Extraordinary Victory: Moving from Disappointment to Rejoicing

By Steve Viars

Bible Text: Luke 24:13-35

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Faith Church

5526 State Road 26 E

Lafayette, IN 47905

Website: <http://www.faithlafayette.org/church>

Online Sermons: <http://www.sermonaudio.com/faithlafayette>

- Have you ever placed your hope in something or someone and later been disappointed?

- that’s probably not a hard question to answer during the COVID-19 pandemic…I would assume everyone has at least one if not many answers to that question…

1. Perhaps you and your friends or family were planning some kind of spring break getaway…maybe to Florida, or some other beach location…maybe even on a cruise…

- well, I’m assuming now the most exotic location you’ve visited in the last few weeks has been your back yard…and that can be disappointing…

- Pastor Green and I were scheduled to leave for Ukraine next week for a mission trip – our brothers and sisters there really wanted us to come and we were looking forward to serving them and strengthening our relationships in that part of the world…

- I just noticed that on the calendar the other day – and it’s disappointing…

2. You may be facing some unique challenges right now with your family while you’re all under the same roof together 24/7…

- you know, when you planned your wedding day – it was all fancy clothes and a beautiful cake and an exotic honeymoon…being quarantined for an undetermined period of time with a person still struggling under the curse of sin probably wasn’t part of your thinking…

- and then your children – when you first found out you were expecting…you had visions of soft lights and a perfectly contented infant sleeping in your arms or cooing softly as you sang lullaby’s…

- so, how’s that working out?...

- suffering and inconvenience has a way of exposing what’s really inside and some of that isn’t always good…

- about a week ago at one of our state’s COVID-19 press conferences…Family and Social Services Administration Secretary Dr. Jennifer Sullivan discussed what she called “alarming” numbers around mental health and addiction in the state.

- she said Indiana’s 211 hotline went from receiving roughly 1,000 calls a day regarding mental health — including suicidal ideation — to 25,000 calls a day.

- another state official spoke about “the extra challenges people are facing, like unemployment and homeschooling, and being confined to one home with family members for long periods of time. “So we know that that’s going to get people irritated and aggravated,”

- then he mentioned the spike in alcohol sales – that’s one of the few industries doing really well right now apparently…and the impact that might have on domestic violence…

- disappointment comes in all shapes and sizes…

3. Others may be facing financial challenges…

- you had it all planned out…but a global pandemic was not part of the plan…

- last fall and Bear and I had the privilege of participating in the 100 Men Who Cook event for Lafayette Transitional Housing and their homelessness services…

- in this case of course, it was 99 Men and 1 Bear…

- but anyone who knows me knows I can cook exactly nothing…except maybe an egg burrito…

- so anyway, we decided to do brat bites…and we decorated our table to feature the Chicago Bears (of course)…

- well, the gentleman next to us was a professional chef…and you talk about being out of our league…

- he had this beautiful entrée on a bed of lettuce with a special sauce…it was presented masterfully…and there I am with a pan of greasy brats…(which were still pretty good BTW)…

- but this gentleman was explaining to us that he and his wife were starting a bed and breakfast just north of here…

- and he was the kindest man in the world and very excited about their vision for this venue…

- they were featured in the paper the other day as having a beautiful venue but who’s staying overnight anywhere right now…

- and there are many in our church family and certainly in our community facing financial disappointment on all sorts of levels because of what’s occurring…

4. We could even talk about churches…

- Easter is the best attended service of the year…

- It’s looking a little light today…

- you may have seen this Meme making its way around FB

- it’s a rack of pastel pajamas and housecoats with the caption --

- I was thinking the other day – this may be the lowest attended Easter Sunday in the history of the church…

- you realize, churches around the world are facing the same situation…

- and for some, it’s mildly disappointing not to be together…

- but there are questions now about how many churches will be able to survive this period of time of not meeting together…

- well here’s the bottom line – our hope this morning is not that the church-house is full – it’s that the tomb is empty…

