

So, it might seem a little bit odd to you that we're going to start a study of the Old Testament with a New Testament passage, but what you're going to find out is what Jesus teaches us here in Luke 24 is really, really important for how we go back and interpret and understand the entirety of the Old Testament. Now, maybe the Old Testament scares you, maybe it's intimidating to you. It's kind of bizarre sometimes. There are wild and crazy stories. There are lots of books written by lots of people over thousands and thousands of years and so, what I'm going to do this semester is I'm going to read through the Old Testament in 90 days and I'm going to invite you to read it with me. We're going to send out an Old Testament reading plan this week and next week we're going to have it printed off. It'll take about twenty or thirty minutes a day, maybe forty if you're a slow reader like me. But it's got it broken up into chunks for each day, so you read basically every day for the first part of the month and then you get a grace day at the end of the month and you do that for three months and you should read through the entire Old Testament in 90 days. Now, if it takes you 90 days, great, you're not going to get a badge or a medal, okay, but that's good! If it takes you 120 days or if you start and don't finish, that's fine too! That's okay, alright? We have a saying around my house, never stop starting a good thing. Reading your Bible is a good thing. Reading the Old Testament is a good thing, and so if you have to keep starting, then that's fine, but that's what I'm going to do this semester, and I'm inviting you to do it with me as we go through this sermon series.

We've got two points this morning, the first is the road of disappointment, and the second is the road of hope. If you're a young listener out there and you want to take some notes, I want you to write down three people from the Old Testament that I reference. Three people from the Old Testament. Alright, let's read God's word here. Hear the word of the Lord from Luke 24:13-27:

“¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles 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.”

All men are like grass and their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fade, but not the word of the Lord, it stands forever. Let's listen to it.

On Friday night, my family went to a picnic at their school and they say it's a picnic. I imagine a picnic like us sitting on blankets and eating out of baskets and that sort of thing, it was not a picnic! It was a festival. It was a party. There were bounce houses, there were yard games, there was food, dancing, all that kind of stuff. Shannon Hayes was also there because she teaches at our kids' school! I was talking with Shannon and she was telling me the kids were all excited about the picnic all day long, and she teaches pre-k, and you know little pre-kers, they don't quite have this concept of time down that the rest of us do, and so, she said that all day long every time they would do something, they would assume that they were going to the picnic! So, she would say, 'Okay everybody, line up!' and they would say, 'Because we're going to the picnic?' And she would say, 'No, we're going to use the restroom.' She said, 'Okay, now we're going to wash our hands.' 'Because we're going to the picnic!?' 'No, because we're going to go eat lunch!' 'Okay, now it's time to put your homework in your backpack.' 'Because we're going to go to the picnic?' 'No, you're going to go home where your parents can answer all of these questions for you!' They were confused about the story! They, in their limited, finite, young wonderful minds, didn't understand how everything was going to play out. They had this promise of a picnic, but they didn't know how it was going to be fulfilled and they were on a little bit of an emotional yo-yo throughout the day, experiencing this, 'We're going to the picnic! Oh, we're not. We're going to the picnic! Oh, we're not.'

When we look in this passage today at Luke 24, I think we see these two disciples were on a little bit of this same yo-yo! Now, you've got to remember, for thousands of years they were waiting on a Messiah! The Jews were expecting God to redeem Israel! For 400 years, between the end of the book of Malachi and the beginning of the New Testament, there was silence! No prophet spoke! But the whole time they were waiting for all these promises to be fulfilled, and then Jesus comes on the scene and He is this mighty prophet and worthy and they think He's the guy! And then He's not. And so, it says they're walking away from Jerusalem and they are sad!

