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Walking with the Risen Christ
Luke 24:13-35; Colossians 1:3-14
April 5, 2015, Jeff Germo
Easter Sunday

Today we celebrate the main event of the Christian calendar, that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead. He is Risen! There is no event more important than the resurrection of Jesus. If the resurrection didn't happen, everything we do as a church is a colossal waste of time.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead there is really no point at all in any of us being here right now. We would be better off staying in bed and getting some much needed sleep. If the resurrection is a myth it means I am perpetuating a lie, and along with the millions of other pastors around the world I am either the biggest fool or a heinous fraud of mammoth proportions.

If the resurrection didn't happen, there really is no meaning to life. What is life about if Jesus did not defeat sin and death? If Jesus did not rise from the dead, friends, there is no hope for any of us after death. We are all doomed. But, the good news, the essence of the Gospel, is that he did. And so it is with great confidence that I stand here this morning believing that my life as your pastor is not a waste of time, and that all our efforts to extend the kingdom of God in Campbell River and beyond are well worth it. That's good news to me because I don't want to waste my life on a lie. He is risen!

One of the things that gives credence to the resurrection account is the fact that most of the apostles were martyred for their belief in it.

Tradition holds that **Peter** was crucified in about 67 or 68 AD. Origen, a scholar and theologian from the second century, wrote that Peter felt himself far too unworthy to be put to death in the same way as Christ, so when he was sentenced to be crucified, he asked if he could do it upside down instead. That sounds like Peter doesn't it.

Acts 12:1-2 tells us that **James, the son of Zebedee**, was put to death by Herod Agrippa I shortly before the day of the Passover, in the year 44 or about 10 or 11 years after the death of Christ.

Matthew was said to be pinned to the ground with a sword.

The other James was apparently thrown off the Temple, but when he survived the fall was beaten to death with a club. Others were crucified.

John was the only of the apostles to die an old man of natural causes when he was exiled on the Isle of Patmos. The obvious conclusion here is that these men, who spent every day with Jesus for three solid years, believed in the resurrection. There are those who say that the disciples dreamed up an elaborate story to perpetuate the myth of the resurrection. If that's true, why would all of them take that lie to the grave with them? Nobody dies for a lie. They all held on to the belief in the resurrection right to the very end, even though, as we will see, most of them struggled with doubt at times, which actually adds to the veracity of the Gospel accounts rather than weaken them. Admitting doubt is important. Doubting is not something we should strive for, but if we have doubts its important to admit them.

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If we don't allow people to doubt, we will produce either, hypocrites, or atheists. Neither is a good outcome.

We are going to take a look at an account in the Gospels that is unique to Luke. The other three Gospels don't share this event. It's a report of a couple disciples of Jesus who had some serious doubts about the resurrection. They had certain expectations of Jesus. He didn't live up to them, so they doubted, until they allowed Jesus to help them with their doubt.

Please turn in your Bibles to Luke 24:13-35.

I like the story of the Road to Emmaus for a lot of reasons. For one, we see Jesus being very real with two people who are seriously struggling with doubt. He comes alongside them and helps strengthen their faith. He simply has

a conversation with them. Another reason I like it is because the two characters in the story are unknown in the Gospels, except for this account. One of them is named, and the other is not. They are essentially “nobodies”. But Jesus sees them struggling and chooses to walk with them, even though they are not one of the prominent characters in the Gospels. To Jesus, though, they are important, and their struggle is important to him so he helps them through it.

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Luke 24:13–35 (NLT)

13 That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem.

That same day. That is, the day that Jesus was raised from the dead, the day he appeared to some of Jesus’ women followers. If you look at the preceding verses, you will see the first people to find out that Jesus rose from the dead were women. And the Gospel of John actually says Jesus showed up to Mary of Magdalene. After their encounter, in Luke, they rushed to tell the others. And of course, the men didn’t believe them. They thought that the women were speaking nonsense. Women, in those days, were not thought to be very reliable witnesses. They actually couldn’t be witnesses in a court of law.

This is another reason why we can have confidence that the Gospel accounts are reliable. If the writers had fabricated the stories, or tried to embellish them they wouldn’t written women as witnesses into the Gospel accounts. Why would they fabricate a story using unreliable witnesses? The Gospel writers were just telling it like it was. The women were the first to encounter the risen Christ, so that’s how they told it.

