

What Do We Do When Our Plans Fall Through?

2) When All We Can Do Is Go For A Walk

Luke 24:13-34 • 2020-04-26 • Easter Series



There's a popular movie that came out in the mid-nineties featuring a man who had a lot of problems growing up. There's a lengthy scene in which as a young adult he gets up from his front porch. You can tell he is just overwhelmed by all the things that have happened in his life. So, he just starts running. He says, "After I got to the end of the county, I thought to myself, 'why not run all the way across Alabama?'" And he keeps on running. All he does is eat, sleep, and run. The man runs from one ocean to the next crisscrossing the country for three years. He becomes a celebrity, and everyone asks, "Why are you running?" And he just keeps saying, "No particular reason." Finally, at the end of his narrative about his years on the road he reflects on it and explains why he thinks he started all the running. "My momma always said that you have to put the past behind you before you can move on. And I think that's what my running was probably all about." So much had happened that all he could do was go for a run and get it behind him.

Have you ever felt that way? Maybe you've experienced events that just leave you feeling like all you can do is go for a walk. For many of us in recent days that is literally about all that it seems we can do. We try to get away from all the trouble in the news today and go out on a walk. Today we continue our series for the Easter season, "What do we do when our plans fall through." And we see two men that are doing just that. They are trying to leave all their troubles behind but find that the walk isn't helping them. And we learn with them how God has a much greater solution for our troubles than trying to walk away from them or putting them behind us.

If anyone had some rough days that they wanted to put behind them it would have been Cleopas and his friend. They were close to Jesus and his disciples. They had witnessed all the events from Jesus' ministry up until early Easter morning. As they walked on the seven-mile road to their hometown they were leaving a whole lot of confusion and trouble behind them. At least they probably wanted to leave it behind. They were still talking about it during their journey.

One thing that disciples of Jesus can take comfort in is knowing that he is aware of all our struggles and frustrations. When we are out on a walk and trying to get away from our troubles, God is present with us. We might feel like God has left us to just figure out life on our own and escape from all it's sorrow. But he hasn't left us alone. That was about to become very clear for Cleopas and his friend. While they were walking and talking over all their troubles, Jesus himself came and walked up to them.

Luke records that these two men were prevented from recognizing Jesus. He asked them, "*What are you two talking about as you walk along?*" Cleopas answered him, "*Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?*" Jesus prods on, "*What things?*" That'd be like someone in New York after 9/11 saying, "What airplanes?" or someone in New York today saying, "What virus?" Jesus didn't die in some dark corner. Everyone knew about it.

They respond by outlining everything about Jesus. They explained how a man from Nazareth was powerful in word and deed and that they had hoped he was the one who was prophesied to be the chosen one, the Messiah. They thought he was the one who would pay the price to set the people free. But their hopes were all crushed when Jesus was handed over to the chief priest and the rulers. He was sentenced to death by crucifixion.

But their confusion didn't end there. Those two men also had the initial reports from that morning. They knew that the women who had gone to the tomb found it empty. Those women saw an angel who told them Jesus was alive. Right after that report from the women Peter and John were brave enough to venture out of being locked in a room. They went to investigate the scene at the tomb. They reported back that the tomb was empty, but that they did not see Jesus.

Can you guess how Cleopas and his friend interpreted all the evidence? They didn't believe the woman or the angel's message. They only heard that Peter and John did not find Jesus in the tomb. They hadn't yet heard how the women later saw Jesus himself. They had only heard of reports of the empty tomb. And their hopes were all crushed.

What went wrong? Jesus tells them exactly what went wrong, "*How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!*" Instead of digging in and relying on Scripture, they chose to just rely on their own conclusions. They chose to debate and converse about the current news without applying God's Word to that news.

Isn't that how we are tempted to handle our troubles? When there are reports of the spread of illness, aren't we fearfully tempted to wonder, "Will God take care of me?" We fear for our well-being and safety. When we look at the financial outlook for the weeks or months ahead, we might also fret, "Will I be able to feed myself and my family? What will I eat and wear if things come crashing down?" We worry about our family members and our plans falling through. Our only solution is sometimes to just go for a walk and talk it over without applying God's Word. We come up with our own pessimistic conclusions rather than applying God's Word to the news of today.

