

We matter, but Jesus is the point

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[0 : 00] Thank you. Good morning, Neil. Good morning, Cornerstone, brothers and sisters, guests and friends that will be joining us. Looking forward to, after this service is over, sharing this link with many of my friends here in the States.

We're part of one big family. In fact, watching Neil this morning, I have sat in that very yellow chair in that room, enjoyed much laughter with the lovely Louise, good food, good fellowship, and likewise, Neil has sat in my home exactly where I am.

Perhaps you can see that it's still dark here, a little after five in the morning, and good news for me is I'm an early riser. So these are my hours I like. Well, as we've already heard read, we are going to this marvelous account that took place on the day that Jesus was raised from the dead.

And this one story, I think, is just a great story for us to consider, not only in the middle of a pandemic, but maybe for those of us that are just looking over the fence at this thing called the gospel.

Maybe some of you are joining us this morning and from the comfort of your home or some place, and it's just easier maybe to consider matters of faith.

[1 : 17] Well, this is just, I think, a remarkable story that will help introduce us to the nature of life in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three things I'm going to briefly talk about in this passage.

If you have a Bible with you or if you just remember the stories that unfolded, I will read through and walk through the text. So you're not at a disadvantage if you don't have a Bible.

You might just want to have one. But in Luke chapter 24, we have this marvelous story that highlights just how much each one of us really matters.

But how in owning the fact that we do matter, Jesus himself is the point. So we're introduced to this incredible conversation.

Let me go ahead and tell you briefly the three things we will see in this story that will help us understand what is this life of faith? Who is this Jesus? What might it mean for us to know him or to know him much better?

[2 : 20] So the three phrases that we'll consider through this text are these. Number one, Jesus comes to us. He's the one that comes to us. Number two, Jesus cares for us.

In so many ways, we'll see this in the story. Jesus cares greatly. Jesus cares about every aspect of our being. And then thirdly, just before we pray in conclusion, we'll see how Jesus loves through us. That his grace, his mercy, his kindness comes to us. But always that it might be for the benefit of our neighbors, our friends, fellow strugglers, those who just like us need the daily mercies that our God promises us.

So let's walk through this story together. I love it. But beginning at verse 13 in Luke chapter 24, think of this image. Jesus comes to us.

That very day, meaning the day that Jesus was raised from the dead, two of them, two disciples, were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

[3 : 29] And they were talking with each other about the things that had happened. Now, they are, as we'll see in a moment, not aware of the fact that Jesus has been raised. They are talking about this very tragic event of the death of the one that they had hoped would be the promised Messiah.

So they're talking among themselves. Verse 15. Now, there's several reasons I love that phrase. Because it does underscore that even before his death upon the cross and now after his resurrection, like I said, Jesus comes to us.

The Bible tells the story that Jesus did not begin his life in Bethlehem, but that Jesus has existed forever. And that his coming to us is seeing him in the fact that he came from heaven, eternity into this world.

He came to us. And now we see him drawing near to two friends that are in a tremendous state of unrest.

[4 : 42] A tremendous state of sadness, as we'll see. Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

You can find that some beauty in that. Jesus is going to make himself known. But there's a benefit of his simply coming as a fellow traveler alongside of two strugglers.

He's walking with them. Verse 17. And Jesus said to them, what is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk? And they stood still and looking sad.

Again, let's just relate to that emotion. Jesus, a stranger. They don't know his name, who this is. But he engages them. Tell me what you're talking about.

I overhear some comments. What are you talking about? And they just stopped in their tracks. And they're sad. Now, again, let's just consider the benefit of that story for you and for me.

[5 : 46] Jesus came to them in their sadness. There's a lot of emotions right now that we are probably feeling in this pandemic. My wife and I are in lockdown.

We have grandchildren local. We have a daughter-in-law who's pregnant with what will be our first granddaughter to go along with our three grandsons. And we're feeling sadness.

We can't hold them. We're feeling a degree of fear. How long will this last? What are the implications of this pandemic and lockdown for the economy, for friends?

There's a lot of feelings. And I just invite you to consider this morning in the sanctuary of your own home. What are you feeling? You see, in the story of Jesus, there are no bad feelings.

The Bible never says to us, don't be angry, but in your anger, do not sin. The Bible never says, get over your sadness or get over your fear.

[6 : 47] Jesus meets us exactly where we are. In fact, one of my favorite things about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is that it puts an end to all posing and pretending. We don't have to fake.

