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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**June 2, 2019**

**Jesus Confronts Cleopas**

**Matthew 26:26-29**

**Prayer:** *Father, I just I thank you for the body, I thank you for the blood, I thank you for this service that we set aside to focus on you and the cross and what you've done for us at that place. And Lord, we just want to pray for an extra measure of grace this morning as we look into your word concerning what you've done for us there, concerning what you are doing in our lives today. Father, I just again pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit, guide us, direct us. These are just words without your presence and so we pray that not only would you guide us but that you would make it of permanent value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as has been said, this is the first Sunday of the month and so we are focused on Jesus and what he has done for us on the cross. And we start out by looking at a passage from the gospel of Matthew that describes the last Passover supper that Jesus partook in. It says this, it says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and*

when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." So Jesus took the bread and he took the wine and then he offered them up, they were symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked the disciples to follow suit, to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood, and then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of this sacrifice on a regular basis. This is what we call "the Lord's table." We do it once a month, some folks do it once a year, some people do it every week. But we prepare for this by first meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus did for us on the cross; secondly, we examine ourselves, we ask God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, we confess that sin, and then we participate in the elements. *John 6:53* says: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well, we've been working our way through the Gospel of John and we are nearing the end, so we've been parked here for a while spending some time looking at some of the confrontations that Jesus had with his disciples and with others, and this is all post resurrection. We've looked at Jesus's confrontation with Mary Magdalene, at the

one that he had with the apostle Peter, at the one that he had with doubting Thomas. Well today we're going to look at a post resurrection confrontation that Jesus has with a man named Cleopas and it occurred on the way to Emmaus. Jesus has just been crucified and has died. We pick up the story at in *Luke 24* starting at verse 13. This is the day of his resurrection. It says: *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.* Think what kind of a conversation that must have been, how awful that must have been. Jesus was dead, but it wasn't like the death of a friend or a relative, it was much more than that. This was the death of the one that they thought was God's Messiah. These folks for three years had been following Jesus, they had to have seen and heard all of the great things that he had done, how he had fed huge crowds, how he had healed the sick, even raised the dead. I think it's safe to say that these fellows knew Jesus about as well as the disciples knew him, which was not really very much at all.

We've been studying the Gospel of John for quite a while and we've seen over and over again that the disciples themselves, they couldn't even see who it was that was living in their midst. Well, that was literally true for Cleopas. Verse 15 says: *While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and*

went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 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. Again, they're walking along and Jesus overtakes them and they can't recognize him and he says: "What are you guys discussing?" It says: "They stood still, their faces downcast." They can't believe what they're hearing. I mean they're literally stopped in their tracks by Jesus's apparent ignorance. I mean, to put that into context, imagine it's the day after 9/11, they were seven miles away from Jerusalem, imagine you're somewhere in New Jersey and you can see the rubble of the twin towers in the distance and you're having this conversation, and a complete stranger walks up to you and says, "Hey, what's going on?" Verse 18 says: *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 he said to them, "What things?" You think about that question. What an astounding question this is. I mean the prince of the universe has just defeated the arch fiend who stole the kingdom from Adam, and it cost him his life, and he reduces the greatest victory in human history down to a two-word question: "What things?" Well, the question's so out of place that the strangers, they stop right there and they say: "Are you a visitor to Jerusalem?" I mean you can almost hear the pain and the anger, the angst in their voice, in their voices. I mean, they're

basically saying are you a tourist or are you just ignorant? Well, these travelers were not just unhappy, they were existentially unhappy. See, this event that had taken place had challenged their very existence. They thought that Jesus was the complete answer to Israel's problems. In verse 19, it says: *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, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."* See, Jesus had been their answer, and Rome and the cross snatched it all away. *"But we had hoped he was the one,"* they said. And the cross had snuffed out that hope. Verse 21 says: *"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. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 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. 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."*