- the church isn’t a building – and in a very profound way – our faith is a personal relationship between us and our God – which means wherever we are, and whoever we’re with…we can celebrate our Savior’s **Extraordinary Victory** – and we can **Moving from Disappointment to Rejoicing**

- with that in mind, let me invite you to open your Bible to Luke chapter 24…we’ve stepped away from our verse by verse study of the book of Romans but next week we plan to be right back at it as we look at the last third of Romans chapter 8 which is such a relevant chapter for the challenges we’re all facing right now…

- but for our purposes today – we’re going to look at 2 men who were also facing a time of great disappointment…and then they had a fascinating encounter with Jesus Christ, and it completely changed the direction they were heading…

**- read Luke 24:13-35**

- so we’re talking about Extraordinary Victory – Moving from Disappointment to Rejoicing

- and with the time we have remaining, let’s look for **3 principles to remember when you’re losing hope.**

## I. Understand that Disappointment Often Reveals Misplaced Hope

- last week I mentioned a book called **The Harmony of the Gospels**

- that’s not a specific title, as much as it is a kind of book – there are many different versions out there…

- but what I love about this resource is that it lays out all four gospels side by side and arranges the material sequentially…

- what’s fascinating is what the Bible records about what occurs right after the resurrection…

- Jesus Christ is now alive…the victory has been secured…but many of his followers were struggling to believe it…and as a result were deeply disappointed…

- like these two men…the disciples on the road to Emmaus…

- and there’s so much about them we don’t know…

- no one knows for sure where Emmaus was…7 miles in some direction from Jerusalem…but no one knows…these men were just getting out of town…

- we don’t know specifically who they were…verse 18 identifies one as being named Cleopas – there’s a man with that same name in John 19:25 – he was Jesus’ mother’s sister’s husband [did you get all of this?} – humanly speaking, Jesus’ uncle…

- but the fact that Scripture gives us so many examples of men and women struggling even after the resurrection ought to tell us something…we don’t have to paste a plastic smile on a broken heart…we can…

### A. Acknowledge the pain that comes from disappointment.

**- Verse 17** [said] **-- ...they stood still, looking sad.**

- Greek word **skuthropos** – it means a **“dreary, downcast look of settled grief, pain, or displeasure”**

- Maybe I shouldn’t use this metaphor since the NCAA basketball tournament had to be canceled…but you know that look on an athlete’s face right after a hard loss?...

- that’s skuthropos…except in this case, about something far more significant than a basketball game…

- earlier this year I mentioned the book **Dark Clouds Deep Mercy** by Pastor Mark Vroegop down in Indianapolis

- it’s a book about the biblical practice of lamenting…it’s amazing how many of our Psalms, for example [our worship manual], are laments…examples of God’s servants crying out to Him in pain, and disappointment, and frustration…

- let me remind all of us that this is a very important aspect of an authentic relationship with the Lord…

- so it is not my intent this morning in any way to minimize the disappointment you may be feeling…and it is very appropriate to take that right to the throne of our Sympathetic High Priest…

- but Jesus didn’t leave these men in that condition…we’re given insight into what is occurring in their hearts…which leads us to…

### B. Pause and evaluate where your hope had been placed.

- what about them?...no question there…**1. For them?**

**- Luke 24:21 - 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.**

- that’s a fascinating statement, isn’t it…which shows how misplaced hopes [even if it’s a good desire, but held too strongly] can blind our hearts to more important realities right before our eyes…

- but what did this hope mean to them?...redeem Israel in what sense?...

- a purely political one…I don’t know if people like you and me can understand how deeply offensive it would have been for Jewish individuals to be living under Roman occupation…

- they weren’t using the word redeem in a theological or “salvific sense”…they wanted to use Him to advance their political agenda…

- which shows that they had elevated their hopes, and dreams, and plans above the plans and purposes of God Himself…

- they had made an idol out of “political freedom” and when that hope appeared dashed, they were overcome with skuthropos…they stood still, looking sad…

- and friend – what needed to happen at that moment?...