So, the same day Jesus showed up to these women, Luke says there were two of Jesus’ disciples walking along the road to Emmaus. Now, I think we usually assume that these were two men, but we don’t know that. The text doesn’t say. They may have been husband and wife. Some say they were father and son. We don’t know. All we know about them is that they were followers of Jesus, and they were on their way to Emmaus, perhaps to their home. We can’t pinpoint Emmaus with one hundred percent certainty. We only know that it was about seven miles from Jerusalem.

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14 As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened.

Now, likely, they had been there with the crowds when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. Perhaps they waved palm branches in the air and laid their cloaks on the ground for his donkey to ride over. They may have witnessed him clear the temple, and curse the fig tree, and teach about various kingdom topics. They could have been with him one of the three or four times he foretold how he would be arrested, tried, beaten, crucified and then on the third day rise from the dead. And, they very likely witnessed his crucifixion. And, so here they are, now three days after he was killed talking about all these things, weighing them over in their minds, wondering what their future would hold.

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15 As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them.

I love this part. Here are two people who are feeling discouraged, disappointed, and lost. All their hopes of freedom and *shalom* that the promised Messiah would have brought have been dashed. They have no idea what to do. They are at the end of their rope and Jesus shows up and walks with them. The risen Christ shows up in the middle of their confusion. Isn’t that great? That’s exactly what he does with us.

How many of you have experienced that before? I certainly have, too many times to count. Without fail, if I am discouraged and in need of some hope, I call out to Jesus and he shows up and encourages me. How does he do it? Sometimes it’s through his people. Sometimes it’s through Scripture. Sometimes it’s through his Spirit, but without fail, when I call out to him in those times of despair he shows up and let’s me know that I’m not alone. That’s one of the reasons that I have kept a journal for many years, and I periodically read back every few months to remind myself how Jesus has shown up in my life exactly when I need him.

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16 But God kept them from recognizing him.

This may, or may not be a good translation of the verse. Verse 16, in the Greek, literally says, ***“They were kept from recognizing him.”*** It could be that God intervened and kept them from recognizing Jesus, or it could be that they were so caught up in their grief that their eyes were blinded to the fact that he was right there with them. Maybe they were so focused on their problems that they couldn’t see Jesus.

Does that ever happen to you? I have to admit that it happens to me far too often. Much less than it used to, but still way more than it should. There are times when I encounter an obstacle in my life and instead of focusing on Jesus, I keep my eyes on the problem. And then, you know what happens to the problem? It gets magnified. A molehill becomes a mountain. The milk you spilled becomes a disaster of epic proportions. The very last thing that Jesus said to his disciples before he ascended to heaven, according to the evangelist Matthew was,

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Matthew 28:20 (NLT)

“And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

He doesn’t just show up when we need him. That’s sort of how it sounds when I say that Jesus shows up and encourages me when I call out to him. The truth is that my eyes are opened to the fact that he is already there. Sometimes I just need a wake up call. He is always with us.

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Hebrews 13:5–6 (NLT)

⁵ Don’t love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.” ⁶ So we can say with confidence, “The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?”

What sort of things do we worry about the most? I think for most of us its money and people. The writer of Hebrews says, ***“Don’t let money control you. And don’t fear people.”*** The things we let control us, and the things we fear are the things we worship. We have nothing to fear because God will never fail us, and he will never abandon us. That is a promise. But, when we focus on our problems they become big and overpowering, and God, in our eyes becomes small. It’s like looking at God through the wrong end of binoculars. He looks small and far away.

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So, Jesus shows up and walks with these two people who in some way are kept from recognizing Jesus.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?” They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. ¹⁸ Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.”

Jesus engages these two people in a real conversation. Something was weighing heavily on their hearts. He knows what it is, of course, but he wants them to name it. So he asks them some questions. And they are incredulous that there could be someone who hasn’t heard about the events of the last few days. The whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. How could he possibly not know? I think Jesus was having a bit of fun. He hasn’t lost his sense of humour.

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¹⁹ “What things?” Jesus asked.

“The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people.

Their description of Jesus is true, but it doesn’t go far enough. They had witnessed his miracles, and sat under his powerful teaching, but they only called him a miracle working prophet and teacher, which is an inadequate designation. They had obviously lost hope in him as Messiah. It’s the third day. He must have only been a prophet. If he had been the Messiah he would be alive.