It says they were discussing the things that had happened. Now, the word 'discussing' is a little misleading because in the Greek it communicates this idea of passion or intensity. They were really wrestling with what was going on, with what was happening. And then in verses 19-24, it kind of tells us what they were discussing. They said that Jesus had proven Himself to be a prophet, mighty in word and deed, and they thought He was the guy who was going to redeem Israel, and by redeem Israel, they meant free them from Roman captivity and reestablish them as rulers over the promised land. But the religious leaders delivered Him up, they condemned Jesus, they crucified Him. So, thousands of years of disappointment was hanging on their hearts at this moment. All of these amazing promises they thought were going to be fulfilled in Jesus, to them, apparently weren't. And to make it even more confusing, their women went to the grave that morning to check on the body, and the body wasn't there! Instead, they saw angels that said, 'He is not here, He has risen! He's alive!' So, they sent Peter and John to go to the tomb, and Peter and John checked it out, but they didn't see Jesus, they just saw an empty tomb. So, you can imagine the disappointment, the discouragement, maybe the despair that they felt as they were on this emotional yo-yo of thinking that Jesus was the guy that was going to save them, and then Him dying but then maybe being raised from the dead, which doesn't happen!

May I ask you this, have you felt the disappointment of unfulfilled promises? I think we all have. This week I read an article about a 97-year-old philosopher who wrote a book arguing that the fear of death is irrational. He said, when you die, nothing happens! So why would you

fear death if nothing happens? He wrote that book and then twenty years later at the age of 97, he found himself fixing to die, and he changed his tune. He said this in a documentary that was made by his grandson, his name is Herbert Fingarette. He says, "It haunts me, the idea of dying soon. Whether there is a good reason or not, I often walk around and ask myself, what's the point of it all? There must be something I'm missing. I wish I knew." See, there's this tension in his heart, there's got to be something going on here, there's got to be more to the story than what I'm getting, because now I'm feeling this fear of death! But then he says, "But there isn't any good answer to the fullest question of understanding mortality. The answer might be the silent answer." So, he's given over to despair and discouragement because he doesn't believe in the God of the Bible.

Well, non-Christians aren't the only ones who struggle with this. I talked to two Christians this week that were struggling with God's plan! One of them did not feel like God was active in his life, and so, he was saying, 'I don't feel like God cares about me! I don't feel like He's relevant, that He even hears my prayers!' Another one was really discouraged and despairing about the state of the church, and he said, 'The church is supposed to make things better, but all I see is this divisiveness and this hate that's only making things worse!' As Christians and non-Christians we struggle with this question of, 'What is going on? What is the point of our story? Where is it going?' Maybe you are struggling with injustice or reconciliation or satisfaction in your work or satisfaction in your marriage or satisfaction in your friendships. There are all these promises in the Bible that we're looking at and going, 'Jesus, I don't see these being fulfilled in my life. What are you doing?'

We're all at some time walking down this road of discouragement and disappointment and despair and it's in that moment that Jesus comes alongside of us, He walks with us, and He speaks into our discouragement. That's what we see Him doing here with His disciples. They start out here on this road of despair and then Jesus takes them down the road of hope. What is the first thing that He does? The first thing He does is give them a general rebuke! He says, "Oh foolish ones!" Now, that's a way of calling them clueless or naïve. He's saying, 'Come on guys, don't you get it? Don't you get what the prophets talked about? You are slow of heart! You aren't believing the prophets have laid this out all throughout the Old Testament that the Messiah was going to have to be crucified! You're not just going to be rescued from suffering, you are going to be rescued through suffering! But you don't get it.' And neither do we, right? We just assume that Jesus is going to rescue us from suffering, we don't think He's going to rescue us through suffering. The disciples didn't believe it, they didn't understand Him, they were disappointed, not because God's promises had failed, but because they had failed to believe them.

So, what does Jesus do next? Does He say, 'Well hey, look guys, I know you don't get it, but here, look at my hands. Look at my feet. I'm resurrected.' No! That's not what He does. What does He do? He preaches them a sermon! And all the pastors say, 'Yes!' He preaches! He starts with Moses and all the prophets, now, when it says Moses, He's talking about the first five books of the Old Testament, we call it the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. There is a lot of hard stuff to understand there but Jesus obviously believed that it was real, and He believed that it pointed to Him! And so, He starts there, and He moves through the prophets. Now, that term, prophets, is pretty loaded for the Hebrew scriptures. It includes what they called the former prophets and that's what we would call the history books so, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Samuel, all those historical books? That would be their former prophets. The second part would be the latter prophets. We call those the major prophets

and the minor prophets. In one way or another throughout this sermon, Jesus shows them through all the Hebrew Scriptures how all the Hebrew Scriptures point to Him. He gives them the interpretive key to the Bible. He says, 'Look guys, let me tell you what this story is about. The story is all about me. I am the Messiah. It's about my life, my death, my resurrection, and how God is going to rescue you through me.' Now, later on, the disciples said their hearts burned within them as they heard this sermon. It sounds like a pretty good sermon, doesn't it? Would you want to hear that sermon? Probably better than the one you're hearing right now!

