

CONFUSION TO CLARITY

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Cecil Clements

Date: 17-05-2020

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

As we prepare to look at God's Word, would you pray with me?

Heavenly Father, we ask now, that You would fill our hearts and our homes with Your Spirit and that You would guide us into the truth. show us what You have for us from this passage, thoughts that we can glean from it and then apply in our own hearts and in our lives. Anoint me Lord, with Your Spirit that I may only speak what I hear from You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

It was a journey of about 12 kilometers maybe, 6-7 miles, and it would have taken them probably about 2 and a half hours if they were just strolling along. But they were on their way. There were two of them, both devastated, disillusioned, dejected even; and I think their dreams had been shattered. All the things that they had hoped for seemed to have just dissipated. As they walked along, they were talking with each other. Scripture doesn't record for us what they said, but I'm sure that they were going over the things that had happened with Jesus, with the one who was their mentor and teacher, the one who had activated their hearts and their minds and their imaginations for 3 years.

I wonder what they said – whether they looked at each other and said, “Do you remember how He taught? There were such wonderful nuggets that came from His teaching.” And the other one said, “Yes, and do you remember how the Pharisees came and they tried to trick Him, and how He gave them such a wise answer that they turned around and walked away.” The first one said, “Yes, but do you remember the Sadducees came asking about the resurrection, and how He answered that. oh, my goodness! Those were such wonderful moments.” And then the other one said, “Do you remember the healings; the people who couldn't see and then started seeing. And the lame who couldn't walk and started walking.” And the other said, “Bartimaeus! I remember Bartimaeus.” “The pool of Bethesda, you remember the lame man there for 38 years, and then he just gets back there and he is walking and he is fine.”

All of these things, memories that kept coming back to them, they began to rehash them, talk about their journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. And as they were walking along, suddenly somebody joins them, and it is Jesus. But they don't recognize Him. And He casually says, “What are you guys talking about?” They look at Him and say, “Well, we are talking about this man, a good man, a prophet who was killed in Jerusalem.” And Jesus says, “Really?” and they look at Him in amazement and say, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who doesn't know this? Where have you been and what have you been doing? He was such a good man and He did so many noble things, but the priests and rulers killed Him. They crucified Him and then He was buried. The amazing thing was that after He was buried, the third day, two ladies went there and they found the tomb was empty. He was gone. They said that they had a vision that angels had come and said that He was alive. Some of us also went to the tomb and we couldn't find Him.”

And then it was Jesus' turn to talk and the first words out of His mouth was chastisement. Really! He chastised them, He scolded them. He said, “You foolish men. It's so difficult for

you to believe in the things that have happened. You talk about Him being a mighty prophet in word and deed, and you talk about all of the things that happened. But you missed the things that you ought to have paid attention to.” Then Jesus begins to explain those things to them. The Bible tells us that He then showed them what scripture had to say about Him. Then beginning with Moses and from all the prophets, Jesus interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the scripture.

We don't know what Jesus told them, but Dr. Calvin Whitman, the pastor of a Baptist church, kind of put together some things. And as I read that I thought, “Yes, that's probably what Jesus would have said.” Remember they had just the Old Testament.

He might have started with: Genesis 3:15 where God cursed the serpent saying, “I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.”

From there maybe, He went to Deuteronomy 18:15 which says, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”

And from there to Isaiah 7:14 where God says, “Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign – the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.”

And from there, Jesus could have taken them to Isaiah 53:3 “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering who knew what sickness was. He was like one people turned away from; He was despised, and we didn't value Him.”

And perhaps He would have also showed Isaiah 53:7 which says, “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, He did not open His mouth.”

Maybe He concluded with Zechariah 12:10 “Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child. And weep bitterly for him as one weeps for a firstborn son who has died.”

And as He began to talk, their thoughts were just illumined. Finally, they reached the village where they were going to. And Jesus acted like He was going on, and they told Him, “No, no. wait. It's getting late. Stay and have supper with us.” And He does. And the Bible tells us that as they fellowshiped together around the meal, and He broke the bread and gave it to them, their eyes were opened, and they realized that it was Jesus. And the moment they did, He disappeared. They looked at each other and said, “Didn't our hearts burn as we listened to Him?”