We don't have to put on our Sunday best. Maybe even the awkwardness of looking at a computer rather than being in a special gathering place with other people gives us more freedom to consider what it should mean as followers of Jesus, to own what we feel.

Well, Jesus truly comes to us in our sadness, our fears, our storms, and our pandemics. Well, the story goes on. Then one of them, one of these two gentlemen that are walking on the road, we had his name.

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? And once again, Jesus says to them, he's drawing them out.

Jesus is conversational with us, this living Savior. I just pray that we would know in this season how he does come to us.

[7 : 54] He pursues us. He engages us. And he says to them, what things are you talking about? And they said, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.

See, these two men had a view of Jesus. They thought highly of him. They considered him to be a profound prophet and rabbi.

And they weren't wrong, but there was so much more to Jesus than just his being a really powerful new rabbi on the horizon of religion in Jerusalem.

Verse 20, and they speak about this tragedy. And our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him.

Verse 21, but we had hoped that he was going to be the one who would redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it's now the third day since these things happened. And moreover, some women of our company amazed us.

[8 : 57] They were at the tomb early in the morning, and they did not find his body. And they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us, meaning fellow disciples, went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said.

But him they did not see. Let's just think about their dilemma. Well, Cleopas and his friend have heard the rumor that something has happened in the morning.

Some people went to the tomb where we know they put Jesus, but he wasn't there. And then there's some, as they report, there's some conversation about angels. Now, what would that have

felt like to them?

They believed in angels, but I mean, really, what would that mean if someone said to you, I've got good news, an angel told me something really wonderful about how life now has changed.

I think we would question more the messenger rather than the reality of the angels. But we see, once again, the reality of the Bible. The Bible is not spinning the story. The Bible is not pretending. [10:06] In fact, the apostle Paul, writing about these very events, went on to say in 1 Corinthians, if Jesus was not raised from the dead, we of all people are most to be pitied.

See, these disciples, they know something critical happened with the death of Jesus. It's now been rumored that he's alive. But if he's dead, they are absolutely cemented in their sadness because their hopes are dashed.

But if he's alive, but they don't know that he's alive yet, everything would change. Well, let's see how the story goes on. And now we move from Jesus coming to us, how we see now in this text, Jesus cares for us.

And I invite you to consider the great tenderness, the compassion, the humor, the love that Jesus has for these two men. And for you and for me, I'm so thankful that Neil invited me to preach this Sunday because I need this story afresh.

I need to be reminded that Jesus is coming to me in my current state. I need to know that Jesus cares for me. Now, what does the care of Jesus look like and how is Jesus uniquely positioned to care?

[11:24] Look at verse 25. And he said to them, O foolish one, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

Now, we need to talk about that for a minute. As Luke is telling the story, when he recites the words of Jesus, these are not words of shame.

In fact, I want you to think for a minute. Who do you have in your life that you are absolutely convinced that they love you, that they care for you, that even when they say difficult things to you, it is not to shut you down, but to call you out.

It is not meant to harm you, but to heal you. The Bible talks about how there is power in our words, the power of death and life. Well, when Jesus says to these two men, O foolish ones, I could see a smile on his face because he knows what he is about to give them.

He knows how he is in his pursuing of them. He is going to give them. He is going to give them something of greater worth than treasure, than the cessation of a pandemic.

[12:36] Jesus is going to give these two men himself, just like he gives his kindness, his grace, and mercy to you and me. O foolish ones, so to believe everything the prophets had spoken.

Now, these were two men who believed that God had spoken in the Old Testament, that God had spoken in his word and that God had made extraordinary promises associated with the Messiah when he would come.

And Jesus immediately, in extending care for these men, highlight the fact that this tragedy that had taken place three days earlier, his death upon the cross, that it was actually not an accident, that this is something the prophets of Israel had been speaking about, that the Messiah would come not into Jerusalem on a big stallion to overthrow Rome, but actually he would come riding on the foal of a donkey, that he would enter Jerusalem in weakness.

He would come into Jerusalem not to be celebrated, but to be crucified. So Jesus is highlighting to them that to think wisely about the Messiah is to understand the Bible pointed towards the day when he, the Messiah, would do something for us that we can never do for ourselves.

And that takes us to the verse 27, which, if I could have one recorded lecture, podcast, TED Talk, Bible study, I would have loved to have had this Bible study.

[14:03] Notice what Jesus did next in his care for them. Again, the similar way he cares for us this morning, verse 27. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he, Jesus, interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Now, we've got to pause there for a moment. Let's just take in, let's slow down enough to consider what's being said here. Jesus is making an extraordinary claim.