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²⁰ But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. ²¹ We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

²¹ ***We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel.*** We had hoped... What was their hope? Their hope was just like most other Jews of that time, that he would be the one who would raise up an army and deliver Israel from the hands of Rome. We won't dwell a lot on this this morning because we looked at that false hope last week. But, just a note; these were disciples of Jesus. I don't think their despondency was unique to them. I would imagine all the disciples, even the eleven were feeling similarly. They had hopes. And those hopes had been dashed. The problem was that their hopes were based on a wrong idea of what the Messiah would be like.

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Proverbs 13:12 (NLT)

¹² ***Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a dream fulfilled is a tree of life.***

Everybody needs hope. Hope keeps us alive. Without hope we give up. Our city is full of people who have lost hope. They have lost faith in themselves. They have lost faith in the government. They have lost faith in humanity. They have lost faith in religion, and they have lost faith in God. They have given up. Why even try? What's the use? There is no hope. But, hope is crucial to survival. It is the thing that keeps us hanging on and trying just one more time. It's the thing that keeps us waiting for God to deliver us.

I can't remember if I told you the story about when Ruth and I worked at a fly-in fishing camp in Northern Manitoba. This was when we were first married. It was 1987. My brother was working up there as well. And he was out in a boat in the middle of a lake by himself. He stood up in the boat and he knocked the tiller with his leg as he stood. And he was jerked out of the boat.

He was wearing rubber boots, which immediately filled up with water. And he was also heavy clothes, because it was early spring and icy cold, and they were soaked with water, of course. The boat was circling him and each time it passed he tried to grab it. His colleague was on shore watching helplessly. Each time it would pass he would lunge for it and knock it off its path and push it further away. He was getting exhausted. He tried one more time, and this time he was successful. He grabbed onto the boat and let it pull him along for the longest time and then struggled to get himself into the boat with his heavy waterlogged clothing. And then he sat in the boat and wept. He said later that he thought he was going to die and had decided in his mind that he would try one more time and then he was going to give up hope and drown.

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You know what? Sometimes, maybe all the time, what we need to do is **give up our struggle so that Jesus can take over, because our hope is most naturally based on human thinking.** We want to be our own saviour. When we give up and place our hope in Christ, he can move in and save us.

Hope is essential. If we lose hope we die inside. These disciples had given up. Their hope was in a Messiah who would deliver them from the Romans. It was a false sense of hope. That was not Jesus' role as Messiah.

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And besides, they said, ***"This all happened three days ago."*** They, along with the other disciples, knew that Jesus had said he would rise after the third day. So, where is he? He promised. It's the third day. He obviously was not the person he said he was.

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²² ***"Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. ²³ They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! ²⁴ Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said."***

Some women said his body was missing and that angel told them that he was alive. But, they were just hysterical women. They can't be trusted. Besides some of the men went to look and his body wasn't there... Duh! Of course his body wasn't there. He rose from the dead. He has risen!

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²⁵ ***Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. ²⁶ Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" ²⁷ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.***

So, Jesus walked with them in their doubt and showed them through the Scriptures that all the very confusing events of the preceding days had to happen. They were difficult things, but God had a plan, and nothing caught him off guard. Wouldn't you have loved to have been there to hear Jesus walk them through the Scriptures and show them why all these terrible things had to happen?

You know what? Jesus does the same thing with us. That's why it's so important to stay in God's Word. That's how Jesus speaks to us. This is why we have our Growth Groups. The Growth Groups are not just a place you can get together and get your social needs met. They are not just a place where you care for each other. They are not just a place you use to reach out to your neighbours who need to meet Jesus. Although, they are all of those things and more. The Growth Groups are a place where you can meet Jesus in his Word and be changed by it so that all of those other things are done with the right heart motive and in the right way.

It's also important for each of us to spend quiet time alone with Jesus in his Word. If you don't have a regular quiet time with Jesus in his Word, I would strongly suggest that you start. That is the main way he speaks to us. Are you struggling with something? Spend time in his Word. Ask him to speak to you through it. Ask him for wisdom. Ask him for direction. Ask him to give you peace in your heart as you walk with him.

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²⁸ By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, ²⁹ but they begged him, "Stay the night with us, since it is getting late." So he went home with them. ³⁰ As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

Sometimes, friends, we miss the presence of Jesus in our lives. We are so focused on temporal things. We focus on our problems. We focus on goals, on our agenda, on our accomplishments and trophies so much that we miss the fact that he is with us. We need to practice being aware of his presence minute-by-minute, day-by-day. We need to practice listening to his voice. Jesus said in John 10:27 that his sheep know his voice.

