

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, Wash.
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Luke 24:13-35

What A Turnaround Jesus Brings!

- 1. He turns confusion into understanding**
- 2. He turns disappointment into joy**
- 3. He turns silent people into witnesses**

Hymns: "He Is Risen" – 149 – 148 – 610

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Luke 24:13-35 –

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Do you know the name Lasse Viren? He was part of one of the greatest comeback stories ever. Lasse Viren was entered in the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany. He ran the 10,000 meter race (about 6 miles). Lasse Viren had never raced in the Olympics before. He made it through the qualifying rounds all the way to the final! About halfway through the final race he fell down. Normally that signals the end for a runner in a race. But Lasse Viren got up and began to run again. Faster and faster he ran! He began to overtake the other runners. Soon he even overtook the British runner who was leading the race. And he won! But not only that, he also set a world record! Unbelievable! What a turnaround!

Today we have a "turnaround story" from Scripture. It is a true story, and it is the greatest turnaround ever. It is a story made possible by Easter. We might call this account

of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus “The Evening Lesson,” as Jesus walks with them and teaches them. Perhaps some of you have seen the famous painting of this Bible story, picturing Jesus walking through a woody place with these two disciples.

As we look at this turnaround today, we see from these verses that **Jesus turns three negatives into positives:**

1. **He turns confusion into understanding**
2. **He turns disappointment into joy**
3. **He turns silent people into witnesses**

1 — Let’s set the scene of these verses. It is Easter Sunday evening. Jesus has not appeared to his disciples yet. Two followers of Jesus (not of the 12 inner disciples) are leaving the city limits of Jerusalem to walk seven miles to a village called Emmaus. They are not happy. They are discussing the events of the past few days. Their leader, Jesus, was arrested and crucified. They are totally perplexed. As they walk on their way, a stranger happens to make his way to their side and walks along with them. It is Jesus himself, but they are kept from recognizing him by God in some way. He enters their discussion and asks what they’re talking about. Soon one of them begins to clue him in on the situation. It is obvious that they are quite confused about what has happened.

Listen to some of the verses that show their confusion:

- *“Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.”*

They were confused about who Jesus was. This person doesn’t even refer to Jesus as the Messiah.

- *“We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”*

They were confused about what he had done.

- *“Some of our women...went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”*

They were confused about where he was.

What is Jesus’ response? Pretty blunt! He calls them “foolish” and “slow”! They should have known better! After all, he had told them many times why he had come into the world.

Jesus begins to teach them (again!). We read, *“Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”* Where did he point these confused individuals? Directly into God’s Word! He went to Moses and the prophets (the OT) and showed them passages about how everything had happened exactly the way it was supposed to. Perhaps he went back to a passage he had said earlier in John 3: *“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.”* Maybe he went back to Isaiah 53, which says, *“He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”* I think we all would have liked to attend this lesson!

As for their confusing thoughts that we mentioned before, Jesus could clearly tell them:

- This crucified person was more than a prophet – He was the Christ (Messiah)!

- This person didn't fail in the task of redeeming Israel – v. 26 says, “*Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?*”
- As far as “not seeing” him anymore even though the tomb was empty – Here he was right in front of them!

Jesus turned their confused hearts around into hearts of understanding and faith!

Today, we have the privilege of seeing this all in hindsight. We can look at the plan of God and see how they should have known better. Sinful mankind was saved by the payment of Jesus' life on the cross and by his resurrection. It seems so clear!

But are we confused spiritually at times? After all, we don't have the luxury of having hindsight in our spiritual lives! Where do we find answers in our confusion? I've talked to many people about spiritual things who are not attached to a church, and many times they've confided in me that they're having a confusing problem in their life. They have struggled for answers in their mind or that they have even prayed about it, but guess what they haven't done. They haven't opened up God's Word for answers, and they haven't been in his house to hear answers! Yet they express confusion and frustration.

Might we also be tempted to feel frustration at not “knowing the answers” to our situations? Might we want to find our own way?

Turn to where Jesus turned – God's Word! Open up the “answer book”!

For example:

- Why this financial trouble? Why did I lose my job? The Lord can teach us that there is more to life than money, and that we trust him for what we need.

- Why did I have this injury or sickness? The Lord can be telling us to slow down in the rat race, and to re-prioritize ourselves with important things, such as being in his house, or being with our family more.
- Why did my uncle die? The Lord can tell us of the glories of heaven for believers and we can realize that God did a wonderful thing in taking our believing uncle to himself in heaven.

The answers are in the Word!

However, we must realize that sometimes we will not have specific answers to every problem of life. When that happens, may God give us a heart of FAITH so that we trust him and realize that he “works out all things for the good of those who love him.” Stay in his Word for the strength and answers that he chooses to give, at your home and at his house!

2 – We see another thought in Jesus' Easter evening lesson long ago, another turnaround that Jesus brings. **He also turns disappointment into joy.** After all, there was more than confusion in these disciples' hearts. There was also disappointment.

