Luke 24 June 10, 2018

*He Was in the Beginning, Part 1*

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 Have you ever gotten to the end of a movie or the end of a book and been surprised … so surprised in fact that you wanted to go back and watch the movie or skim through the book again just to look for the clues you obviously missed? I have always loved to read mysteries – trying to figure it all out along the way. As a young girl I devoured every Nancy Drew book I could, staying up late to read (maybe with a flashlight under my covers so my mom wouldn’t know I was still up). When you’re looking for the clues it makes reading the book or watching the movie even more fun and exciting!

 Today we are starting our summer sermon series entitled “He Was in the Beginning,” looking for Jesus in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. Usually if we’re looking for Jesus we begin in the New Testament, don’t we? We begin with the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But the truth is that the whole Bible leads us straight to Jesus, both the Old and New Testaments. I’m excited to study and learn myself so that I can preach this series to help us all look into the wonder of Genesis to see how it prepares for and points to Christ. Let us pray:

 *Father God, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, help us to learn in new ways the truth that is older than the ages, a promise of things yet to come. Help us to learn anew of the One who was born for our salvation. This we pray in Jesus’ name, Amen.*

 How do we know that Jesus is revealed from the beginning of God’s Word? He said so, over and over again. Today we are going to look at several Scriptures that tell us this, but we will spend most of our time in Luke 24 on the walk to Emmaus. It’s sort of wild that at the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry, after his resurrection, meeting two of his followers as they walked to Emmaus - that’s when Jesus himself made it clear to his disciples that the whole story of the Old Testament had always been all about him. Do you remember the story? Let’s take a look:

 ***13****Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles[*[*f*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-25995f)*] from Jerusalem,****14****and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.****15****While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,****16****but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.****17****And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad.****18****Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?”****19****He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth,who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,****20****and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.****21****But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.[*[*i*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26003i)*] Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.****22****Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,****23****and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed 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 they did not see him.”****25****Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!****26****Was it not necessary that the Messiah[*[*j*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+24&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-26008j)*] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”****27****Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.* ***28****As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.****29****But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them.****30****When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.****31****Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.****32****They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within uswhile he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”****33****That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.****34****They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!”****35****Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”*

Why would their eyes have been kept from recognizing him? Let’s think about what would have happened had they recognized him right away. They would have been stunned, excited, amazed, minds-blown, right? Would they have really been able to hear and concentrate on anything he said to them? Probably not. It sort of reminds me of a wedding, when I’m trying hard to communicate a wedding message to the bride and groom once they’ve seen each other all dressed up and are standing in front of their family and friends…I try to say something simple and good about a Christ-centered marriage…but I might as well be saying the words to “here we go ‘round the mulberry bush” for all they can hear in that moment. (But I still try.) If the two followers of Jesus on the road to Emmaus had known right away that it was Jesus, they would have missed the amazing teaching he had for them and for us, over 2000 years later!

It is brilliant what he does: He asked them what they were talking about and then listened to their account of what had just happened in Jerusalem regarding his crucifixion and possible resurrection. He wanted to hear what they thought they knew because in their minds they understood who Jesus was and what he came to do. But they misunderstood. *“We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel,”* they said. In other words, “We have hoped he was the one, but we were wrong. He wasn’t the one.” Wrong again! He was the one to redeem Israel – but not just Israel – he was the one sent to redeem the world! But because he didn’t do it in the way they expected (as a conquering warrior), they missed it. They completely missed it, which is why they were walking down the road like a bunch of disappointed fans after their team just lost the championship game.

Sometimes, we think we’ve got Jesus all figured out, and let’s admit that anytime we think we’ve got something or someone all figured out we find it very hard to see that our understanding is maybe distorted or diminished. Do I want my understanding of Jesus, my Lord, to be distorted or diminished in any way? Do I want Jesus to be the Jesus I want, a Jesus that I’m comfortable with, who is passionate about the things I’m passionate about, skeptical about the things I’m skeptical about, and condemning what I want to condemn? Do I want a Jesus who was merely an agent of change, or who only taught people to be loving and accepting and tolerant so that we would be good citizens of the world? Or do I want to know the real Jesus as he defines himself?

Have you ever had someone sum you up? Maybe they took a little bit of what they know about you and made some leaps and assumptions and then proceeded to say something like, “You are one of those creative types who can never be anywhere on time or do things the same old way.” Or maybe they might say, “I can tell that you are the kind of person who would never try something adventuresome.” And you think, “What are you talking about? That’s not who I am! Who do you think you are to define me like that?!” It should make us wonder how many times we have defined Jesus in a way that is not true to what is revealed of him in the whole Bible by only taking bits and pieces of what we know from the Gospels?