Beloved, into their confusion came Jesus, and out of that encounter, came clarity. From confusion to clarity, and the one who did that was Jesus. And I wondered, as we look at this passage this morning, and we think about their confusion, their devastated dreams, their disillusionment. For 3 years they had followed Him; they had left everything to follow Him. They had plans, because if you read scripture, it says that they thought He had come to redeem Israel. They had different plans for Jesus. Their schedules had been disrupted and the purpose for their lives had been misunderstood.

And yet, when Jesus came along, He took all of that and He changed it, and they were able to understand, and understand to such a point that, late as it was (they asked Jesus to stay the night because it was late), they turned around and went back to Jerusalem. They made that 12 km. trek back to Jerusalem and told the other disciples what had happened. Filled with zeal and enthusiasm and vigor! Gone was the confusion, clarity had come in and along with that, a sense of purpose had overtaken them.

Well, let's delve a little deeper into this passage. Jesus was able to bring clarity to their confusion, but the question we must ask first is: Why were they confused? They were disciples who had spent time with Jesus. Jesus had told them everything that was going to happen, and yet it caught them on the wrong foot. What happened?

1. They didn't have a clear understanding of scripture.

They used scripture but they didn't know how to interpret it for the time that included Jesus, even though Jesus had talked about it many times. They didn't understand scripture as it pertained to their time.

2. Their plans for Jesus trumped God's plans.

They had their own plans. "We thought that He had come to redeem Israel." They were following Him because they thought that they would see a new day for Israel. Their plans didn't line up with God's plan for why Jesus had come.

3. They didn't understand His salvific work.

They didn't understand salvation. They knew Him only as a prophet, as a good teacher, and they were following Him as the good leader that he was. But they couldn't understand His plan of salvation that would reach throughout history and touch people and lives even beyond their time and their era. They hadn't understood that.

4. They didn't read the signs correctly.

They didn't reach the right conclusion. They saw the empty grave, they heard and talked about the vision of angels saying, "He's alive!" But they couldn't put the signs that they heard and saw with the words that He had spoken, that this indeed would happen – that on the third day he would arise.

So, out of this came their confusion, and then into their confusion came Jesus, and He brought clarity.

Well beloved, how about you? As you listen to this passage in this message, what's your state today? Are you in a state of confusion? Is there some amount of uncertainty in your life? are you disillusioned with what's going on either in your work or your family, in terms of relationships? Are you headed away from God and saying, "I can't handle it? This is too confusing for me. I can't make any sense of what's going on in my life right now." And are you walking away from what God would want you to engage with?

Well, the good news for us is that even though Jesus is not physically here to walk into your life and bring clarity, He has given us His Holy Spirit. He said, "I am going away, but I will send a comforter and He will guide you into all truth." so beloved, you and I, we have the Holy Spirit alongside us right now to guide us into truth, to take away the lies that may be surrounding us, that may be confusing us, and to bring clarity into our situation.

Bill and Gloria Gaither have written numerous songs, but one song that has really stick with me for many years now has been the song about dreams, where he says:

If there ever were dreams
That were lofty and noble.
They were my dreams at the start
And hope for life's best were the hopes
That I harbor down deep in my heart
But my dreams turned to ashes
And my castles all crumbled, my fortune turned to loss
So, I wrapped it all in the rags of life
And laid it at the cross.

Something beautiful, something good
All my confusion He understood
All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife
But He made something beautiful of my life.

God can make something beautiful of your life as well. out of all the confusion that is prevailing, He can bring clarity and make something wonderful, if you will allow Him. The question that we too must ask is why are we confused? Let's place the same yardstick for each one of us that we placed for those disciples.