What if you could hear that sermon? What if you could? What if Jesus came alongside you in your disappointment, in your despair, in your confusion, and walked alongside you and showed you from the Old Testament how every passage pointed to Him? Well guess what? He can! Through the New Testament. We have that sermon because the New Testament writers take that interpretive key that Jesus gave them, and they go back to the Old Testament and they draw on the Old Testament for their teachings. The New Testament is filled with all of these allusions to the teaching of the Old Testament. St. Augustine said it like this, "The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed. The Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed." So, we can go back to the Old Testament and we can see how everything points to Jesus! In 1 Corinthians 1:20, Paul says this, "All the promises are yes and amen in Jesus." What is Paul doing? He is looking back at all the promises in the Old Testament and he is saying Jesus fulfilled all of those promises.

So, what if Jesus' sermon went like this? 'Hey guys, remember whenever I told Adam and Eve that Eve was going to have a child and that child was going to crush the head of the serpent, Satan? Yeah, that's me. I did that. It was through my life, my death, my resurrection that Satan was defeated.

Hey guys, remember whenever God sent that flood and flooded the whole earth except Noah and his family, and then afterwards He came and He made a promise to Noah, and He said, 'Noah, I promise you that I'm never going to flood the earth again and I'm going to put a rainbow in the sky as a sign to show you that I'm not going to do it?' Yeah, that rainbow was pointing up at me. God shot His bow at me so that He would get justice and He would not have to judge creation again.

Hey guys, remember all those amazing promises God made to Abraham? How He promised to make Him a great nation and give him a great land? Well, I am the true and greater Abraham and everyone who is a child of God through me will be a part of God's family and will inherit not just the middle east but the entire cosmos!

Remember when God went to Moses and He made His amazing promises? He gave him this law and He said, 'If you do this law, then you will live by it.' But you guys couldn't keep it? I kept it. Because of me, you will live, and because of me that law is good and it brings life to you. Remember when God came to David and He said, 'David, one of your children is going to sit on the throne forever, and He is going to reign for eternity over everything!?' I am the Son of David. That promise was fulfilled through me.'

What if Jesus said, 'Remember Jonah and that crazy story about how Jonah got swallowed by a whale and he lived in the belly of the whale for three days and then he came out and preached the gospel of repentance? I am the true and greater Jonah. I was in the belly of death for three days and I rose, and now I'm preaching the gospel of repentance and all who repent and believe will also rise again! All the promises are about me. Everything you've been waiting for. Everything you've wanted. The deepest desires of your heart are yes and amen in me and for all who believe in me and trust in me, they will experience life everlasting, true life.

Taste of it now and eternal life in eternity with me. They will experience the full reality of existence.’ Now, that is a sermon! Right? That is the point of the story! That’s the point of the story of the whole Bible! That’s the point of the story of what Jesus laid out here for these disciples.

That’s the story that’s revealed through the Old Testament that gradually, through these covenant promises, God is revealing more and more about the gospel and that’s what we’re going to look at this semester as we go through the Old Testament. We’re going to start with Adam and we’re going to look at the covenant with Adam and then we’re going to look at the covenants with Noah and Abraham and Moses and David and then finally the new covenant, and we’re going to trace the promises of God and see how they find their fulfillment in Jesus. As we do that, it’s my prayer that in those moments Jesus will come alongside us, the way He did with these disciples, and that He will walk with us through our disappointments, our discouragement, and our despair and bring us the hope of the gospel.

