

LUKE 24 SEEING JESUS

Here is a picture.

Can you tell what it is? With what you have before you, can you see it for what it is?

I will satisfy your curiosity about that later. But this sermon is not ultimately about that. This sermon is about Jesus Christ.

Do you see who he is? Do you recognize him for who he is?

Do you even care? I invite you, for a few minutes, to care. I invite you to this, because I believe that when you see Jesus Christ for who he is, your today and your forever, will never be the same.

In the last chapter of Luke's gospel, we read about some people who are struggling to see Jesus for who he is.

The women go to Jesus' tomb, and they are told he has risen from the dead. They tell Jesus' disciples, but the disciples don't believe them. Peter goes to the tomb, sees only the strips of linen from Jesus' body, then walks away from the tomb, wondering what has happened.

Then Luke describes two of Jesus' followers, later that day, walking along the road to a town called Emmaus, trying to figure out what has happened.

We might translate their words as, "What do we make of this guy? What is the deal with him?"

Then Jesus walks up to them, and they still do not see Jesus! They see a person, but they do not recognize Jesus for who he is.

WHY NOT?

Somehow, Jesus is keeping them from seeing him for who he is, but that's not all. Something seems to be in their minds and hearts, that prevents them from seeing him.

Some of this is CONFUSION OF MIND.

They are processing. They are trying to take the information before them, and sort through it. But they are confused.

He was a prophet. He spoke powerful words that only God can speak, and he did powerful deeds that only God can do. They have seen that.

But then he was crucified. He was called a criminal by the Jews, then sentenced as a traitor by the Romans, and he died by crucifixion.

They thought he was going to redeem Israel. They hoped he was going to lead the armies of Israel, to throw off the burden of Roman oppression.

But now he has been killed, and now nobody can seem to find his body.

Who was this guy? Who is this guy? It is confusing. It was confusing for them, and it is confusing for us.

Just out of curiosity, I recently decided to google "Jesus Christ." One day, I did it, and there were 29-million, 800-thousand entries about him.

Four days later, I did it again, and there were 30-million, 200-thousand entries about him.

The first one was about a chocolate Jesus. We don't need to go there, but think of some of the confusing claims about Jesus.

* Some say he did not exist. There never was a Jesus.

* Some say he was a political revolutionary. He wanted to redeem Israel with his holy armies, and he is an example for revolutionaries of our day.

* Some say he was sort of an ancient-day Ghandi, wowing people with his serene demeanor and wise sayings.

* Some say he was a good teacher. He was a moral man.

* Some say he was a husband and a father. You know: the DaVinci Code.

* Some say he was a way to God, for his followers. For other people, there are other ways to God, but Jesus did put people in touch with God.

* He was a Democrat. He was a Republican. He was a Communist. He was a Capitalist. He stayed away from meat. He stayed away from alcohol.

And on and on and on...30 million times.

No wonder we are confused. The people who lived and walked with Jesus were confused. Two-thousand years and 30-million Google entries later, it is hard to see Jesus for who he is.

Why not? Confusion of mind.

Why not? SLOWNESS OF HEART.

In other words, even if their minds could sort through the confusion, their hearts were not ready to see Jesus for who he is.

They had seen him. They had heard his teachings. They had witnessed his miracles. Yet

somehow, they did not understand what he had come to do. As I said, they thought he was going to gather some soldiers and beat up on the Romans for the glory of Israel.

What about our hearts? Even in a confusing culture, we know a lot about Jesus. Maybe we don't know Bible stories as our parents or grandparents did, but the average person has heard of Jesus, and probably has heard something about Jesus, and possibly has heard the gospel message about Jesus.

But so what? Has information led to transformation? We have 30-million "sources" about Jesus, but only one which goes back to the days he walked on this earth. Yet we either don't believe it, or we don't care about it.

We go along and we get along, and we pursue our lives and our pleasures, and our hearts are slow to see Jesus for who he is.

Why not? Confusion of mind and slowness of heart.

But what should we be seeing? SEE WHAT?

On the road to Emmaeus, Jesus tells these disciples. He says, "Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?"

See what? HIS SUFFERING.

The Christ had to suffer. Why?

They had heard this! They had seen him say this! "The Son of Man came, to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus had to suffer, because God the Father sent him to suffer, so that his people would be freed from their sins. A ransom purchases freedom. The Savior Jesus purchases freedom for sinners.

A pastor named Mark Buchanan tells of a town in Canada, where there is a riverside park filled with sculptures.

That's not unusual, but this is unusual: the material for the sculptures, has come from the trash collected from the bottom of the river. The city dredges up the stuff, then leaves it for the local sculptors, who then come with tools in hand, and make beautiful sculptures.

Why did Jesus have to suffer? He had to free us of the junk in our hearts and lives, and make something beautiful out of us.

When he suffered and died, he was receiving God's holy hatred for our junk. God was carting it away and cleaning it up, so that through Jesus, we would become beautifully sculpted people for God.

If you are to see Jesus for who he is, you must first see yourself, for who you are. You have to see the junk, and admit its "junkiness", and trust that Jesus is the only One who can free you from that junk, by taking that junk away, through his suffering.

Jesus did not come to beat up the Romans. He came to free us from our junk. He has come to suffer, for us.

See what? His suffering.

See what? HIS GLORY.

Jesus said that he had to suffer, then enter his glory.

