

**Acts 2:14a, 36-41**

**April 6, 2008**

**Luke 24: 13-35**

**Bakersfield, CA**

### **“Easter Living”**

**Easter is the most important day of the year because it celebrates the most important event in human history. That’s why, in the Christian calendar, Easter is celebrated for a season of 50 days. Easter, though, is really more than a day and season. It’s a way of life, a world view.**

**There are two ways to look at the world. One is to focus on the wars and violence, tragedy, and death. From this point of view, Easter seems a fairy-tale exception, a contradiction in the name of God. This way gives temporary solace.**

**There is another way to look at the world. If I take Easter as the starting point, the one incontrovertible fact about how God treats those whom he loves, then human history becomes the contradiction and Easter a preview of ultimate reality. Hope then flows like lava beneath the crust of daily life. This view most likely explains the change in the disciples’ perspective as they encountered the Risen Lord.<sup>1</sup>**

**Anyone can get sentimental about Christmas, and maybe feel like a Christian for that time. But Easter is the main event; if you don’t believe in the resurrection, you’re not really a believer; and hope is hard to come by.**

**Some two millennia ago, on a road to Emmaus (a town a few miles from Jerusalem), two men walked along discussing the tragic events of the previous days in Jerusalem: how Jesus had been arrested, tried, executed, buried, and then even his body was missing! They had hoped in him and now their faith had been shattered. All they had left was words . . . words which didn’t seem to help much. It appeared that violence, tragedy, and death, in the form of Roman might and connivance of a few Jewish officials, had triumphed again.**

**The two men were bereft of hope ... then they discovered someone walking with them.**

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Yancy, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995).

**We live in a world where people face serious disappointments everyday; loneliness, emotional pain, even despair, are all-too familiar. A part of what it means to be authentically human is to learn to cope with disappointment. The best, of course, is to learn to cope creatively and usefully.**

**[Creative coping: A young man in the tenth grade had a crush on a girl in the eleventh grade. Suddenly, his dreams came true. Out of the blue one day, she walked up, right in the middle of the cafeteria, and invited him to the junior-senior prom. He was absolutely bowled over! He accepted her invitation gleefully. He rented a tux, ordered a corsage for her--and then his dream became a nightmare!**

**It hit him with a sickening thud. He realized that he had no car and, even worse, no driver's license. All his older friends with cars already had made their plans. He could find no one to double date with. He was in an embarrassing situation. But as they say, necessity is the mother of invention, and he came through. He devised an ingenious plan.**

**He remembered that his grandfather owned a big, shiny, black car. With that in mind, he went to a nearby pawn shop and bought a chauffeur's cap. Then he went over to persuade his grandfather to put on a black suit, a black tie, and the driver's cap, and serve as his limousine driver for the night--not telling anyone that the driver was his grandfather! Well, it worked to perfection. He was the hit of the prom. His date loved it. And Grandfather played his part to the hilt--driving well, opening the "limousine" doors for them with a flourish, and throughout the night, calling his grandson "Mr. Johnson"! Now that's what I call rising to the occasion.<sup>2</sup> ... my daughter's prom – no limousine – renting a Town Car...]**

**I don't mean to belittle life's disappointments or de-sacralize Christ's power. But I want to illustrate the down-to-earthness of resurrection hope. Some of you are tired, I know. You may look at your life, your family, your work, our country, or our church here and wonder, what kind of future is there? Some days I'm tired; very tired and ask whether preaching the grace and hope of Christ is worth the effort.**

**Perhaps that's the time to listen and watch for Christ to be with us. ["There will come a time when you believe everything is finished. That will be the beginning"]<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup>James W. Moore, *Some Things Are Too Good Not To Be True*, (Nashville: Dimensions for Living, 1994).

<sup>3</sup>Louis L'Amour, *Lonely on the Mountain*, (Bantam Books, 1980).

**In the midst of their disappointment on that road to Emmaus, Jesus appeared. But the two disciples, like so many of us, did not recognize him. Still, they journeyed on, and still Jesus accompanied them. While he explained the Scriptures to them, even the small security of *their disbelief* in which they had taken refuge, was shattered. Sometimes we cling to our unbelief as an excuse for not taking a step in faith, and it takes a fresh word of Scripture to pull us to our feet again. Finally, at the end of the day, at the meal, when they broke bread together, they recognized him. There is no supernatural splendor at his appearance, even though it is a divine miracle. Yet it changed their lives. He gave them power for Easter living.**

**Part of the "Good News" of Jesus is that sometimes what one perceives with the eye need not be played out in one's heart. We can be stopped in our tracks by our doubts and fears when things do not turn out the way we think they should. True, in a general sense, it may be especially true of our life in Christ. Maybe you're disappointed that illness, tragedy, or just difficulties have overrun your life. You're disillusioned, maybe angry, that God hasn't answered your prayers. Maybe you feel the church, or the pastor, has let you down, or not understood your wishes. Perhaps, what we need is to be able to stand far enough from the situation (the journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus), just "walk" for awhile, until we realize that He walks with us. Wanting our prayers answered, and wanting God to be God, are two very different things.**

**There is strength in fellowship. As those two disciples walked to Emmaus, Jesus became a pilgrim with them and entered into their pain and grief without being overcome by it. Life's tragedies and disappointments are much more bearable when they are shared. Jesus comes to his own through you and me. We owe each other support and affirmation, time to listen. Often, just a silent yet real presence can mean the difference between growing faith and bitterness. Don't wait for some organized event, take the initiative yourself to invite someone over for dinner or lunch, or a cup of coffee, or to join you in some activity. If we can't make genuine friends within our own circle, how will we ever widen it? Our mission statement "To bring people to the transforming power of Jesus..." must have down to earth meaning, to mean anything at all.**

**Jesus gave those two disciples the chance to be fully human in their disappointment and pain. Then he joined them at the table, and they recognized him as he broke bread. As they recognized him, they also**

**recognized their victory over despair. Of all the stories of the Risen Lord's appearances, perhaps this one is the most beautiful. The appearance of the Risen One takes place through two events: the opening of the Scriptures and the breaking of the bread: through Word and Sacrament.**

**We continue to meet Him in with other believers and seekers while studying the Bible, hearing the sermon, and sharing in Holy Communion. This has been true for over two thousand years. It will continue until he comes again. [Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.]<sup>4</sup>**

**Courage and hope to continue the journey are found in Word and Sacrament.**

**Through Word and Sacrament the Risen Christ comes to his own.**

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<sup>4</sup>Hebrews 10:25, NIV