Jesus said to the followers on the road to Emmaus, “*“Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!****26****Was it not necessary that the Messiahshould suffer these things and then enter into his glory?”****27****Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.”*

More than likely these followers had been students of the Scriptures, they had most likely spent years in the temple listening as the scrolls were opened and read. Jesus is saying to them, if you had really listened to what the prophets wrote, if you had gone beyond listening just to learn it, but had really processed it, believed it, you would have seen and understood that the one whom God had promised to send to save you, was going to save you through suffering – because that truth is interwoven throughout the entirety of God’s Word.

Did you catch where he started to begin to explain to these followers who he was and why he had to die? He didn’t start with his birth, or the sermon on the mount, or his constant wrangling with the some of the Pharisees, or the plot against him. He opened up Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Psalms, Hosea, Isaiah, and all the way to Malachi, showing them, “This is who I am. This is why I came. This is the curse I came to bear. This is the mercy I came to show. I am the One whom God had promised. I am the sacrifice God provided.

What happened to the followers on the road to Emmaus as they listened? ***Their hearts started to burn inside of them as they began to understand the big picture of what God has done and is doing in the world.*** They began to understand that the story of the work of Christ is not just a story outside of us, but a story and a work that God is accomplishing in them, and in us through the eternal Christ.

And once Jesus opened that gate, the apostles’ sermons in Acts did the same thing, not beginning with his birth or with his teachings or with his death but beginning with the Old Testament! In Acts 2:25-31 in Peter’s first amazing Holy Spirit filled sermon, Peter said that King David wrote about Jesus in the Psalms! In Acts 3:17,18 he told the Jews in the temple, *“I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.”* V. 24, *“And all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days.”*

My hope is that as we move through Genesis through the lens of the revelation of Jesus Christ we will understand more fully, more deeply, more personally and yet more widely aspects of the salvation story that we might have just glossed over before. My hope is that we will come to know Jesus more nearly and more dearly, day by day, as the old song goes. So, here’s a brief preview of the next nine sermons in the series:

* As we consider the wonder of creation next week, we will see Jesus as the light that was in the world before there was a sun or a moon.
* As we grieve with Adam & Eve over the curse that came after the fall, we will see Jesus as the promised offspring who will crush the head of the serpent.
* In the terror of the flood, we will see Jesus as the ark of safety in whom we are saved in the storm of God’s judgment.
* In the wild story of the tower of Babel, we will see that we do not need to build a tower to get to God. He came to us in the person of Jesus Christ.
* When we walk alongside Abraham we will see that it is the righteousness of Jesus that was credited to him because he believed God.
* At the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham we will see that this points us toward the one-for-all sacrifice of God’s beloved Son.
* As we watch Jacob wrestling in the dark to get a blessing for himself, we’ll see Jesus wrestling in the dark of the Garden of Gethsemane to gain the ultimate blessing for us.
* As we look with Joseph in the face of the brothers who wanted to kill him, we’ll see Jesus – the One who also could have said to those who nailed him to the cross, “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good to save many.” (Genesis 50:20)
* As we see Jacob’s sons become the leaders of the twelve tribes through whom God intends to bless the whole world, we will see the One, the only One through whom that blessing will come, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, before whom people from all tribes and people and languages will one day bow.

Probably most people who knew Winnie Agett knew her as a proper lady, someone who

liked for her outfit, her hair, and her nails to look good all the time. Do you know that she never wore pants, ever, until just 6 weeks ago when she went to Menno Haven for rehab? 94 ½ years of wearing dresses and skirts – ladies – I don’t know about you, but that sounds awful. But you might hear that, or you might have seen her and thought, “She must have been quite the stick in the mud. She must have not been very much fun to be around. She must have not been very adventurous.” All of which are completely incorrect assumptions. Winnie loved to laugh, and she loved to make others laugh. A few years ago her caregiver, Kathy Hampton, rented a yellow convertible specifically to take Winnie out for a ride as a gift for her birthday. They went all over the place. And Winnie loved it. Her only disappointment was that more people weren’t out along the road so she could wave to them! Recently Kathy told Winnie that she was thinking about getting a motorcycle. Winnie’s response was, “You get a side car, and I’ll go along.”

 I don’t want to be defined by others in a way that is not true to who I am. No one does. And certainly Jesus doesn’t because, quite frankly, a wrong definition could make an eternal difference for people. And the great thing is that he addressed this head-on. Jesus, the Word of God incarnate (in the flesh) explained the written Word of God so that we could clearly know the Word of God incarnate. How beautiful is that? How merciful is that? How helpful is that? He knows that we are stiff-necked people who can sometimes get stuck in our ways of doing and our ways of thinking.

Brothers and sisters, may our hearts begin to burn with a more passionate love for Jesus during this summer of 2018, and may our minds be opened to a deeper understanding of who he is and what he came to do so that we can more passionately and more truthfully share him with the people at work, at school, at the ball games, in our neighborhoods, and in all the world. May it be so. Amen.