See, the reason Cleopas is so downcast is that he saw the very one who gave his life meaning, he saw that person executed. So what's he to do now? Well, I submit to you that Cleopas's problem is our

problem as well. You see, without Jesus, without the logos -- and "logos" means "that which gives meaning to" -- without the logos, there's really no point or logic to life. There's only life itself. I mean we're born, we grow up, we go to school, we get a job, we find a spouse, we get married so that we can have kids who then grow up, go to school, get a job, get married and repeat the process over and over and over again. We're born, we grow, we reproduce, and then we die. Now I ask you, how is that any different from the animals that we see surrounding us? You see, without Jesus I'm just the smartest of the animals, which may matter a lot while I'm alive, it doesn't matter a whit when I'm dead. Then the best that I can hope for is that I am just like any other animal, I'm just fertilizer. But God says otherwise. In *Hebrews 9* God says: *It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* See, Jesus came to bear that judgment for us. And Cleopas and his friends were extraordinarily unhappy because they just didn't get that. Cleopas said: *"Our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."* You see, in Cleopas's mind, redeemers just don't get crucified. I mean he was downcast and distraught because his reason for living was dead. He *"had hoped that Jesus was the one,"* and now by dying Jesus had failed to be that one. I mean he was supposed to redeem Israel, I mean to usher in this new day when the nation would no

longer be under the thumb of the Roman empire. And he'd seen this tremendous power and all of these miracles in the life of Jesus only to see that life snuffed out like that of a common criminal. You see, Cleopas's hope had died when Jesus died. And he can still hear the words: *"He saved others, yet he couldn't save himself."* And all the hope that he had vested in this Messiah now lay dead and buried.

So Cleopas had a good reason to be unhappy, but he was unhappy because he was terribly uninformed. See, the Jesus that he had invested his life in was far greater than his wildest imagination. He had hoped that Jesus was the one to save Israel not realizing that Jesus had come not only to save the nation but to redeem his sheep and give meaning to what had become a meaningless existence. God said: That this same Jesus that Cleopas had seen crucified was not only the redeemer of Israel, he was also the creative force that produced the entire universe. *John 1* says: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.* Listen to what God is saying here. He's saying that Jesus himself was the creative force that literally infused life itself into creation. *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.* Like I said, that Greek word that

we translate "logos," it means "that which gives meaning to." It's the same word that we get our word "logic" from. In verse 14 of John 1 God tells us that the logos, the word, the one who gives meaning to, became a human being and lived among us. It says: *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* The one who gives meaning to life became a human being. And he wasn't just the creative source, he was the well that meaningful existence comes out of. I mean, without Jesus we have an existence that Shakespeare summed up perfectly in the words of *Macbeth*. He said: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." I mean life without the logos of life signifies nothing. Solomon himself said of life: *It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.*

And you know, Cleopas had a few precious moments thinking that his life was going to be different before the reality of Jesus's death hit home. So now he is shattered. Cleopas made the same mistake that many others do. He thought of Jesus as a political ruler alone. You know others thought of him as a revolutionary or as a teacher or as a prophet, very few thought of him as a sin bearer, as a flawless substitute for his sheep. Like I said, Cleopas



wasn't just unhappy, he was also sadly uninformed. He was uninformed about who Jesus really was and what his purpose in coming was as well. And you think about Cleopas and you just wonder about his life, I wonder if he ever heard what Jesus had said about his sheep, I mean, he said in *John 10*: "*I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for my sheep.*" Well, Cleopas apparently got the first part, he got the shepherding part, but he completely missed the second part. That's the dying part. Did you hear what Jesus said well before he was arrested and crucified, in *John 12*, Jesus says this, he says: "*Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.*" This is important to understand what he is saying because when he used the term "lifted up," everybody understood crucifixion. That's what the term meant. The scripture goes on to say: *He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.* Cleopas had seen Jesus lifted from the earth, crucified, exactly as he said he would. But he never connected the dots. He was distraught about Jesus's death because he was badly uninformed. All he saw was a tragic miscarriage of justice resulting in the execution of an innocent man.

