Luke 24: 13-21,

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and Word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

Our gospel story today begins with, “Now on that same day…” When? The same day of that first Easter Sunday when Mary Magdalene met Jesus resurrected and went and told the disciples all about it—yet they struggle to believe and understand.

These were difficult times for all of them—in losing Jesus, their hopes were dashed. Luke tells us that some of them were hiding, gripped with fear of the Jews, while two of these confused and disheartened disciples left Jerusalem and started traveling back home, Emmaus—a town 7 miles from Jerusalem. **They were returning to their old lives because they thought that was all they had left. They were confused, disappointed, and hopeless.**

And who could blame them? It was only a few days that they had been with Jesus. The week before had been a glorious time when they entered Jerusalem alongside Jesus until he was arrested, unfairly tried, and killed. **They were disheartened and disillusioned when this man, who they believed to be the Messiah who would drive out their enemies, was crucified and died.**

For them, it was all over. They were slowly beginning to return to the reality of their lives without Jesus and hope for a different and better future.

But then, the unexpected happened. As these two were heading back home to Emmaus, a man they did not recognize approached them and said, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?”

They stood still, looking sad as they struggle to find words to answer this man’s question. Jesus’ execution was about the only thing people were talking about in Jerusalem. It had been the tragic climax to a week of controversy, confrontation, and political intrigue. So, Cleopas replied to him saying,

“Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” The man replied back, “What things?” “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.”

I can see Cleopas pausing for a moment, feeling this conversation very deeply as he continued,

“We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”

At this point, you can imagine Cleopas quickly wiping the tears off his eyes, telling the new twist that had emerged that morning about Jesus’ body missing,

It is now the third day since these things took place. Now some women of our group that were at the tomb early this morning came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.

**There were rumors of a resurrection.**

Then the stranger said the last thing they expected,

“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”

After this, this strange man walked Cleopas and his friend through the entire Scriptures for the next two hours and explained all the references to the Christ. And as he did, the fire of their faith that had died out on Golgotha came back to life and burned with that familiar hope, the hope that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. **Jesus opened the Scriptures to them, and the Scriptures gave them new life and hope.**

As the story continued to unfold and they were approaching Emmaus, the two revived disciples pleaded with him to stay at least for the night, and they were overjoyed when he agreed.

At dinner, the man took some bread, pulled it apart, and gave them each a piece. As soon as the bread touched their hands, they recognized who it was: Jesus. Both gasped, and Jesus vanished.

All this time, the man walking next to them speaking words of encouragement and hope, giving them back their faith by explaining the Scriptures about the Christ, and eating with them by breaking bread with them, was Jesus.

I think there is a lot of us in this story. I can see myself and all of you too in here. How?

Let me explain. These disciples had a particular expectation of who and what the Messiah ought to be and do for them. **They expected their Messiah to fulfill their dreams and expectations of being a king and conqueror, freeing them from their enemies and Roman oppression**. But, since that didn’t happen and they did not understand what God was accomplishing instead, **they were disappointed and feeling let down.**

Remember Palm Sunday? Many followers of Jesus expected him to be a conquering hero. However, their assumptions and limited way of thinking kept them from seeing the big picture, the miracle God was accomplishing in their midst. **In their attempt to “boxed” God into their desires of personal success, they were missing the real blessing for their lives**.

Has this ever happened to you? **You were so convinced that you had all the answers and thought you knew what was better for you, so much that you were certain God was going to do things your way only to be disappointed and confused?**

All of us have been there—if we are honest. Every person has a “Road to Emmaus” journey at some point in their lives when our old habits, misunderstandings, misguided expectations, and limited ways of thinking keep us from seeing Jesus and understanding his purposes for our lives. **We confused the things we want with what God has promised us**. Instead of coming from a place of faith and openness for the unexpected, we come from settled expectations and limited understanding.

I am telling you this not to discourage you or make you feel bad about yourself, but to say we are normal human beings. It’s a fact of life that we wander from God and get lost from time to time and quit trying anymore because **we may not understand what God is doing and why some things happen the way they do or why they take too long**.

Think of it this way, blessings come as seeds that we plant and we ought to water so they can grow and bear fruit. How many times have we received the seeds of future blessings but did not plant them? How many times we plant them but did not water them? How many times we planted and watered them but abandoned them because they were taking too long to grow and bear fruit?

There are many ways we can be impatient with God or misunderstand what God is doing, but there is only one way to welcome and enjoy God’s blessings: **by trusting him and staying faithful.**

Here is the good news: Jesus is always walking with us even if we don’t recognize him and have been misguided about our expectations of what God should have done for us. And Jesus fulfills his promises to us always.

Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we may have sorrows, confusion, disappointments, and despair. Still, Jesus finds us in our need, and he never ignores our suffering but makes himself present in our lives, offering us his companionship and nourishment. **He does not come to our side to judge us but to guide us so we may not give up on him but remain faithful to receive his blessings**.

I know there are times when we are tempted to give up on God and lose faith when things don’t go the way we thought they would or seem to go wrong or we feel let down. But it is in such times that Jesus reminds us that he is with us.

Here is the bottom line: when we are struggling, maybe fatigued or frustrated, and can’t see Jesus and can only think of everything wrong with our lives, we should pause, read the Bible, pray, and find communion with God. Then, our eyes will be open to seeing that we are not done and there is much more ahead. Then, we will start getting glimpses of the big picture—and we will be glad and fulfilled.

My friends, I know that although sometimes we may feel we are walking alone in this life’s journey, we are not. Not only is Jesus with us, but there are many others seeking hope just as we are. And, most importantly, Jesus is always near each one of us, offering his companionship and blessings. Amen.