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³² They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" ³³ And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, ³⁴ who said, "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter." ³⁵ Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.

Look what happened when Jesus opened their eyes and they allowed him to minister to them. They couldn't keep quiet. They had to tell the others. They experienced the reality of walking with the risen Christ and had to spread it around. That is what will happen when we let him open our eyes.

He has risen! And because he has risen, if we have received his forgiveness based on his death on the cross, which paid the penalty for our sin, we have his Spirit living in us. And we too can walk with Jesus in a very real way.

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Philippians 3:10 (NLT)

¹⁰ I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. That should be the heart cry of every Christ-follower, not just that we would have experienced his salvation sometime in our past, but that we would experience his resurrection power every minute of every day of our lives. Sometimes as Christians we are blind to what is ours in Christ.

There's a story I heard recently about 67 year old man named Tomas Martinez. He was living on the streets in Bolivia – dirt poor. He had become paranoid and fearful of the authorities and so whenever he saw the police he avoided them. I'm not sure how long ago this happened, but a couple years ago the police tried to catch him. The

media was after him. And other organizations all tried to track him down. And each time he saw them coming he would run and evade capture. They all finally gave up and gave the \$6 million inheritance to his sister.¹

Sometimes we just don't know what we have in Christ. And he is saying to us, "Look, my son, my daughter, stop running. Just rest in me. I want you to experience my resurrection power in your life. I want you give me your fear. Stop looking at your problems and turn your eyes upon Jesus."

I think the greatest evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is the changed lives of the disciples who walked with him two thousand years ago. They were changed from being fearful, egocentric men to courageous, loving men who laid down their lives for Jesus. And the greatest evidence for the resurrection today is the same change in our lives. There is hope for all of us because Jesus rose from the dead. He is risen!

Communion

We are going to celebrate communion right now. In preparation for that I want to read Colossians 1:3-14 to you. Listen to it. Let God's Word wash over you. Pay close attention to any parts of it that jump out and ask the Spirit to speak to your heart and your mind.

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Colossians 1:3–14 (NLT)

³ We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God's people, ⁵ which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

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⁶ This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.

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⁷ You learned about the Good News from Epaphras, our beloved co-worker. He is Christ's faithful servant, and he is helping us on your behalf. ⁸ He has told us about the love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you. ⁹ So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.

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¹⁰ Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. ¹¹ We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need.

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May you be filled with joy, ¹² always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

That is an amazing passage. There is so much life changing truth wrapped up in there, and it's all summed up in the last two verses.

¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

That is what Easter is all about. The resurrection of Jesus brings us from darkness to light. We talked about this a couple weeks ago in the sermon on goodness. All the way through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation we see the importance of walking in the light of God. Let's take a moment of silence to reflect on these truths before we celebrate together.

¹ <http://www.therichest.org/world/amazing-inheritance-stories/>



***Walking with the Risen Christ
From Darkness to Light***
Luke 24:13-35; Colossians 1:3-14
Week of April 5th, 2015

Objective of this study: To understand in heart and mind, the impact of the resurrection.

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read Colossians 1:3-14 meditatively to the group. Then pause for about a minute and let it sink in.
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Welcome (5 – 10 minutes)

Describe a time when a friend walked with you in your struggles and doubts.

Word (20 - 30 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. It's important to be honest about our doubts. If we give others the impression that we are not allowed to doubt, the result will be that we produce either hypocrites, or atheists. Note as we look at this passage how Jesus led these two struggling disciples from doubt to enlightenment, from darkness to light.
3. Read Luke 24:13-35 keeping the above in mind.
4. Why did the two have doubts? What were they doubting?
5. How did Jesus walk them through their doubts? What specific questions did he ask them? What was the effect of these questions?
6. What can you learn from this about how to deal with doubts in your life, or how walk with others through theirs?

Work (30 - 40 minutes)

1. Take some time together to discuss some doubts and struggles you have had in the past, or perhaps still have. Talk each other through the doubts, with no judging, without offering advice (unless it's requested).
2. What difference does the resurrection make in regards to your doubts?
3. What difference will a correct understanding of God make in how you deal with doubts?
4. Read Colossians 1:3-14 meditatively again.
5. Spend the remainder the time praying for each other. Pray also for your friends and neighbours.