

A state trooper was cruising on I-5 late one night near Olympia, when he noticed a car in the fast lane that was crawling at a snail's pace. It was barely moving – it was an accident waiting to happen, so the trooper pulled the car over to see if they needed assistance. When the trooper approached the car, he noticed a short elderly man seated behind the steering wheel.

The trooper asked the man why he was driving so slowly, to which the man pointed to the blue sign on the side of the road and said, "It says 5."

The trooper shook his head in amazement and explained that "5" is the number of the highway – not the speed limit, and then the trooper happened to glance in the back seat and noticed two very dazed and confused passengers.

The trooper asked the two, "Are you okay?" to which one replied, "Yes, but give us a moment, we just came off Highway 101."

This morning, I would like to share another interesting road story – a story involving two men, on a seven-mile road, who were also dazed and confused over the recent events they had experienced.

Our story takes place on Easter Sunday – the very first Easter Sunday, where two men were walking from Jerusalem towards their village called **Emmaus**, which was about a seven-mile walk. Now, these two weren't any of the "famous" apostles we know of like Peter or James or John – they were just simple common men who had followed Jesus. One was named **Cleopas** but we are not given the name of the other.

We are told, that as they walked along the road, they talked and argued about the recent events during the last few days. I imagine they talked about what they had witnessed just a week prior, as they watched Jesus ride into Jerusalem on a young donkey for the Passover celebration. People were laying their coats and palm branches on the road – like rolling out the red carpet for Him, and they were shouting "***Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord.***"

It was amazing and exciting, for many believed He was the King who had come to establish His kingdom. Many thought He had come to bring peace to a troubled land, He had come to kick out the Romans, He had come to make all things *right* – but now it would seem they were all *wrong*, because just a few days ago, on Friday, Jesus was beaten to a pulp and executed on a Roman cross between two criminals. Jesus is dead – and their hopes and their dreams have died with Him.

How could this happen to Jesus? This was the Jesus who gave sight to the blind, opened the ears of the deaf, and caused the lame to walk. This was the same Jesus who could calm a storm with a word. He even walked on water. This was the Jesus who feed thousands of people with next to nothing. This was the same Jesus who had earlier raised Lazarus from the dead. **How could Jesus do all that – but not save Himself?**

They were dazed and confused, and on top of that, the great movement that Jesus had started which changed the lives of so many appears to be over. All the apostles who had walked with Jesus are in hiding. They've thrown in the towel. They saw what happened to Jesus, they saw what happened to their fearless leader, and now, they know they have targets on their backs as well. They're in witness protection – hiding in fear for their lives because they don't want to suffer the same fate as Jesus.

Jesus is dead, and so is the movement He started. It's all over. **How could this happen?**

Down the road these two men walk towards Emmaus, engaged in this very emotional conversation – disillusioned, and discouraged, and defeated, struggling with questions without answers, wondering what to do next, and suddenly a stranger joins them going in the same direction. This stranger is Jesus, but they don't know it. They are being kept from recognizing Him until they are ready.

So, it's at this point I want you to find this story in your Bible. Turn to **Luke 24, verse 17.**

And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad.

In the middle of their conversation, Jesus asks these two men a very natural question – a question Jesus already knew the answer to. Essentially, Jesus asked them, **“What are you talking about?”** and it stopped these men in their tracks. They stood there, looking at Jesus, and their answer was written all over their faces – it was sadness and grief because Jesus – the one they loved and the one who loved them – was gone.

Then beginning with **verse 18**, they speak to this unknown stranger,

¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here

in these days?” ¹⁹ And He said to them, **“What things?”** And they said to Him, **“The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,** ²⁰ **and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.** ²¹ **But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.** ²² **But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning,** ²³ **and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also 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 exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.”**

Cleopas was amazed that someone could have been in Jerusalem during the last couple of days and not heard all the news – to which Jesus replies **“What news?”** These two must have thought this stranger was new in town, or maybe just crawled out of a cave or something, because it’s already “gone viral” so to speak, and everyone knows what happened to Jesus.