But you know God saw the very same facts from an entirely different perspective. Jesus was about to drive out the prince of this world

by using the devil's own tools against him. The prince of this world, that is the devil, saw the cross as this great public humiliation and a repudiation of Jesus by the very people that he had come to save. God saw it as a public demonstration of his Son's substitutionary atonement for us. Jesus, the perfect one, offering himself as a sacrifice for his fallen and imperfect sheep. And you know both sides, both kingdoms had huge stakes in the outcome here. Jesus came to die as our perfect substitute. If he had failed that mission, if he had sinned in this life or he had sinned even in the act of dying, he wouldn't have been a flawless substitute for us, the sacrifice would not, could not be accepted by his perfectly holy Father and he would have stayed dead and buried. Cleopas saw the cross and all he could see was a dead Jesus. And that's what the world saw at least for three days until the angel announced, *"He is risen, just as he said."* You see, the resurrection was the Father's proof that his Son's sacrifice had been perfect and that our sin debt had been paid in full and the proof of that was an empty tomb. That rolled open stone proved that Jesus' perfection was accepted on our behalf, and that the prince of this world, Satan, could no longer use our sin as his claim to us because that sin was now paid for in full. Jesus had turned the tables on Satan, canceling our debt, paying it in full just as God declared in *Colossians 2*, which says: *And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God*

made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. Cleopas didn't get that. Cleopas only saw a man named Jesus nailed to a cross. And what he saw as tragic defeat, God saw as the greatest triumph in human history.

So we got to ask ourselves, how did Cleopas miss this so badly? Well, he missed it because he failed to see who Jesus really was. And you know, folks, that's something most of us, believer and non-believer alike, do every single day. I mean how often do you find yourselves disappointed in Jesus? He just hasn't lived up to his billing. I don't have this incredible victory where everything is just working out amazingly because I got Jesus on my dashboard, I got Jesus behind me, he's my co-pilot, and we're just kind of blowing everything away. It's working out great. Has Jesus failed to deliver what you thought he promised? I mean is life for you a struggle instead of a victory? Well, maybe you're making the same mistake that Cleopas made. Maybe your Jesus is too small. Maybe his victory has escaped you like it escaped Cleopas. Just consider for a minute how God could call the agony of his son's execution, he calls that a triumph. Consider how different God's notion of

success is compared to ours.

As the elders begin distributing the bread, just take some time to ponder that, but consider also taking God's warning about communion itself. It's found in *1 Corinthians 11*. It says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* I repeat this warning each month at this time and I tell you that communion is an extremely serious undertaking and to enter into it in an unworthy manner is to court disaster. You need to be a child of God, you need to be one of his own to participate in this and you first need to be reconciled to your brother and sister before you bring your sacrifice to the altar. I was sitting in the office this morning and I heard Dave repeating the same thing in his Sunday school class. You folks missed a wonderful class. It's ending for the summer now but let me tell you, Dave does an incredible job with the adult Sunday school but he was just talking about that specifically. First things first, if you're here and you have something against your brother, your brother's got something against you, don't

participate, deal with that first and then come back. Again, if you're not participating, no one's going to think you're weird, no one's going to think you're odd, they may think you're wise. And I also want to point out the other side of this. The other side the enemy loves to make us not even think about and that is we think if we're not perfect, if our conduct hasn't been superb, we're not worthy to receive communion, and the enemy loves that, too, because that's got us stuck right between two poles. See, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you never fail. What it means is you've got God's Holy Spirit inside you and when God takes up residence inside you, part of what his job is is to convict us of sin. He's speaking to you right now, he's saying you need to deal with these things. That's the point of communion is to hear what God is saying when his Holy Spirit is speaking to you, when he's convicting you of sin and agreeing with him. It also means we recognize that our salvation is a gift, one that no one is ever capable of earning by being good. And as I quote each month, Dane Ortlund says it well, "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you, is thinking that you do." But you know, if you have failed and God is convicting you of this sin in your life, in a way you can rejoice because that's the evidence of the Spirit's presence. God's Spirit is within us convicting us and so we grieve as children who know that

we have a Father who longs to forgive and cleanse us. And God says so in *1 John 1:9*, he says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that you're spotless, it means that when you sin you understand that you're forgiven, that you have an advocate with the Father, someone speaking in heaven itself on your behalf. *1 John 2:1* says: *My dear children, I write this to you, so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And that's the bottom line. You see, it's not our righteousness that we're appearing before God saying, "I hope it's good enough" because it's not, it's not perfect, it's not flawless. The only one who was perfect and flawless was Jesus. But guess what, he gives us his righteousness. We appear before God not with ours but with his, and we can turn and look at his righteousness and say, "Father, I have his righteousness." It's perfect. And that's all we need. And if you have that righteousness, you're free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself that privilege because Jesus purchased it for you at the cost of his blood. He lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we deserve to die in our place so that we could be made worthy enough to participate, so that we could receive a gift that we really can't begin to understand.

