

At first, he feels like a stranger, but when we are finally able to cease from our own evaluations and ruminations, Jesus is able to tell his story... tell our story. Not just a ‘spin’ on a tired, old narrative, but actually a new vision which is beyond what you currently assume to be possible.

If “risky trust” or “arrogant denial” are the postures available, I chose to play the fool (1 Corinthians 1)

If “despair” and “hope” are my only options, I choose hope.