And he's either a liar, a lunatic, or he's speaking the truth. As he says to them, let me let you know what the entire revelation of God's word was always about, is about.

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus, we don't know how long. Was it a 20-minute overview, an hour conversation? We don't know. We don't have to know.

But what we need to see is Jesus is saying this. Everything in the Old Testament is talking about me. That ultimately, the only hero in the Bible is me.

[15 : 15] That when Moses was talking about creation, recording that God made a world, and God revealed himself to his first son and daughter, and God set in motion an incredible story of goodness, truth, and beauty, that Moses was actually thinking about me.

Now, we know later in the New Testament, most specifically, what Jesus meant by that, when the Apostle Paul says, and when the Apostle John says, that Jesus is the creator.

That when even Moses was recording the poetry, the beauty, the story of Eden, that Jesus is saying to these two men, I was there.

It's about me. In fact, when Moses promised, recording the promise of God, that evil would be destroyed one day, that through this first son and daughter, God would set in motion a story, that their seed, their offspring, would be used in the story to crush evil that had brought death and destruction into the world.

Jesus is saying to these men, he was talking about me. I am here. I'm with you. When Moses spoke about worship, Jesus is saying Israel's worship was about me, this whole sacrificial system.

[16 : 31] He was talking about the day that I would come into Jerusalem and that how the blood of bulls and goats and animals could never truly meet the need that we have, that I am the Lamb of God who gladly, freely laid down my life for you, O Cleopas and your friend.

Now, talk about Jesus caring. Talk about the beauty of how Jesus comes to us, comes to you, comes to me through his word, caring, showing that he truly loves us as none other.

So Jesus is the fulfillment of the meaning of creation. Jesus is the fulfillment of what Moses wrote about in terms of Israel's worship and the law. Moses wrote the law.

Well, Jesus would want us to know that he fulfilled the law for us, that when we look at the law of God, we see its demands, we see its beauty, we see its wonder. Jesus says, I have come to live for you before I died for you.

This is again what the New Testament means when the Apostle Paul writes in Galatians that the law of God was given to drive us to Christ. See, Jesus did not primarily come into this world, my friends, to be a model for us to follow, but a substitute for us to trust.

[17 : 45] And this is exactly what Jesus is doing for these two men who are depressed, who are anxious, who are fearful, who are confused, who are hopeless and hapless.

And it's exactly what he's doing this morning for us. By his spirit, Jesus is speaking to you and me. Everything the Bible is talking about, it points towards me. Once again, which prophets that day in that Bible study did Jesus refer to?

When Jesus says, the prophets were talking about me, we could spend our remaining seven minutes or so just trying to unpack what are some of our favorite promises that the prophets of Israel spoke that we would say, you mean Jesus, this is you?

And the answer would be yes. In fact, the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1, verse 21 says this, for no matter how many promises God has made, they all find their yes in Jesus.

I can think a lot of the prophets' promises that I'm so glad to know today that because he was raised from the dead, Jesus is God's yes.

[18 : 53] Jesus is God's yes to the promises of personal redemption. Can we know for sure that our guilt and our shame are taken care of? Yes, because Jesus is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53, the one who was crushed in our place, the one who went to the cross for the joy set before him.

And part of that joy was knowing that he loves you. He's pursuing you. He's pursuing me. What hope do we have that this world, broken world that we're living in now, one day will become new heaven and new earth?

Well, because Jesus is God's yes to cosmic redemption. One day the entire world will not be filled with a pandemic, but with the pan beauty, the full beauty of the knowledge of God's glory.

These things are not hype, they are hope. Indeed, Jesus loves us, pursues us. Let's go on in our text because we're just about out of time. But I hope you're sensing today the story of the Bible about Jesus.

He comes to us, pursues us, he pursues prodigals of all variety. He meets us exactly where we are and he cares for us. He wants us to know what a great and gracious Savior he is.

[20 : 03] Well, we go on, verse 28. So they, Jesus and these two disciples, drew near the village where they were going and he, Jesus, acted like he was going farther. But they urged him, strongly saying to them, saying to Jesus, stay with us, for it's towards the evening and the day is far spent.

So he went in to stay with them. Once again, I love the picture of Jesus who would fellowship with us. Jesus is not in a hurry, my brothers and sisters and friends.