So just for a moment put yourself in Cleopas's shoes. Try to figure this all out, try to figure why in the world this terrible thing happened. And understand that Cleopas's vision of who Jesus was was tiny, shrunken, not at all who he was. *1 Corinthians 11:23* says: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* So take, and eat.

As I said, Cleopas's ignorance seems almost comically inept. And we ask ourselves how could he have missed the scripture's depiction of who Jesus was and what his mission was? I mean instead of predicting a triumphant political ruler wresting Israel from Rome's grip, it speaks instead of a rejected sin-bearer taking on our sin. I mean the prophet Isaiah spoke these words centuries before Jesus was even born, he said this about the Messiah: *He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone*

*astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth.*

So I ask Cleopas, who could that possibly have been but Jesus? I mean wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement that brings us peace is upon Him. He's led like a lamb to the slaughter. I mean Cleopas had to have seen in the cross all that unfold before his eyes. *Psalm 22* is even more specific. It was written a thousand years before Jesus's birth and it opens up with the very words that Jesus cried out from the cross: *"My God, my God why hast Thou forsaken me."* It then goes into a graphic description of what happened at the crucifixion. Verses 7 and 8 say: *All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"* A thousand years later that exact mocking comes from the high priests as they're standing there watching Jesus. *Matthew 27:41* says: *"Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders said, "He saved others; himself He cannot save. If He is the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him."* Didn't Cleopas hear that? I mean *Psalm 22* goes on to say: *"My*



*strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."* A thousand years after the Psalm is written these incidents happened and they have them exactly as predicted. We go to *John 19*, it says: *When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things.*

And so we ask, didn't Cleopas see the soldiers when they're casting lots for Jesus' garments? I mean, didn't he see how they pierced his hands and pierced his feet, couldn't he put two and two together? I mean when that Psalm was written ten centuries earlier, Rome didn't even exist as a power and crucifixion itself had not even been invented. Well, surely Cleopas had access to the Psalms. I mean the cross and the garment and the piercing, these were dots and they were the size of beach balls. So why didn't

Cleopas connect the dots? Like I said, his blindness was almost comical. You know if you go back to this text I read at the beginning of the message, you find this very unhappy, very uninformed Cleopas telling a Jesus he can't recognize how disappointed he is in Jesus.

As the elders distribute the cup, let's pick up on that conversation. And we pick it up again at Jesus's question: *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, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 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. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 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. 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."* Mind you, Jesus is standing there talking to them and he's unloading all of this on Jesus. And what we see here is really overwhelming evidence that Cleopas is not only unhappy, he's not only uninformed, he's filled with unbelief. I mean he starts off by telling the Jesus he doesn't even recognize that this

Jesus, who has bitterly disappointed him, was a powerful prophet in word and deed who's been crucified and buried. That's a dot. He tells Jesus that he's heard the tomb is empty. That's another dot. Oh, and he heard that there's eye witness accounts of an angel announcing that Jesus is alive. That's another dot. Oh, and he's also heard other eye witness accounts saying that friends had found the tomb empty. Another dot. I mean you add to those dots, all the other dots contained in the scriptures about Jesus as the bearer of our sin and we wind up with this gallery of dots, and he never connects them. He thinks isn't all of this just so awful? Remember, Jesus has overtaken them. They're the ones that are silent and downcast and defeated and they rebuke Jesus's feigned ignorance of the events of these last few days. Now they find it's Jesus's turn to rebuke them. Verse 25 says: *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* Jesus tells Cleopas, hey, Cleopas, the dots were there in front of you all the time. *"O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"* He says, my dear Cleopas, you are a hard-hearted fool, but I still love you enough to pursue you. And you know, I've been kind of hard on Cleopas and that you might say that's unfair, because

really Cleopas is us. Those words are not just for Cleopas, they're for all of us. "*Foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe.*" See, when it comes to dots we've got a lot more dots than Cleopas ever had, I mean, we have all the evidence that he had, plus we have the whole of scripture, the whole of history, all of science and all of the failed attempts at skeptics to prove that the tomb wasn't really empty.