How does that happen? It happens, in his rising from the dead. When he did this, he showed for all who will see, that he is more than just another man who said and did good things. He was, and he is, the Son of God, who alone is able to break the chains of death. Because he lives, we who hope in him, can hope for new life, after death.

After he rose from the dead, he returned to heaven, where he now sits again, in glory with his Father, until the day he comes again, to bring history as we know it, to an end.

Do you believe that? It is hard to believe. You don't see people rising from the dead every day.

This is the testimony, not of 30-million entries into Google, but of people who saw Jesus with their own eyes, in his life, his death, and his new life.

Suffering and glory. Think back to this story. When are the eyes of these disciples opened?

Jesus eats with them, and he takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and gives it to them. "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him..."

Why? What is so important about the bread?

I think it is a reminder of something they have seen.

* Maybe Jesus' feeding of thousands of people, with only a little bit of food. In remembering this, they see Jesus' glory.

* Maybe Jesus' last supper with his disciples, before going to his trial and his death. In that supper, he described the bread as his body, which was to be broken for them. In remembering this, they see Jesus' suffering.

Suffering and glory. In seeing this, our eyes are opened to Jesus Christ.

So WHAT THEN? I am asking you to see Jesus for who he is. If you do, what happens in your heart and life, and in my heart and life?

WE SAY, "IT IS TRUE!"

These two people see Jesus for who he is, and they get up and go back to Jerusalem, and they gather the disciples and announce, "It is true! Jesus has risen and has appeared to Simon."

It is true! He is the Savior, and he is the Lord! He is the One who brings everyone to God, who sees him for who he is!

But now it gets tough. Now I walk where so many, even some who say they are Christians, do not want me to walk.

He is the Savior, and he is the Lord? How about, "He is a Savior, and he is a Lord?" After all, is it not rather exclusive to say, Jesus is the only path to God?

Yes, it is exclusive. Jesus excludes every other person who may claim to get people to God.

He said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

He said, "I am the resurrection and the life."

He said, "I am the Good Shepherd...I lay down my life for the sheep..."

"I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."

Only Jesus has suffered for the sins of sinners. Only Jesus has risen from the dead, and returned to glory. When we say, "It is true!", we are saying that Jesus is true, and all others are false.

Either he is the only Savior and Lord, or he is no Savior and Lord. Either it is true, and he is true, or it is false, and he is false.

See his suffering. See his glory. See it and say, "It is true!"

Then WE SAY, "THIS IS LIFE!"

Earlier I said, "When you see Jesus Christ for who he is, your today and your forever, will never be the same."

This is how it was for these disciples. Later in Luke, they worship Jesus. Then in Luke's next book, the book of Acts, they see Jesus return to heaven. Then these confused, slow people begin to change the world, as they tell what Jesus has done, and who he is.

Hear me well, and I say this to each one of us - all who say they have seen Jesus for who he is, and all who have not seen Jesus for who he is: he will rock your world. As some of you have heard me say, Jesus has come to disturb us. Jesus has come to take junky people, and make them people who speak and live his beauty, every day of their lives, and forever.

In 1803, the British navy seized a Prussian ship, and carried off all sorts of stuff. Somehow some of the stuff ended up in a museum in London.

Some of that stuff was seeds from southern Africa. For two hundred years, those seeds sat.

Then someone discovered them, and decided to see if the seeds would grow. It was not easy, but by creating conditions like those in Africa, the plant people got some of the plants to grow. They live, and they thrive.

We say, "This is life!" No matter how long you have been a "dead man walking", there is life in Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ takes you from the death of bitter and painful relationships, and grows a new life of forgiveness, and grace, and peace.

Jesus Christ takes you from a lifeless pursuit of money or comfort or sex or power or chemicals or self, and grows a new life of living for him.

Jesus Christ takes you from soul-killing suffering, and grows a new life of living by faith in him, even through suffering.

Jesus Christ takes you from suffocating questions with no answers, and grows a new life with real answers to real questions.

Jesus Christ takes you from a deadly guilt about the past, and grows a new life with a new heart, and new habits.

Jesus Christ takes you from a morbid life of loneliness, and grows a new life of real relationship with himself, and his people.

Jesus Christ takes you from a deadly world of daily confusion, and grows a new life of daily wisdom.

Jesus Christ takes you from a dead-brained cynicism about everything, and grows a new life of seeing how God can bring good, in a world of evil.

Jesus Christ takes you from a consuming fear of death, and grows a new life of confidence, that death will not be the end, but the beginning.

Jesus Christ takes you from a deadly despair about the events of our world, and grows a new mind of knowing that he is the Lord of history.

Jesus Christ takes you from a dead heart, that knows no love, and grows a new heart, that knows and delights in the love of God.

It is true, and this is life! Because he has suffered for the sins that keep us from life with God, and because he has risen from the dead and is ruling again with his Father, Jesus Christ truly brings life!

Does this mean life with Jesus is easy? No.

This means life with Jesus is real. It is not the fake life we pursue and will eventually lose. It is the real life that he gives us, and we never lose.

This is the object again - although now you can see it for what it is.

This is the picture of Jesus Christ. This is who he is.

Will you see him for who he is? Will you recognize him for who he is?

Are you confused? Read the words of the ones who walked with him.

Are you slow of heart? Pray for God to make your heart burn, as he did with these two disciples.

See his suffering, for your sins.

See his glory, in rising from the dead.

Worship him. Give your heart, your life, and your forever to him.

See him as he is, and confess him as Savior and Lord.