Where were they going on this trip? We'd have to speculate, obviously, but it very well might have been that they were going home. Perhaps they had spent a good amount of time following this Jesus of Nazareth. Now that his life was “over” they were going home. This is worse than your baseball game being rained out or your circus being cancelled. This was what they had staked their life and hope on! Listen again to some of the saddest words that we hear in Scripture from one of these men: “*We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.*” We had hoped, but obviously this is not true. What now?

We also hear how these men looked: *“He asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’ They stood still, their faces downcast.”* The word translated “faces downcast” here simply means “sad-faced.” Have you ever seen the look?

When I was about 10, my dad bought our family tickets to the Ice Capades. This was a fancy ice skating show with professional skaters and flashy acts. We drove quite a ways to the show and took our seats, which were “OK” seats as far as their location in the arena. We weren’t there long, waiting for the show to start, when some other people came up and asked if we were in the right seats. My dad got up and compared tickets with them, and it turned out we were at the wrong performance. This was not the right time for us to be there. An usher came up and helped solve the seating problem by giving our seats to the other people. Now we weren’t going to see the Ice Capades! DISAPPOINTMENT! But after my dad explained our situation, we were ushered to some specially reserved seats right on the edge of the ice! We had front row seats! Our disappointment was turned to joy!

That doesn’t even compare to the turnaround that these two disciples experienced. As they invited Jesus in to talk more with them, he had a wonderful surprise for them. As he blessed the evening meal, their eyes were opened and they recognized their Lord and Savior, their Jesus! How joyful they now were! He had overjoyed them with his words and teaching, and now he overjoyed them with his presence. He was alive! It was true! And he had won the victory over sin for them as their Savior. Can you imagine their faces after his appearance? Can you imagine the tone of their voices as they talked? Can you imagine that the pace of their walk was a

little different on the way back to Jerusalem?

Do you live with the joy of Jesus in your heart? If someone were to describe you, would they use words like:

- Positive
- Joyful
- Optimistic

Or would you be described as cranky, irritable, and cantankerous? Are you a joyful church member? Or when you’re in the room do people have to be joyful and happy in spite of you?

What is there to be so happy about? Our greatest joy is the same lesson that Jesus taught these two disciples! It’s the lesson that he is the fulfillment of our salvation. It’s the lesson that just as was prophesied about him, he came and paid your debt of sin! We had every reason to be depressed and down because of our predicament of sin, but no longer! Easter victory is ours! That’s why Easter hymns are so joyful and upbeat. The victory over sin and hell is won in Jesus. **In any stage of life or any situation, we can be sure of this!**

3 – We see one other lesson with our “turnaround” today. We also see how Jesus turned silent people into witnesses. We read, *“They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.”*

What effect did Jesus have? They “turned around” and immediately went back to Jerusalem that very evening! They didn’t say they would go back in the morning. It doesn’t even sound like they stayed to have a bite to eat. They went back at once to find the eleven disciples to share with them this great news. And when they returned, there

was joyful news from the eleven – Jesus had appeared to Peter and had shown himself to be alive! They heard that joyful story and shared their joyful story too.

Have we had a turnaround in this area also? Or have you been quite silent? Isn't it a temptation of ours to be silent? We live in an age where people don't want to get involved.

Perhaps you've heard of a syndrome called the "bystander effect." A recent study was done where a person was placed in a room where they were to fill out a job application. As they did that, smoke was piped into the room. The experiment was done to see how under what circumstances a person would do something about it. The experiment was done with three settings:

1. With a person alone in the room
2. With a person in the room with two others who were also ignorant of the experiment
3. With a person in the room with two other people who were instructed to visibly notice the smoke and then ignore it

The results were:

1. A person alone in the room notified someone of the problem 75% of the time. 25% ignored it.
2. Three people in the room who knew nothing of the experiment notified someone 38% of the time. 62% ignored the problem.
3. When a person was in the room with two people who knew about the experiment and visibly ignored the smoke, he reported it

to someone 10% of the time. 90% ignored it.

Conclusions were that:

- When there are other people present, a person feels that someone else will take care of doing something
- People feel its socially acceptable to follow the actions of others around them. If no one is acting, they shouldn't either.

Think back for a moment on how many people you have invited to your church in the past year. Has it been fewer than 15? 10? 5? Fewer than 1? If so, why? How many people did you talk to in the past year about your Savior or simply to invite to church whom was new to you, and who didn't know about Jesus? Any at all? Why not?

- Is there a devilish temptation that you leave here thinking someone else will do the speaking up about Christ?
- Is there a temptation to think that it's not socially cool to share our faith and our church with others? Perhaps we think it's too personal or too awkward.

If so, God forgive us! May he forgive us for the sin of keeping our mouth shut and his message to ourselves. We have the greatest message to share, salvation from hell itself and life forever in heaven! Let's look at the example of these disciples who shared their good news of the risen Savior and follow it. Talk to people other than other believers about the wonderful Easter news and about your church that gathers around this message every week!

What a turnaround! **We've seen three ways that the Easter message has turned us around:**

- 1. Jesus turns confusion into understanding**
- 2. Jesus turns disappointment into joy**
- 3. Jesus turns silent people into his witnesses**

May God turn our lives around through Jesus. May our turnaround be evident to all those around us and attract them to find out about the Savior who takes our depression and darkness and turns it into eternal joy! Amen.