So why doesn't everybody believe? Well, the answer is actually very simple: We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are. We become the final filter that determines if we'll accept things as they really are or as we choose to perceive them. Case in point Jesus and his healing of Lazarus from the dead. The Pharisees, they see with their own eyes a man who was not just dead, he's so far dead he's starting to rot. And they see him alive, standing there, and what do they conclude? Clearly this is God, clearly this is the author of creation, clearly this is the person who has the power of life itself. Uh-uh. They conclude that this guy is a threat. In fact he's such a threat he now has to die. See, they didn't see things as they are, they saw them as they were, as they chose to perceive them. You see, there's still a war going on between the kingdoms and part of the fallout of that spiritual warfare is this spiritual blindness every one of us has inherited from Adam. Cleopas literally could not see the Jesus

that he was speaking to because God wouldn't let him see. Verse 16 says: *Their eyes were kept from recognizing him.* But you know the same is true for everybody who's outside the kingdom. But you know it's not God who's blinding him. It's Satan and his minions. 2 Corinthians 4 says: *The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* And because they're blind, 1 Corinthians 1:18 says: *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* You see, your non-believing friends, neighbors and relatives, they all think the cross is foolish or unfortunate or unimportant because they can't see otherwise. They can't see that the cross is the pivotal event that divides believer from unbeliever. And so we say, if that's true then why bother telling everybody about Jesus? If everybody's blind, they can't see, if everybody's deaf, they can't hear. Well Jesus tells us why in Matthew 19. Jesus has just met this rich young ruler who wants to follow him and Jesus tells him he's going to have to sell everything, give it all to the poor, lay his treasures down, accrue for himself treasures in heaven. And then the ruler goes away sad and Jesus goes on to say: *Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.* And of course the disciples, they're stunned by this statement, I mean, everything they thought,

everything they've learned or were taught said that wealth was this prima facie evidence of God's blessing. Here's Jesus turning the entire concept on its head. He's saying wealth is often a curse and this was just too much for the disciples. Verse 26 it says: *When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"* I mean if they're thinking if the wealthy aren't blessed of God then who in the world could ever enter into the kingdom? Well, verse 26 says: *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* Understand Jesus was unequivocal here. Jesus said no human is capable of leading another human into the kingdom. He says it's impossible. Jesus himself said in *John 6:44*: *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."* It is impossible for us to lead anyone into the kingdom of God by our own power. But here's why we still preach the gospel: *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* You see, the god of this age, Satan himself, is still at work today and he works mightily to make sure that you and you and you and all of those folks outside do not connect the dots. He even wants you to think that the dots themselves are ridiculous. And he's been wildly successful. I mean for many, the whole idea of God-man bearing my sins is just plain foolishness. And no matter how hard I try, I cannot make you believe Jesus is who he says he is, God in the flesh, the good

Shepherd who came to earth to ransom his sheep with his blood. I can't overcome the god of this age who's far more powerful than I am, but I can introduce you to someone who is far more powerful than that god. And I may suggest to you that he might even be overtaking you right now, walking and talking to you this morning, just like he did with Cleopas and his friend. Remember they were existentially unhappy, uninformed and unbelieving when Jesus overtook them because they thought the meaning of life itself had died. Perhaps you sense that same kind of meaninglessness. You know perhaps you've asked yourself what am I doing here? What is the point of all of this? Cleopas had the joy of his life restored because God elected to show him that the logos, the very one who imparts meaning to life, that the logos had gone to the cross to purchase eternal life for his sheep. So Jesus opens up the entire word of God to show that everything that had taken place was exactly as God had planned it. Verse 27 says: *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.* Oh, what I wouldn't give to have been at that Bible lesson. It's probably the greatest Bible lesson of all time, I mean, as the author and finisher of scripture itself begins to explain that the entire Bible is about him. Cleopas says, *"Didn't our hearts burn within us as he opened to us the scriptures?"* I'll tell you why his heart was burning. His heart was burning because the meaning of life that he thought

had died was not only very much alive but was there among them, proving and demonstrating that life in the kingdom was the only life that has meaning. The logos who gives our life its only logic had risen from the dead and was now walking beside them.