1. They didn't have a clear understanding of scripture.

Do you? Do you understand the things that are written in the Word of God? Have you invited the Holy Spirit to take those words and apply it to your own heart? Do you understand that you are made in the image of God? Do you understand that God has said to you: I will never leave you; I will never forsake you? Do you understand that God has said in His Word that if anyone lacks wisdom, they only need to ask and He will give? Do you understand that God gave His Son to save you? Do you understand that you are precious in His sight? Do you understand that He will walk with you, that He will never leave you, that His love for you is everlasting? Do you understand all of these things, and if you do, are you able to see that you cannot be alone in this confused state? The God of the ages is with you and He can bring clarity into this situation because you are His child and He cares for you.

Cast all your cares upon Him because He cares for you. Peter says, "Cast all your burdens on Him," – all those things that are worrying you, that have somehow made you turn around and walk away, headed for Tarsus maybe, when you should be in Nineveh.

All my confusion He understood. Wonder whether you are able to take the truths in God's Word and invite the Holy Spirit to help us understand those words and apply it.

2. Their plans for Jesus trumped God's plans.

Maybe it's true for you that you and God have been walking along together, very clear in your mind that you are doing exactly what He wants. And then at some point, you felt that this was what He wanted and you went another way. Now all of a sudden, you're somewhere out there and it's no longer the place that God wanted you to be. Your plans have taken over

God's agenda for you. I wonder whether God is inviting you back, saying "Would you come back?"

How do you do that? I often say that God's will and God's peace are never separated from each other. So maybe, what you need to do is to just turn around and say, "Let me walk back to the place where I knew I had His peace." And then, at that place say, "What decision did I take that made me go off on a divergent track?" and get back to Him.

3. They didn't understand His work of salvation.

Do you? Do you understand Jesus as your Savior? Or is He to you a good man, a prophet, maybe, the teacher who spoke words of wisdom, even a miracle worker? But you've never engaged with Him as Savior. And I wonder whether today is the day, in the midst of confusion, in the midst of trying everything, you are still without direction. I wonder whether Jesus is knocking on your heart's door and saying, "Will you let me in, so that I can come and bring clarity to your confused life? will you take me in as Savior and make Me your Lord?"

4. They didn't read the signs correctly.

What about you reading the signs correctly? Maybe you are looking at the signs that are around you. What could they be? maybe no salary, maybe there wasn't an increment, maybe you are stuck somewhere away from family. Maybe you don't have a job. Maybe you are sick with some kind of chronic disease. And you are looking at these signs and misinterpreting them, and thinking that this is what you need to focus on and then follow a particular path. And I wonder whether you need to stop and say, "Lord, these are the signs that I am seeing all around. Have I got them wrong? Do I need to take a step back and allow You to interpret those signs for me? What does a month without a salary mean? What does a lost job mean? What does this sickness mean for me? Is there something much greater that you want to do in and through me, through this situation – but I am misreading it?"

Just 4 points, beloved, for us to think about and ask ourselves the question whether we are on a 12 km. walk away from the will of God. I wonder whether the Holy Spirit has come alongside as I have been speaking, and is talking to you and saying, "We need to make a U-turn. You need to get back there because that is where God's will is going to be fulfilled in your life."

Beloved, for those disciples, out of confusion He brought clarity; out of disillusionment He brought renewed purpose; out of dejection He brought delight; and out of apathy He brought zeal and vigor and energy. I wonder whether that's what you need today.

Let's pray together:

Heavenly Father, we want to open our hearts to Your Holy Spirit. Speak, Spirit of God, to each one in every home where this word is being listened to, and maybe there are U-turns that need to be made, clarity that needs to be brought into confusing situations. Maybe, Your word needs to be explained, or signs need to be explained, or even positions that been taken need to be questioned. Whatever it is, O Holy Spirit, would You speak to each one. May we hear You clearly. Rid our minds of the clutter that can sometimes fill us and help us to hear Your sweet voice. Then Lord, soften our sometimes, stubborn wills. Make us malleable and moldable, that we may align with Your perfect will today. May heaven and earth come

together and may Your will be done on earth in our lives as it has been scripted in heaven. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.