

Luke 24 – Road to Emmaus

Two disciples, not of the twelve, but disciples nonetheless are walking sadly down a road.

They are sad, believe it or not, because they have bad grammar. That's right. If you've ever had to do sentence diagrams, or ever seen that typo *after* you sent the email you can relate to these two: grammar can make us quite sad.

You see, they had their tenses wrong. They said that Jesus WAS (past tense) a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. It's the wrong tense, it should read, and still should read to this day, that Jesus IS (present tense) a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people (and, by the way, he is a bit more than even that – but lets not be too picky on these poor guys).

Later, in verse 21 they state, “We HAD Hoped (which is the pluperfect tense, or PAST perfect tense) that he [Jesus] was the one to redeem Israel.” It's the wrong tense. For the One who had redeemed Israel and the World was walking alongside them so their hope wasn't past tense at all. And that means, neither is our hope past tense. Which is why we are not at “had hoped Lutheran Church” but Hope Lutheran Church – flows better doesn't it? And it's way more accurate.

Now this has all been a bit tongue in cheek, forgive me, but folks tenses *do* matter. If you tell your spouse you love them and they respond “I *loved* you too...” Well, that might be reason for a conversation. Tenses matter.

On the Road to Emmaus, the tenses matter. And right now, tenses matter. So often we say Jesus was, Jesus was, Jesus was. And when it refers to an event, then yes, it is accurate; “Jesus *was* on the sea of galilee.” But when it refers to his being, Jesus is not a “was” He is an “is,” even as He still IS alive and still is the I AM who always will be. He IS with us right now. He IS still

watching over his Church. He IS still interceding for us. And we don't have to wonder "what would Jesus think if he saw us here and now?" No! He is here and now and his Word will guide us into truth.

Tenses matter. And they matter for us too. That loved One who has died in the faith... his name WAS not Henry. His name IS Henry. It's true he went (past tense) fishing with his children many times, but he still (present tense) loves them and is still their father. Even as our God is the God of the living not the dead (Which is stated in 3 Gospels).

Tenses matter. Get them wrong and its good reason to be sad. That loved one – "gone forever, a past tense only." That Savior, "no Savior at all, unable to redeem Israel, let alone the world, because death holds him." And so they are sad on the road to Emmaus. Hopes dashed and gone with the wrong tense. But with correct grammar, accurate grammar, our hope is living and real. Lets rejoice this easter season in present tense grammar.

The Good news in our reading is even more abundant than this however.

First, we see that even while they are sad, that sadness does not actually affect reality – Jesus is alive and he is still walking with them, even in their sadness. Likewise when you get sad, and that liar depression tells you "there is no hope or purpose or value or meaning or future" – rest assured, your feelings and depression's lies do not change reality. The grass is still green whether you are happy or sad. And Jesus is still alive whether we, or the Emmaus disciples, are happy or sad. And no matter what depression says, the reality of a Crucified and Risen Lord is that you DO have value (enough he would die for you), and you still have hope, and eternal life. All this in Jesus, who walks with you (even if it is hard to see at times – as it was for them) in good times and bad. Which is good news.

Secondly, there is more good news for us in this text because we see that even while they two disciples are sad, Jesus' first response is not an immediate personal revealing. It is to reveal the plan of God in the scriptures, in the *word*. Why? Because Jesus didn't bodily reveal himself to everyone. Now don't mishear me: there ARE eyewitnesses to the resurrection – the scriptures say about 500 of them, and we thank God for their public witness. But what about everyone else, what about us? Second rate? Or... can we learn today that God is more than capable of giving real comfort to real confused and sad people like them (like us) through his Word?

Yes, their hearts burned with them – not, by the way, because they just prayed until they felt a certain way – no, but upon examining the scriptures. The burning of the bosom is not a manufactured feeling, it is a response to real teaching that points to Christ. When you read Psalm 2, or Isaiah, or the story of the sacrifice of Isaac and you go – “woah – that's pointing straight to Jesus!”

And in this, Jesus revealing himself in the Word – they began to be less sad. Which means that while our feelings don't change reality – Jesus is alive and does walk with his people in joy and sorrow - but what can change feelings? The exposition of the scriptures and the revealing of the promises of God therein.

So when you are depressed, when your hopes are dashed, when you are stuck in a rut, when you've fallen back into that sin again... Hear the Word of the Lord, in it's proper present tense fullness. Hear the Word of the Lord, how through brokenness, suffering, and trial, indeed through a Cross. God is at work to win a great victory.

A victory promised from the fall (Gen 3:15), prophesied throughout the OT, and carried out precisely as God planned it. And when things go according to plan, doesn't that give us reason

for confidence and relief? In 40 years of this building being here, a big hole being punched in the wall over there would have been cause for great concern. But this year, according to the plan, it's kind of exciting in a way.

Jesus says: "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" The plan of God, promised in his word. And since this has taken place according to the plan, the death and resurrection of our Lord, is there room for confidence and relief that he will keep his promises to us? Forgiveness, life, victory? Yes.

And if you doubt this goodness and promise is yours, once more we go to the text and see more comfort. We see these two disciples ask Jesus to stay with them, and he does. *Jesus despises no one who asks for him to stay.* Rejoice in this beautiful promise here today as we begin with the invocation, invoking God's name and presence. Rejoice in this promise at home as we pray "Come Lord Jesus be our Guest," as we say our prayers at night. He is faithful, patient, and good – and he is yours.

This is shown even more in our text as he is revealed to the two at last in the breaking of the bread. Fellowship? Communion? Yes. Christ is revealed and they can't help but head back down that same road to celebrate with the others. 7 more miles! And do they walk it sadly this time? Or has something changed?

Yes, their grammar. Their hopes realized. A Savior revealed, bodily, yes, but in the Word as well.

Rejoice with the Emmaus disciples! Jesus Christ IS risen, he IS with us in sadness or joy, and his victory and promises are for you.