Sermon Notes

Speaker: Patrick Mead

3/23/25

Back to the Future
Luke 24:13-27

1. 1985 movie (40yrs ago!) with Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd. Two follow-up movies were also popular and dealt with trying to fix problems in the present by going back and changing the past…which led to a changed future.

2. You might remember that we had a sermon on February 9th titled “The Once and Future King” that looked at Hebrews 12. We see ourselves there living in both the present and the future. This is not a new concept in Hebrews 12.

3. To prepare ourselves for the resurrection of our King, we need to be oriented. The words “orient” and “orientation” are derived from the Latin word “oriens” which means “sunrise” or “east.” So, literally, to orient oneself is to face east toward the rising of the sun. In Hebrew, it is much the same. The Hebrew word for east, “qedem” also means “in front,” which means that, to orient yourself, you need to face front, or east.

4. Here is where things get more interesting. The word “qedem” means more than just “east.” It also means “past” or “golden days.” The past is what we have already experienced. It is not hidden to us. It is in front of us because we can see it. In the West, we think of the past as behind us but that would be completely foreign to the writers of the scriptures. They saw the past as in front of us all the time. In fact, the Hebrew words for future are “acharit” and “acharon” which means “at the back.

5. We cannot see the future so it is at the back of us, behind us. In the Hebrew way of thinking, we walk backward into the future, facing our past to orient ourselves as we walk into “what will be.” When we read scripture, we are literally walking back to the future.

6. We are going to introduce a few more new terms in this lesson and in the next one. The first is “Tanak.” (sometimes spelled “Tanakh”) It is an acronym from T=Torah, N=Nevi’im, and K=Ketuvim. This is the name used by Jews for their scriptures. It refers to the traditional, threefold Jewish division of what Christians call the OT. The Torah is
the first 5 books, the Books of Moses. The Nevi’im are the Prophets, including prophetic histories such as Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The third category is the Ketuvim, the Writings, made up of all the rest such as Psalms, Proverbs, and Job.

7. If you were a group of Christians gathering in 50AD…or 80AD, the Tanak was your Bible. You almost certainly didn’t own all the scrolls, but you were familiar with them. They were read and studied in the synagogue and discussed by the group. We would say that they were missing 27 books (or more, if we think about the Apocrypha). And yet, they had what they needed to know Jesus.

8. Sadly, we often treat the Old Testament as a collection of moral stories. This “moralism” strips away the meaning of scriptures and causes a kind of blindness. For example, the same man who was the Goliath killer was also the Uriah killer. What happened between Ruth and Boaz on the threshing room floor was a lot more than just an evening’s conversation. If we search the OT looking for role models, Chad Bird says in “The Christ Key” that we might end up “intoxicated, fratricidal polygamists who impregnate their daughters-in-law and build temples for child sacrifice. No wonder we tend to skip huge portions.

9. But the Jews didn’t skip those portions. They wrote them! Not only did they write them, they wrote them again and again. The Bible is layered as the Holy Spirit continued His work. As more was revealed, the texts were edited and we can often trace the work of individual editors. It turns out that that is a great way to write a Bible. This leads to another term we need to know: intertextuality. This is the interplay between two or more texts, rather like the links to other scriptures you might find at the bottom of your Bible pages. This is also the understanding that, as more and more biblical material was inspired by the Spirit and written down, every book built upon what came before it and every new layer interacted with every layer that came before it.
k, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, amen.”

10. For example, Exodus does not just follow Genesis, it interprets it. Joshua interprets Deuteronomy, Isaiah interrupts Judges and so on, until we get to the NT and find that the NT interprets the whole OT.

11. So, back to our group of Christians in 50AD (and we could have said 80AD or 100AD). When you talked about the Messiah, his promises, who he was, and what he did you did so without ever leaving the contents of the Tanak. Want to talk about what it means for him to be the Son of God, go to Psalm 2 or Daniel 7. Want to reflect deeply on the priesthood? You go to Genesis 14, Psalm 110, and Leviticus 8-9. Do you need clarity on how Jesus's death atoned for our sins? You go to Exodus, Isaiah, and the Psalms as well as Leviticus.

