

WHEN ALL HOPE IS GONE

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Text: Luke 24:13-35

We've all faced times when God does not do what we think that He is going to do -- or for that matter what we think He should do. We become frustrated because we cannot see or understand why the reason behind God's actions and will are not evident. We know deep in our hearts that God must have a plan; but as humans we still tend to lose hope in these situations. The two men on the road to Emmaus were facing just such a situation when they encountered the God of hope.

William Barclay writes, [The story] tells us of the ability of Jesus to make sense of things. The whole situation seemed to these two men to have no explanation. Their hopes and dreams were shattered. There is all the poignant, wistful, bewildered regret in the world in their sorrowing words, "We were hoping that he was the one who was going to rescue Israel." They were the words of men whose hopes were dead and buried. Then Jesus came and talked with them, and the meaning of life became clear and the darkness became light. A story-teller makes one of his characters say to the one with whom he has fallen in love, "I never knew what life meant until I saw it in your eyes." It is only in Jesus that, even in the bewildering times, we learn what life means. (Barclay, 295)

If we will allow Him to do so, Jesus will make sense of that which has left our hopes and dreams shattered. The mystery is solved when Jesus helps us to understand the realities that remain.

Note the realities that we can see in our text.

1. Christ is still with you.
2. It is always too soon to give up.
3. There is still a work to be done.

I. CHRIST IS STILL WITH US (vv. 15-16).

A. He is present even when we cannot see Him.

Our human minds tell us that if God were really with us then we would be able to see Him at work at all times. This leads us to face disappointment by closing our eyes to the presence of the Savior in all situations. We sit in our disappointment and mumble about what we had hoped for.

Max Lucado reminds us of how often we hear those words spoken on the road to Emmaus....."But we had hoped." He writes,

How often have you heard a phrase like that? "We were hoping the doctor would release him." "I had hoped to pass the exam." "We had hoped the surgery would get all the tumor." "I thought the job was in the bag."

Words painted gray with disappointment. What we wanted didn't come. What came, we didn't want. The result? Shattered hope. The foundation of our world trembles.

We trudge up the road to Emmaus dragging our sandals in the dust, wondering what we did to deserve such a plight. "What kind of God would let me down like this?"

And yet, so tear-filled are our eyes and so limited is our perspective that God could be the fellow walking next to us and we wouldn't know it. (Lucado, 88)

B. He seeks to reveal Himself to us in all His power and glory.

Notice that when the two men revealed their unbelief in verses 18-24 that He began to reveal himself to them through the scriptures. We can only imagine what His sermon revealed but perhaps it sounded something like this:

In Genesis, He is the Seed of the woman.
In Exodus, the Passover Lamb.
In Leviticus, the atoning sacrifice.
In Numbers, the bronze serpent.
In Deuteronomy, the promised Prophet.
In Joshua, the Captain of the Lord's host.
In Judges, the Deliverer.
In Ruth, the heavenly Kinsman.
In the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles,
the promised King.
In Ezra and Nehemiah, the Restorer of the nation.
In Esther, the Advocate.
In Job, the Redeemer.
In Psalms, the All in All.
In Proverbs, the Pattern.
In Ecclesiastes, the Goal.
In Song of Solomon, the Beloved.
In the prophets, the coming Prince of Peace.
(Swindoll, 128-9)

Open your eyes and see that He is still with you. He is there to give you hope.

II. IT IS ALWAYS TOO EARLY TO GIVE UP (vv. 21 & 25-26).

A. They had given up their hope because they did not understand.

The empty tomb mentioned in vv. 22-24 -- without the appearance of Jesus himself -- only served to confuse them more. Human logic and understanding had failed them. They could not *see* a reason to hope.

B. Their ability to believe and have faith had been challenged.

The worst possible response to adverse situations is to give up. The Lord calls us to press forward in our faith. He calls us to persevere until we are triumphant in our faith.

There's a little poem that I found which offers words of encouragement for times in which we find ourselves in the midst of trials.

It is entitled, *Don't Quit*.

Don't Quit

When things go wrong as they sometimes will;
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill;
When the funds are low, and the debts are high;
And you want to smile, but have to sigh;
When care is pressing you down a bit --
Rest if you must, but don't you quit.
Success is failure turned inside out;
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt;
And you'll never know close you are;
It may be near when it seems afar.
So, stick to the fight when you're hardest hit --
It's when things go wrong that you mustn't quit.
-- Author Unknown --

Peter said it this way, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6-7)

III. THERE IS STILL A WORK TO BE DONE (vv. 33-35 & 46-49).

A. Discouragement does not make the job go away.

There were others who needed to hear what had been revealed to these men on the road to Emmaus. There is a great ministry of sharing Jesus Christ which has been entrusted to us as the church. Sure we are going to face trials; but we do so knowing that ultimately our perseverance through those trials will further the message of Jesus Christ. The "genuineness of our faith" is exactly the testimony some need to hear and see.

B. Those who truly know Christ are the only one's truly qualified.

These men and women had been witnesses to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ according to verse 48. Who better to send into the world to preach the reality of Jesus Christ?

We may not have seen the same things as others but we who know Christ as our Lord and Savior also have a message to tell. We "are witnesses of these things." *We must not let disappointment lead us to lose hope. We must share hope with those who are without it.*

CONCLUSION

John Maxwell tells a story that emphasizes the importance of maintaining our hope in dark times.

"We heard about an experiment performed with laboratory rats to measure their motivation to live under different circumstances. Scientists dropped a rat into a jar of water that had been placed in total darkness, and they timed how long the animal would continue swimming before it gave up and allowed itself to drown. They found that the rat usually lasted little more than three minutes.

Then they dropped another rat into the same kind of jar, but instead of placing it in total darkness, they allowed a ray of light to shine into it. Under those circumstances, the rat kept swimming for thirty-six hours. That's more than seven hundred times longer than the one in the dark! Because the rat could see, it continued to have hope." (Maxwell, 71)

We are not rats in some grand cosmic experiment by God. However, we are like all of God's creations -- we need hope -- a ray of light if you will. For the child of God Jesus is that "Light." And He is constantly calling to us that we must not lose hope, He is in control.

References

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