

Christ Community Covenant Church
Sightings: The Road to Emmaus
Pastor Dave Scherrer - December 27, 2015

Sightings: Going on a God hunt

So today we finish up our short Christmas series on sightings – Christophany – and the whole point of the series is to let the Scriptures comfort us. At Christmas we celebrate Emmanuel – God with us. And with these studies we are seeing that God is not a stranger. He is not distant and indifferent. He is personal and immanent. Always has been always will be!

On the second day of advent we looked at Melchizedek, the first of our sightings from Genesis and Curt introduced us to the fourth person in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – they prove to us that God is on our side. He is not the enemy and has never been. He is your advocate. He is your champion. He is your Savior. And there is one more sighting we are going to look at today but before I do, I want to once again encourage you to go on a God hunt. Do it all year in 2016, maybe keep a record of all the times that God has been at your side, all the times he stood up for you and protected you and defended you and healed you and vindicated you. It will be a daily occurrence for you if your eyes are open.

So, speaking of opened eyes, let's go ahead and look at our last sighting for this series. It is the story of the disciples having their eyes opened as they spent the afternoon on the road to Emmaus on the Sunday of the resurrection of Jesus (it is an Easter story but still a Christmas story too). This story has been an inspiration forever in art and drama and literature.



Swiss painter Robert Zünd, 1877



On the Road to Emmaus, by Duccio, 1308



Caravaggio, 1601

Luke 24:13-35

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem,¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.¹⁶ But their eyes were kept

from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him,

"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

What's going on here?

To start with: Who were these disciples? The story itself gives the name of one of them – Cleopas. Some think that perhaps the second unnamed disciple is Luke himself, and that is why he doesn't mention the name of the second disciple. But let's follow the hint of the name of Cleopas for a bit first - there is a second mention of his name in another account of the Resurrection. The reference is John 19:25 where we read, "**But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.**"

So, we learn that the wife of Cleopas was also present in Jerusalem at the time of the Crucifixion. So perhaps she was the one returning to Emmaus with Cleopas on the morning of the Resurrection.

We must remember at this point that the disciples who were last seen in the garden where Jesus had stopped in the midst of His normal nightly return to Bethany from Jerusalem, had scattered and had no doubt returned to Bethany. The psychology of the situation demands that they would have fled away from Jerusalem, not toward it. And reason dictates that they would have hoped to collect again at the place to which they had been heading. Only Peter and John, who followed those who had arrested Jesus, are mentioned as being in Jerusalem until after the Resurrection. They would not have traveled on the Sabbath. And it is likely, therefore, that until the day of the Resurrection the fact of the Crucifixion was known only to Peter and John, the women who were present at the cross, including Jesus' mother, and whatever other acquaintances of Jesus were present in Jerusalem for the Passover.

Here we must reconstruct what had happened. The wife of Cleopas, we know, had been present at the foot of the cross. She had seen the Lord Jesus Christ crucified, the nails driven into His hands and the cross erected. She saw the blood. She heard Him cry out. She experienced the darkness. Finally she saw the spear driven into His side. Mary would have had no doubt at all that Christ was dead. And neither would Cleopas, who may have witnessed many of these things also.

The same restraints that had kept the women from going to the sepulcher to anoint the body would also have kept Cleopas and Mary from returning home to Emmaus. The morning after the Saturday Sabbath came finally. Jesus' mother Mary went to the tomb to anoint the body with the other Mary's (Cleopas wife and Magdalene, leaving Cleopas to get their things together. Mary saw the angels, returned to tell Cleopas about it, and then — and now look how utterly remarkable this is — joined him in preparing to leave. So far from her thinking was any idea of the literal truth of Christ's bodily resurrection! Cleopas and Mary went right on packing. And, as soon as they were ready, they left Jerusalem. Here was a couple who were so sad at the loss of the Lord Jesus, so miserable, so preoccupied with the reality of His death, that they could not fathom the Resurrection.

They had heard the rumors. Cleopas quotes his wife but kind of gives her some protection by not naming her outright. In verse 22 read, "Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive."