12. To talk about Jesus, you talk about the Bible that Jesus himself read, and quoted, preached and built upon, alluded to, and fulfilled – the Tanak or the OT. In the NT, every mention of "the scriptures" refers to the Tanak, not to James, John, or Acts.

13. Luther once said, "What is the New Testament, but a public preaching and proclamation of Christ, set forth through the sayings of the Old Testament and fulfilled through Christ."

14. Ready to learn something new? Read Romans, Galatians, Peter's epistles, Hebrews James or Revelation and notice something: these authors all quote the Torah, the first 5 books of the Bible, far more frequently than they do the words of Jesus. Was that because the Gospels had not been written? No, some of them had been written, and stories of Jesus were widely circulated and shared at every gathering of Christians.

15. Jesus himself said that all things had already been written about him in Moses and the prophets. Remember the road to Emmaus? He started with the scriptures – the Tanak.

16. Recently, on our Monday Morning Messages, we did a multi-part series on the Angel of the Lord, which are appearances of Christ in the OT. But the OT is FULL of Jesus. Joshua describes meeting "the commander of the Lord's army" (Joshua 5:14), the historian wrote of the seed promised to David (2 Samuel 7:11-16), the psalmist sang of the Lord's begotten Son and King (Psalm 2:7), Isaiah spoke of a new exodus out of slavery into freedom (Isaiah 11:11-16), and the prophets spoke again and again of the coming and the work of the Lord's anointed.

17. The NT is full of call-backs to the Old Testament. John uses the same words to begin his Gospel that started Genesis: in the beginning. Matthew paints Jesus as Moses 2.0. Revelation is soaked with references to the Torah and prophets and is indecipherable unless you know those books. Jesus said in John 5:46, "Moses wrote of me." As the Psalmist said in Psalm 119:18, "Open my eyes so that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."

18. As we approach Easter, we prepare ourselves for our King. What will the days of the Messiah be like? A re-genesied world. How will he accomplish redemption? By re-exodusing the world. Whom will he be like? Adam, Noah, Melchizedek, Aaron, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David and Zerubbabel.

19. How can we picture his redeeming atonement and sacrifice? By reading of the sacrifices at the temple, the saving deeds of the judges, the mediation of the priests.

20. Here, we run into the Nashville problem I ran into in Tanzania. When I mentioned where I was from, they got no picture of that in their heads at all. When I said "Tennessee," they also got nothing, not a picture, idea, location or anything at all. Chad Bird uses the classic movie "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" as an illustration of this problem. He loves the movie because he is a good guy and it's an awesome movie. People who've seen the movie can quote vast portions of it to each other. They can also just use one phrase such as "She's a witch", "'tis but a scratch", or "strange women lying in ponds distributing swords," and everyone knows what you are talking about. They have a common reference point. But not everyone.

21. If you don't get the reference, you see the words said in isolation and, indeed, they are isolated from meaning anything to you. This is the problem: the Old Testament refers to itself repeatedly, and, if you don't know the books, you lose the meaning. Joshua quotes Deuteronomy. David alludes to Exodus. Ezekiel takes a phrase from Genesis. Jesus borrows a line from Micah. If you don't know the Bible Jesus used, the same one used by early Christians, you "just don't get it." And that's a shame.

22. The last new word for today: metalepsis. It means the literary technique of borrowing a small bit of an earlier text in a such a way
that the reader can grasp the significance of the echo only by recalling the original context from which the phrase comes. For example, when Joshua is told to "take off your sandals for the place where you are standing is holy" in Joshua 5:15, we are supposed to think about Moses being told the same on Mount Sinai in Exodus 3:2.

23. We have much to say about these things in the next two lessons as we prepare for the celebration of the resurrection of our King but let us end with a quote from the 16th century Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. "Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, amen."