He's only in a hurry to be with us. He's in a hurry to be with you. Once again, own your own sadness, own the disconnect, the confusion, the fear, the anger of the season and know that it's Jesus who is pursuing, coming close to say, what you need, I freely give you.

I gladly give you. Well, they went in and verse 30, when he, Jesus, was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them and their eyes were opened.

I love that. Something about meal fellowship with Jesus. In the giving of bread and the blessing, they recognized him and then he, Jesus, vanished from their sight.

[21 : 16] They said to each other, and I love this verse, did not our hearts burn within us when he talked to us on the road while he opened to us the scriptures?

Let's just briefly consider before we move to our last point, the beauty of this. So here's Jesus pursuing, coming. Here's Jesus asking questions, engaging, dialoguing.

Here's Jesus moving into the emotional confusion of life and making himself the point. He's not telling these men to get their act together.

He's saying, oh, your hope, all your hopes and your fears, they find their answer in me. And he fed them grace, he fed them bread, and he met with them.

And look at the impact. And maybe this is an important connector for us today. So their eyes were opened. See, the Spirit of God helps us see Jesus in scripture. Their eyes were opened as he, Jesus, interpreted the scripture.

[22 : 18] Scripture cannot be understood apart from seeing Jesus. But then look at this statement about their hearts. We call this redemptive heartburn. Our hearts burned.

There's something about this was real. Jesus, we didn't just need a rabbi to tell us new things to do. We needed life. We needed resurrection. We needed something that would connect our head and our heart that would meet us in the disconnect of life, the confusion, the fear.

Did not our hearts burn inside of us when he spoke with us? My dear friends, this is the Lord that's pursuing you and me today. This is the resurrected Jesus.

Well, lastly, consider how this story finishes. We see in Luke 24 how Jesus comes to us. We see how he gives to us that the entire Bible is pointing out his life, death, and resurrection, his ascension into heaven, his fulfilling everything we need in a prophet, priest, and king.

But what was the ongoing impact in the lives of these two men? Thirdly, Jesus loves through us. Look at verse 33. And they rose, these two men, Jesus is now gone, and they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.

[23 : 35] And they found the eleven, meaning the other disciples, the part of the apostolic band, and they found the eleven, and those who were them gathered together, and they said to them, the Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.

And they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. So the final picture you see here is these two men, they're not holding on to a private religious experience.

They're saying, this good news, this understanding that Jesus is not dead, he is alive, he is everything he promised and more. It motivated them to move towards those whom they love.

You see, the Bible's telling this great story that the love of God comes to us, that it might go through us. And they joined the eleven, and the eleven now were alive and awake. And so just imagine that beautiful gospel party of these who were living in a culture of fear and shutdown and confusion.

Now they say, it is good, it is true, it is beautiful. And then what happens next, and I will pray for us right after this statement. You go from the end of the gospel of Luke into Luke's next book called the book of Acts.

[24 : 52] And you begin to see how this heart-worm community of men and women who are pursued and found by Jesus now come alive, and they become the best neighbors.

They become those who engage their community and their city. They bear witness to Jesus. That's what it means to be a witness. We speak about the things we have seen, felt, and experience, and know to be true about Jesus.

This is what I pray for my heart, the church family I serve here in Nashville, what I pray for Cornerstone. And I just want to conclude now with prayer, asking the Lord to apply these words to our hearts.

What a marvelous, true story. What an invitation that we have also in a time of crisis, sadness, and fear, and confusion to be pursued by Jesus.

Would you pray with me? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thank you for this magnificent story, story, this true story of a resurrected Jesus, not a legend.

[25 : 53] Lord, we truly, none of us need hype. We need hope. And thank you, Jesus, that you are the one that comes to us. You're coming to us right now and that you care for us.

You care about our bodies. You care about our spirit. You care about our eternity. You care about our today. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for being the fulfillment to everything the Bible speaks about, that you are our righteousness.

You are our forgiveness. You are our hope. You are our healer. You are the ruler of the kings of the earth. And we pray that your love in this season would explode in our hearts.

Lord, make us good neighbors to our friends in Edinburgh. Help us to be those mindful of the least and the lost, those who are so alone, even as we enjoy, Lord, this time together.

Lord, I thank you again for Neil. Thank you for Cornerstone. Thank you for this day. Thank you for the marvelous privilege we have once again to cry out, hallelujah with a savior.

[26 : 55] Hallelujah with a salvation we have in and through Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen. Amen. God bless you, my brothers and sisters in Edinburgh. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.