So, these two men go on to describe Jesus – who ironically, is standing right in front of them. If you think about it, this is somewhat comical, but on a serious note, it reminds us that Jesus is much closer than we might think. Yes, there may be those times where He seems a million miles away. Yes, there may be those moments where we might question if He is truly present in our lives, or we may wonder if He’s really working on our behalf, but the truth is – He walks with us, especially when we think we are walking alone. Remember, it was Jesus who said at the very end of Matthew’s gospel, **“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

We may not always recognize Jesus, and we may wonder where He is and what He is doing when certain things happen in our lives – but know this, in those times when we think Jesus is the farthest away – those are the times when He is actually closer than we might think.

Anyway, Jesus patiently listens to these two men while they tell Him what He already knows. These men lay out all the facts and they describe Jesus as **“a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people.”** Jesus was holy and righteous, He performed countless numbers of miracles, He was perfect in all of His ways – sinless, and yet, these two were baffled that it was their own religious leaders who put Jesus to death. The Jewish leaders who were supposed to be men of God – they falsely accused Jesus and had Him arrested. Then they took Jesus to the Roman authorities and the Romans carried out the

execution that the religious leaders demanded. Jesus was crucified for all to see – it was a public and horribly violent spectacle.

The two continued and said, “**we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.** From their perspective, they expected Jesus to establish His earthly kingdom right then and there, and set His people free. They had hoped that Jesus was the one who would deliver Israel from its Roman captors and make everything right for God’s people. That was their expectation of Jesus, that’s what they expected the Messiah to do on their behalf, but when that didn’t happen, when He was crucified – when their hopes and dreams were dashed on a cross – it appeared that death had won and it was all over but the crying.

And if that wasn’t bad enough, to pour salt in an open wound, early that morning they heard news from some women that the tomb where Jesus was laid was now empty. His body was missing. **Who would do such a thing?** The women who went to the tomb told the apostles that some **angels** appeared to them and said Jesus was **alive**, but everyone knew that was crazy talk. **Who in their right mind would believe that?** No one. Yes, a few of the apostles did run out to the tomb and verified the body of Jesus was, in fact, missing, but no one can figure out what happened to Him.

So, as far as these two men can tell, Jesus is dead, the movement He started is dead, and now His dead body is gone. No one can seem to find Jesus, even though we know Jesus has already found them. To them, He is only a stranger, and now the stranger speaks beginning with **verse 25**.

²⁵ **And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.**

When they were finished speaking about their dashed hopes and dreams, Jesus had something to say to them. He calls them **foolish men and slow of heart to believe** – meaning they should have known what God’s word had said about the Messiah. They should have known that before there was a *crown* of **glory**, there had to be a *cross*. This was all part of God’s plan spelled out in the Old Testament, their Scripture – a plan that clearly spoke of His suffering. They should have known it, they should have believed it, and so Jesus leads them through the Old Testament and explains what it says about Himself.

So, without identifying who He was, Jesus began to point out portions of Scripture that referred to Himself, specifically those portions that speak about His suffering. We are told that Jesus began with **Moses** – the first five books of the Old Testament, and maybe He started with **Genesis 3:15**, which reads,

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

This is the first gospel message – given immediately after sin entered the world. In context, after Satan deceived Eve and Adam was knowingly disobedient – God pronounced there would be an ongoing battle of good versus evil, and in this battle, Satan will eventually wound the seed of the woman, but in the end, the seed of the woman will crush Satan and evil will eventually be vanquished.

Jesus may have told them, *“The Messiah is the seed of the woman who suffered on the cross, but that won’t be the end – for He will crush Satan.”*

Maybe Jesus explained that passage to them, or maybe He made reference to **Psalm 22**. I’ll read a portion of it beginning with **verse 14**,

¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it is melted within me. ¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; and You lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

That was written 1000 years before Jesus was crucified, and it’s a clear description of our Lord’s dying thoughts during the saddest hours of His life on a Roman cross, which had just occurred a few days prior.