But we are getting ahead of the story. At this point Cleopas and Mary have not yet believed, and they were going home. It was all over. The dream was dead, and they were sad. As they made their solitary way on the road to Emmaus Jesus came, but they didn't recognize Him. The last time they had seen Him He was beaten, marred, and bleeding. Here He was in a glorified body, and they didn't know who He was. So as they went on their way Jesus drew near to them, as He does to all who walk the Emmaus road, and asked them why they were sad.

Luke 24:18-21

¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

He who should have *redeemed* Israel! Of course Christ's death on the cross did redeem Israel and the world with it. However, they were thinking of a different kind of redemption.

Jesus Christ was redeeming them from sin, and all they were thinking of was a deliverance from Rome. Redemption means to buy out of slavery and to set free, and they had been hoping that Jesus would be the Messiah Who should make them free as a nation and set them up with an earthly king much the way they had been under the line of David. Jesus had died to redeem them from sin. But that wasn't what they were looking for.

And, of course, that is not what men are looking for today. We all want freedom from oppression in order to pursue our own will without hindrance. We would all love to have our problems solved. But we don't want the problem of our sins talked about much less confronted.

So Jesus began to teach them. He unpacked the old scriptures once again:

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

He showed them that it all pointed to Him, to this very moment when God would pay the penalty for an eternity of sin with a blood offering of eternal blood.

- He might have started in **Genesis 3:15**. He might have told them, "Do you not know that I am the wounded seed of the woman who crushes the serpent's head?" He might have stayed in Genesis 3 and said, "I am the true and only covering for the sinner's guilt pictured in the covering of the sins provided by God at the price of the death of an innocent substitute." He might have gone to **chapter 4**

of **Genesis** and said, "The one sacrifice God will accept in the way He accepted Abel's and rejected Cain's is Me. That picture's Me, the acceptable sacrifice."

- Probably He went to **Genesis 6 through 8** and recounted the history of the Flood. And as Peter does, said, "I am the true ark of safety into which sinners enter and sail through the waters of divine judgment." And surely He went to **Genesis 8:20 to 22** and described the altar built there by Noah and the sacrifice offered and said, "That sacrifice offered after the judgment against the world is a picture of My sacrifice. I'm sure He stopped at **Genesis 22** and reminded them of the story of Isaac who was to be offered as a sacrifice on the altar and was a willing sacrifice which is, in a sense, a picture of Christ, but a ram caught in a thicket was used in Isaac's place which is a true picture of Christ, the substitute.
- I'm sure He must have gone to **Exodus 12** and said, "Don't you remember the Passover lamb, the Passover lamb had to be without blemish and without spot. And if his blood was shed and splattered on the doorpost and the side beams, the angel of death would pass by that house. I am the true Passover Lamb who protects the sinner from divine judgment. I think He probably went to **Exodus 16** which is the story of God providing manna and told them that He was the true manna from heaven. He says that in **John 6**.
- I think He went to **Leviticus** still in the writings of Moses, first seven chapters; there are five main offerings there. There's the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering. And I think He showed how He is the fulfillment of each of those offerings. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear that He is the true offering, superior to all others.
- I think in the Pentateuch every reference to the Day of Atonement pictured Him and He made it clear that He was not only the sacrifice on the altar, but He was the scapegoat who took away sin. I think He probably went to **Exodus 17** and **Numbers 20** and said He is the true rock to be smitten once in death to release the water of life.
- I think He must have stopped at **Deuteronomy 18:15** and said, "I am the prophet like unto Moses who is to come. He probably went to **Deuteronomy 21, 22 and 23** and said, "I am the one hanged on a tree, cursed by God and taken down and buried before sundown."
- Surely He spent some time in **Psalms 22**. He is the one the psalmist hears when the Psalm begins, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The very words He spoke on the cross. Psalm 22 says, "He will be a reproach. He will be sneered at. His bones will be out of joint. His strength will be gone. His hands and feet will be pierced. His clothes will be divided up by lots as He dies.
- Perhaps Jesus took the two of them to **Psalms 69:21** and reminded them...reminded them of Messiah's cry of thirst. Then He was given vinegar to drink.
- Perhaps He went to **Isaiah 50 verse 6** and said, "I am the one who gave His back to the smiters, His cheeks to those who plucked out His beard and covered His face with spit."
- Perhaps He went to **Zechariah 12:10** and reminded them that Zechariah had said, "One day Israel would look on Him whom they had pierced." They were the ones who really did the piercing though the spear was in a Roman soldier's hand. Without question, and you can look at it with me for a moment, they would have gone to Isaiah...without question.