And we rightly worry if that is our solution. The solution this world offers for the curse of sin and all our suffering is to just get past it. The comfort that is offered by many people is, "Things will go back to normal; you'll be okay. Just put it behind you, talk it over, and walk it off." But normal means that we will continue to face uncertainty. Normal means an entire life trying to ignore the inescapable reality of death. You can't just look death in the face and walk it off. You can't brush past the troubles of sin and its curse. It follows us wherever we go. And all our plans to overcome it fail us.

But even though we might at times fail to apply God's Word, he comes to us with his Word. His Word then opens our hearts to burn in excitement with this all-important truth: Our plans may fail, but God's plans will never fail. God keeps his Word and fulfills all his plans. And when we are wondering about the future and confused about the past, God isn't confused. His Word contains all that we need to put the troubles of the past behind us and make the future bright.

Cleopas and his friend were about to experience the greatest lesson on God's Word ever given. The teacher was God himself in his resurrected and glorious body. Jesus started applying God's Word to the news. *Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

Can you imagine hearing that explanation of Scripture? Jesus was opening their hearts and minds to understand and believe the Word of God and all the things that pointed to his suffering, death, and resurrection. Can you imagine them hearing about the prophecies recorded in Genesis by Moses? They would have heard about the one who was promised to come born of a woman and would be struck by the devil. Can you picture their eyes opening with excitement as Jesus explained how Moses spoke of that man crushing the devil? They would have heard the promises in all the prophets regarding the Christ's suffering and resurrection. They were hoping Jesus was their Redeemer. Jesus would have spoken of men like Job who said in faith, *"I know my Redeemer lives and that in the end after my flesh has been destroyed yet I will see him with my own eyes!" (Job 19)* Job's heart burned within him in excitement. Jesus would have no doubt mentioned the prophets like Isaiah, David, Zechariah, and Daniel and many others who spoke of the Messiah's time of suffering and time of glory after his resurrection. It was all there. God's plan for the Redeemer to rescue his people by dying for their sins and rising to life in glory. There were direct prophecies and so many countless allusions to the picture.

Those two men listened intently as they had their troubles washed away and their future brightened with sure hope. Jesus had suffered and died. Jesus rose again in glory. This was God's plan!

It's the same thing that washes away all our past troubles and gives us a bright future! Jesus is alive. God's Word is true, and we can apply it to every bit of news no matter how bad that news is. "Will God take care of me?" His Word tells us, "Yes." And though the curse of sin with sickness and death may threaten, God has overcome death! We can say with confidence with the apostle Paul "For me to die is gain!" We can trust confidently that our God is able to save us from all illness. And even if he does not and we are left to suffer illness for a time nothing can separate us from his love and his promise of eternal life. We will rise with Jesus! His plan will never fail. "Will I be able to feed myself and my family?" God's Word answers this worrying with a clear "Do not worry about what you will eat or drink... your Father in heaven knows that you need these things. He opens his hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing. He clothes the lilies. Won't he take care of you? Even the hairs on your head are numbered. Trust him for daily bread."

When evening came the two men invited Jesus to stay with him. It was during the meal that their eyes were opened, and they realized that it had been Jesus himself talking to them all along. God had never failed. God had never left them. He came to them. He came first with his Word. Then believing they also beheld him face to face. It's the same with us. Jesus still comes to us with his Word. It may be during times of trouble that we find the time to wonder and reflect on that trouble. But God gives us his Word so that we don't have to reflect on that trouble alone. We reflect on all of God's promises and all his working for us.

Open that word and apply it to the news. Apply it to your situation. Do so knowing that all of Scripture points us to see and know Jesus who died and rose again. And because he is alive, we know that living Word of God is true. Go ahead and take a walk. But don't go without Jesus. Remain in his Word and your walk will never end in despair.

At the end of that movie with the running scene the man stops running. He is facing towards Monument Valley heading towards the Arizona border. (He maybe didn't realize how close he was to paradise.) He just stops running. It's funny to see the crowds that had been trailing behind him wondering what was happening. They were looking for some sage advice from him. But they got nothing other than, "I'm pretty tired. I think I'll go home now." They crowd is confused and asking, "What do we do now?" No answer comes. So much for trying to find all of life's answers by putting your troubles behind you.

God has a much better solution for all our troubles than just going for a walk and trying to leave them all behind us. There is only one man who can put all our troubles behind us. And we walk with him, following him through all our troubles. He will turn our troubled and saddened hearts into excited hearts burning with joy for what is at the end of the road.