Then I have to believe that Jesus took these two men through **Isaiah 53**, which was written some 700 years before He was crucified. I am going to read this from the New International Version, and it says,

¹Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? ²He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. ³He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

*⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away. **Yet who of his generation protested?** For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished. ⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. ¹¹ After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. ¹² Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

This was a vivid picture of Jesus – the Messiah who would suffer and die for the sins of a fallen people who rejected God. All of *us* have gone astray. In *our* sinful rebellion, all of *us* chose to go *our* own way – and as a consequence, there was heavy price to pay – a death penalty, but God laid this penalty on Jesus. He became a **guilt offering** – suffering and dying for the sins of the guilty so that the guilty might go free and enter into a life changing relationship with the risen Savior.

So, maybe Jesus shared these passages with these two men – maybe He shared others and there are many others, but whatever He shared, He connected the dots and explained that Scripture clearly laid out God's plan to save a lost people. Jesus assured them that what had happened wasn't unexpected – in reality, the cross was part of God's plan all along to make a way for salvation – it had to happen that way – Jesus had to die so that others may have life, the *cross* had to come before the *crown* – they were just slow to believe it.

As Jesus shared all these things, before they knew it, they came to the end of their seven-mile walk, and we are told beginning with **verse 28**,

28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them.

These two men had walked with Jesus and listened to Him, and when they thought that He would continue on alone, they asked Jesus to come home with them. Remember, they still don't know who He is. To them, Jesus is just a stranger who seems to know everything there is to know in Scripture.

Did you notice that Jesus pretended as if He was going to continue on without them? Was Jesus planning on leaving them in their doubt before revealing Himself? I don't think so, instead, it seems that Jesus wanted to give them an opportunity to invite Him in – and fortunately for them, that's what they did and here's what happened beginning with **verse 30**.

30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

We are told Jesus reclined at the table with these men, and acting like the host, Jesus took some bread, blessed it with a prayer, and began to share it with them – and it was then they realized the stranger who had been walking with them all along was, in fact, none other than Jesus. Maybe at the table, they noticed the nail marks as He passed the bread out. Maybe it was the personal way Jesus prayed to the Father that gave Him away, or maybe it was the way He broke the bread that opened their eyes. How they came to recognize Jesus we are not told, but once they did – poof, He vanishes from their physical sight.

What a rollercoaster ride for these two men. They knew Jesus had been crucified and died on Friday. They knew the apostles were hiding in fear and concluded the movement that Jesus started was dead as well. Then on Easter Sunday, early that very morning, they heard His body was gone. Their hopes and their dreams were dashed, but at the end of their seven-mile walk – everything changed. They now know the truth, Jesus is alive, and they got to tell somebody. Then beginning with **verse 33**, we are told,

33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, “The

Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”³⁵ They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

These two men immediately leave Emmaus and bolted back to Jerusalem in the dark to tell the apostles and others who were with them what had just happened. These two men had walked and talked with Jesus, and by the time they got to Jerusalem to tell everyone about it – Peter had seen Jesus as well, and this was only the beginning – for they would all see Him. This experience with the risen Savior would dramatically change their lives, so much so, that the apostles would come out of hiding and flood the streets with the good news about Jesus without any fear. Jesus is alive and the movement He started will now thrive.

That was a great Easter story, and to draw this story to an end, I want to say this – two men had a life changing experience with Jesus because they opened their minds to the truth about Him found in God’s word. As Jesus spoke to them, taking Scripture and connecting the dots to the events they had experienced, they knew in their hearts they were hearing the truth – it burned in them, and they responded to the truth by seizing the opportunity and inviting Jesus into their home – into their lives, and from that point on – their lives would never be the same.

Maybe you are here this morning, dazed and confused by the circumstances of your own life, and maybe like those two men, you are asking – *“What happened to Jesus?”* or better yet, *“Where is He when I need Him?”* Yes, I admit, there are those times when Jesus seems far away, yet in reality, He is closer than you might think, and maybe you need to take your own seven-mile walk with Jesus so to speak – believing the truth about Him found in God’s word, nailing it down in your heart, and then by faith, responding to it – for if you do – just like those two men, you will be closer to learning something about Him.

Source Material:

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