And then to chapter 53 of Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:7-10a

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,

and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.

⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people?

⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him;
he has put him to grief.

“Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us along the way, and while he opened the Scriptures?”

From that moment on they began to burn with understanding. It was all fitting into place. All that Jesus predicted about his own death, the fulfilled prophecies – finally it kicked in for them. They understood both the Scriptures and the Lord Himself differently. Before, much of the Word of God was a mystery.

Hereafter, when they would return to the book of Genesis, Cleopas and Mary would see Jesus prefigured in the life of Joseph and see Jesus revealed in the accounts. And so, Genesis would be new for them. And they would understand the Lord Himself better. He is the cloud Who guides His people and covers them with His protection. And the Fire that is the Light of the World. In Joshua He is the captain of the Lord’s hosts. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, He is the Son of Righteousness risen with healing in His wings.

And then their eyes are opened! Do you remember in verse 16 their eyes were blocked from seeing and then in verse 31 their eyes were opened. What was different from the first moment to the second? The Scriptures! Jesus taught them the truth concerning him and it transformed them. This new awareness of the truth changed the course of their lives and their immediate plans for the evening.

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem

Never have two people gone from such pits of despair to heights of joy, from believing that all their hopes and all their aspirations and all their expectations and even their redemption and their salvation was lost because Jesus had been crucified, all the way to realizing that all their hopes and aspirations and expectations, their redemption and their salvation was indeed accomplished because Jesus was alive. It would be hard for us to comprehend their disappointment. It would be equally hard for us to comprehend their exhilaration. The transition was from the depths to the heights.

Everyone must walk the road to Emmaus

If you are ever inclined to doubt that the Word of God continues to show life-transforming power, even in the twentieth first century, you ought to read a book by England’s social critic Malcolm Muggeridge (1903-1990), entitled *Jesus Rediscovered*. In England, as also to some extent in America, Muggeridge has gained a tremendous reputation, first, as the editor of the satirical weekly news magazine, *Punch*, and then as a television personality. As Britain’s scourge of the Establishment, Muggeridge has taken on the government, the royal family, international politics, even the church. And it is safe to say that in the eyes of most Englishmen there has probably never been a less likely candidate for conversion to Christ or Christianity.

Nevertheless, Muggeridge today gives testimony to the power of Christ through the Scripture to transform his life and the lives of others. He recounts his conversion as something that happened to him when he was in Israel for the British Broadcasting System. Although several factors contributed to it, the truth of

the gospel and of Christ's living presence really came to him first when, for the filming of a program of the New Testament, he was walking along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, as those two disciples had done nearly 2,000 years ago on the morning of Jesus' Resurrection.

I believe that the road to Emmaus is a road that must be walked, in one sense, by everyone who would become a better Christian. And it is in that light that I would like us to study it. The walk started out in disbelief and sadness. It ended in joy, excitement, love, and true devotion. The same can happen to each one of us.

Community Group Discussion Questions

How was Christmas for you? Do you have any Christmas traditions concerning Christ that you grew up with? Now?

Have you ever had a sighting of God that was qualitatively different from your 'normal' relationship? What were the circumstances around that? If not, why do you think not?

It was interesting that Cleopas and the other disciple were so closed to the idea of the resurrection, even after perhaps Mary had seen the angel? How could that be?

What kinds of things do we close our eyes to in the 21st century, especially spiritual things?

How can we encourage one another to go on a God hunt? What if we made a regular practice here in this group to speak often of the sightings we have?