

April 11, 2004
A.M. Service – Easter Sunday
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Because of the Resurrection”
Luke 24:13-34 NLT

13 That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles out of Jerusalem. 14 As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. 15 Suddenly, Jesus himself came along and joined them and began walking beside them. 16 But they didn't know who he was, because God kept them from recognizing him.

17 "You seem to be in a deep discussion about something," he said. "What are you so concerned about?"

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."

19 "What things?" Jesus asked.

"The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth," they said. "He was a prophet who did wonderful miracles. He was a mighty teacher, highly regarded by both God and all the people. 20 But our leading priests and other religious leaders arrested him and handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. 21 We had thought he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. That all happened three days ago. 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, Jesus' body was gone, just as the women had said."

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

28 By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus would have gone on, 29 but they begged him to stay the night with them, since it was getting late. So he went home with them. 30 As they sat down to eat, he took a small loaf of bread, asked God's blessing on it, broke it, then gave it to them. 31 Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And at that moment he disappeared!

32 They said to each other, "Didn't our hearts feel strangely warm 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, where the eleven disciples and the other followers of Jesus were gathered. When they arrived, they were greeted with the report, 34 "The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter!"

These two disciples or followers of Jesus, returning to the village of Emmaus, at first missed the significance of history's greatest event because they were too focused on their disappointments and problems. In fact, they didn't recognize Jesus when He was walking

right beside them. To compound the problem, they were walking in the wrong direction -- away from the fellowship of believers in Jerusalem. Christians are likely to miss Jesus and withdraw from the strength found in other believers when they become preoccupied with their problems, dashed hopes, and frustrated plans.

Things didn't work out the way these men on the Road to Emmaus thought it would. Perhaps they were wondering how God could allow them to be so disappointed. And where is God in their confusion and hurt? Where was God now that they need Him?

Are you currently in some crises situation? Have you lost hope in God's deliverance and even his goodness? Learn a lesson from these two believers: Wait for the Lord to redeem your situation and give you hope once more.

Things don't always work out the way we think they will. Sometimes we feel desperate and helpless. We wonder how God could let these things happen to us. How God can just stand by and watch us suffer? Where is God when it really hurts? Maybe God is actually closer to us than we think. Maybe it's when we're in these situations, where everything seems to be falling apart, that God gets an opportunity to remind us of how much He really loves us.

This year, for those who saw "the movie" ("The Passion of the Christ"), we got a better understanding of just how much Jesus had to suffer to forgive our sins. Our sin and the love of God merged in a tremendous collision at the Cross of Christ. Sin brings suffering and sin can only be forgiven through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When we choose to believe in Jesus and accept Him as our Savior, *because of the Resurrection: We receive forgiveness of sins*, the sin that separated us from God is removed; *We receive reconciliation to God* and can have a personal relationship with Him; *We receive the Spirit of God*—that is how close we can be to God—we have His life in us; We also *receive* the promise of *eternal life* because the death and resurrection of Jesus opened up the possibility of *heaven* for all who will believe.

We become friends of God and children of God through faith in Jesus. And He gives us His spirit as a comforter and helper to get us through the difficulties of this life and as a first deposit guaranteeing eternal life in heaven.

We need His Spirit and this hope of heaven as we face our own suffering in this world. We need to know there is a loving God Who knows our need and in Whom we can trust. Jesus understands what we go through, and none of us will ever go through the agony that Jesus did. *We have a loving God knows what it is like to suffer, Who can sympathize with our need and help us.* The Bible tells us that Jesus was "a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3).

Hebrews tells us, "This High Priest of ours (Jesus) understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same temptations we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the

throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it" (4:15-16 NLT).

Maybe you are at a crisis point in your life right now. God loves you and cares about you. These promises are ours because of the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. *But* if you want to receive forgiveness of your sins; if you want to have a personal relationship with God; if you want His Holy Spirit and Eternal Life; if you want to know our loving God, receive His help you in times of trouble and be carried safely home to heaven; *you must believe. Believe in Jesus, His death and Resurrection and accept Him as your Savior and Lord. You must be willing to give up the throne of your life and give it over to Jesus.*

And if you are a believer in a crisis point in your life, do as Jesus did - continued to trust the Father and move in the right direction doing what is right. *You must always believe that no matter what God is good and you must always believe that no matter what you have a free will to obey God even when you don't feel like it.* The result? You will see the power of God. The resurrection! The resurrection follows suffering and death. Our own resurrection to eternal life will follow suffering in this life and death. But because of the death and Resurrection of Jesus we have a loving God who will see us through the suffering and death we will experience in this life and bring us safely home to heaven.