You notice that Jesus was the one who overtook Cleopas and his friend. It was Jesus who pursued and overtook them. Again I say perhaps that same logos is pursuing you. And when he does, the first thing that you will notice is perhaps for the first time you start to see dots that start to line up. You start to think perhaps the foolishness of the cross is not so foolish after all, and if you think that, you didn't get that on your own, I assure you. You see, it's impossible to come to God on your own but you're never alone. Again, Jesus says in *John 6:44*: "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.*" See this gospel, if it makes any sense to you at all, it's because God has visited you or is visiting you just like he did for Cleopas. Just don't think it's anything out of the ordinary when it comes to God's grace.

Paul Tripp writes: "In Luke 15 the Pharisees came to Jesus and ridiculed him for 'receiving sinners.' They were wrong. Jesus does not receive sinners, he pursues sinners. He pursues sinners like a shepherd pursues a lost sheep, like a woman pursues her lost



coin, like a father runs after his lost son." Jesus runs in pursuit of sinners. I mean if Jesus is overtaking you and you don't know what to do next, I'd love to have a chat with you, I'd love to have you chat with any of the deacons or elders here, if you have a believing friend, it's time to get this squared away. And if he has overtaken you, if he has given you his life and his logos, which is the meaning of life itself, then it's time to do what should come naturally to the creatures he designed for this in the first place, and that is to praise him, to glorify him and to worship him. So let's take a moment to contemplate the love of God and a Christ who pursues.

*1 Corinthians 12:25 says: In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." So take, and drink.*

This is the part we call heart, hands and feet where we try to find a practical way to apply what it is that we're trying to remember about Christ. And I want to go back and just reflect on Cleopas and I think, you know, maybe you are like Cleopas. Maybe you're a believer who's deeply disappointed that Jesus just not -- hasn't really delivered what you thought was promised. Maybe you wonder where is this victory? Maybe life isn't enjoyable or easy or even

fair, maybe it's much more like the kind of life that Jesus had. And if that's your situation, just consider the possibility that the promise you're clinging to is not too big, it's too small. Cleopas wanted an earthly answer to a heavenly problem. Because Jesus wasn't who he thought he was, his life had lost its meaning and its purpose. Jesus brought it all back into focus by opening up the scriptures proving that Cleopas's foolish heart had shrunken Jesus down to this earthly solver of political problems when Jesus was so much more than that. So Cleopas went from deeply depressed to hearts on fire and he did so because Jesus connected the dots for him. Much of what Jesus revealed to him we've had revealed to us by God's Holy Spirit. And so now it's our turn to let other people's hearts burn within them.

I guess my question for you this morning, I want you to think seriously about this. When was the last time you actually had a conversation with somebody about Jesus? When was the last time you had an opportunity to connect the dots for somebody who needs to know and everybody who doesn't desperately needs to know about Jesus. I maintain it's one of the greatest privileges and pleasures you will ever have in your life, but I fear these days that those conversations are few and far between. And so what I want us to do this morning is as a congregation to plead with God, to prayerfully come before him for an opportunity to share that

good news, the good news of who Jesus really is, that Jesus was the perfect sacrifice sent to redeem his sheep. I also want to pray that while we are doing that, we would have Cleopas's heart afterwards, a heart that is on fire, because we get it. The dots have been connected it's now our turn to connect the dots for somebody else. This is the message the world desperately needs to hear and it's one that God delights to speak through you and me, provided we are willing. And I know what people think, they say, you know, I'm not good at theology. I don't buy that at all. If Jesus is real to you, you can communicate the fact that he's real, you can communicate what he's done in your life. You don't need to be a theologian to do that. You can talk about the dots that God connected in your life. I mean, the bottom line is you just have to be willing to share the dots and then let God do the knitting together. Let's pray.

*Father, we just, as a body of believers, recognize that part of our privilege is the ability to share with others. And, Lord, we are in a climate now where people resent it, people get angry, people think who are you to thrust your religion down my throat. We have become cowed, we have become afraid, we have become inured to the needs that these folks have who are living lives that are meaningless, who are strutting their hour upon the stage signifying a life that means nothing. Father, we have the secret to*

*everlasting life. We have the dots. We could help people connect them. And so I want to pray for each and every individual here that you would give us opportunities, whether it be just in the grocery store or over a clothes line, at a little league game, bowling, anything, Lord, everything can be a divine encounter by your grace, by your strength and power, but it won't happen if we don't ask. And so I pray, Lord, that we would be able to come back here and share opportunities that we had, opportunities to share the good news of who you really are. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*