Because like these disciples, all of us at some point are somewhere on this road between faith and unbelief. They were on a road between faith and unbelief and at this point they are walking away from Jerusalem, and in a sense it’s them walking away from faith, they’re walking away from believing the gospel. All of us are there at some point. Maybe you’re looking at your life and you’re going, I just don’t see what God’s doing in my life, it’s strange, it’s confusing, I don’t understand the Bible, I don’t understand all of this. My prayer is that as we go through this study you will see the clarity, the beauty, the necessity and the power of God’s word, and that His promises in your life would become clearer and clearer and that you would begin to find them in God’s word, that you would begin to treasure them and that they would give you assurance that God has a good plan and He’s working out that plan for all who are loved by Him and called according to His purpose.

Some of you might be disappointed because you’re looking at your life and you’re looking at those promises and you’re going, ‘Lord, I’m believing. I’m not walking away from the faith. I’m believing and I’m trusting that You are going to answer my prayers. I’m trusting that You’re going to bring justice and truth and righteousness, that You’re going to bring community and family to me.’ What I hope you see is that God’s faithfulness in the Old Testament is a model of and a promise for His faithfulness to us. And I pray that you’re going to feed on those promises. That in those times of struggle you would go to God’s word and you would pull out those promises and you would feed on them, and they would strengthen you.

If you’re disillusioned by the church and by the Christian life like some of you may be, and like I have felt at times, what I hope you see is two things. One, that God is sovereign, that He is in control, that He has a plan that He is working out through all of history, that He has been working out, and that man is responsible for making wise and Biblical decisions. There is a tension there and a mystery there between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility that as you go through the Old Testament, you see that both of those things are true. What I hope happens is it encourages us to trust in God’s sovereignty, but to live wisely and Biblically and thoughtfully in our current age. What we need most now is an understanding of Scripture, and we need the Holy Spirit to help us apply Scripture to our time and our culture. It’s God’s sovereignty and our responsibility, and somehow together that fulfills God’s plan.

Maybe some of you here are like these disciples and you have been religious, you’ve been following Jesus for a long time, you know your Bible really well, but your hearts are hard and they’re slow to understand. You’re with Jesus, you’re near Jesus, but you don’t see Him. Isn’t that the irony of the passage, right? They say, ‘Our friends, they went to the tomb, but Him

they did not see!' And at that very moment they were staring at Jesus and they didn't see Him. That may be some of us here in this room this morning. We're looking for Jesus and at this very moment He's standing right in front of us and we don't see Him. My prayer is that you would see Him clearly and that your heart would melt in the power of the gospel.

Lastly, you may be here, and you may be like Herbert Fingarette. You may totally reject the idea of God. You may totally reject the idea of the Bible and the gospel and authority and truth, but you have these questions about life and death and meaning and purpose. If that's you, I am so glad you're here. I love that you're here. We want to be a community that walks alongside you the way that Jesus does here, and hopefully you will see that the Bible is beautiful and believable at the same time. There's probably nothing I'm going to say in this moment that's going to convince you that this is true, but my hope is that by becoming a part of our community, you would begin to believe that it is true, and it is beautiful, and you begin to believe in Christ.

No matter where we are on this road between faith and unbelief, I pray that we would all see the person and work of Jesus more and more clearly and that we would move from disappointment to delight, because that's what happens with His disciples. Now, I didn't put it in the reading, and I didn't put it in the passage because we didn't have enough space, but after this sermon, Jesus doesn't just end with the sermon, they go back, and they have a meal. The disciples invite Jesus in for a meal. They sit down. They eat together. Jesus breaks the bread, He blesses it, and in that moment their eyes are opened, and they realize they are eating with Jesus, and then He vanishes. Isn't He funny? Why would He do that? They said, 'This is amazing! Did not our hearts burn within us while He was explaining the Scriptures? Let's go back and tell everybody else.' So, they literally got up from the meal and they left and they went back to Jerusalem. They went back home. They went back to faith and they told everybody what happened on the road and how they saw Jesus in the breaking of the bread and how Jesus was alive. They moved from disappointment to delight. They moved from disillusionment to hope. That's my prayer for us. That us as a community, as we gather around Jesus and we feed on Him in faith, that we would see Him more clearly, that we would move from discouragement to hope, and that we would want to go and tell more and more people about Him so they can experience that as well. Let's pray that that's what happens.