- they needed to acknowledge that the problem wasn’t with Jesus and what He had done…the problem was with their own hearts and what they had wanted…

- this is why John Calvin said – the human heart is a factory of idols…he also said that it’s not so much what I want that gets me in trouble, but that I want it too much…

- friend – COVID-19 can have that same effect on us, if we will let it do its purifying work…

- it’s possible for good things to disappoint us in times of trial because we placed inordinate or even ultimate hope in them…like what?...

**2. For us?**

**a. engineering and technology**

- there are banners all over Purdue right now celebrating 150 years of engineering excellence…

- and what an incredible resource we have right in our backyard and the advancements that have been made in engineering and technology are mind-boggling…

- but what’s was Purdue’s advice when the pandemic approached?...

- and I don’t say this critically at all – history may show that their forceful and rapid response saved many lives in this community…

- but what was the advice…get out of town…- engineering and technology, as amazing and beneficial as it is in so many ways, does not have an immediate life-saving answer to this crisis…

**b. medical science**

- I hope you’re praying for our medical leaders and workers…the load they are carrying is enormous…

- but some people seem to have the view that medical science has (or ought to have) an immediate answer to every problem to keep everyone alive forever…

- and we had these dear men and women on a national level…with incredible amounts of knowledge and education and expertise and experience…

- and they held press conferences and told us what…wash your hands and don’t touch your face…

- and please hear me – I am not criticizing them in any way, shape, or form…

- there won’t be enough medals to hand out to all of these dear servants when all of this is over…

- what I’m criticizing is what C.S. Lewis in his book **The Abolition of Man** termed scientism…

- and Lewis explained that while followers of Jesus Christ promote the advancement of science for all sorts of sound theological reasons…

- we don’t worship it…we don’t ask it to do more than it is capable of doing…

- otherwise you end up with a culture of people acting, as Lewis said, “soulless men”, or “men without chests” or “trousered apes”…as if science is capable of addressing ultimate questions of life and death or somehow preventing us from having to face death some day…

- the hard reality is that while it’s likely that few hearing this message will die of COVID 19 [some will, and I could be one of them]…but few will die of COVID – 19…but what’s the corollary to that…everyone hearing this message will die of something…

- and if we’ve put our ultimate hope in technology or science or some other human invention…we’ll end up in a condition of “skuthropos” – a “dreary, downcast look of settled grief, pain, or displeasure”

**3. Wealth and prosperity**

**4. Entertainment and pleasure**

- if time allowed, we could say the same thing about financial security, or the enjoyments of sports, or other pleasures…

- friend, if you find yourself disappointed today to the point of despair – is it possible that our loving God has created an unbelievable condition all around His world today to bring all of us to asking whether too much of our hope has been misplaced…

- and if that’s the case to any degree…what do you believe the resurrected Savior wants to do with you today?...how about this answer?...how about, He wants to go on a walk with you?...

- and if you say – look, I’m just a nobody…so were these two…

- or – I don’t even know where I’m heading now – neither did they…

- and that’s a very important point form this passage – our resurrected Savior will go to great lengths to interact with obscure people headed to obscure places…even if they should have known a whole lot better than they apparently did at the moment…

- and please tell me – what was the clear emphasis of His subsequent interaction…where did He direct their attention?...

## II. Let God’s Word Point You to a Better Alternative

- see, the key question is – how do you move away from disappointment?...

- what should the person do who is grieving that lost vacation…or those family challenges, or that financial pressure, or even uncertainty about long-term viability of their church?...

- the answer is – let Scripture point you to a hope that will never disappoint…

### A. God’s Word predicted a Messiah who would suffer for our sin and then be resurrected.

- Jesus didn’t mince any words with these men, did He?...

- **Luke 24:25–26 - And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”**

- God’s Word didn’t promise that in this life that we would have political deliverance, or flawless vacations, or perfect family relationships, or the fulfillment of our financial dreams, or even church-houses filled with worshippers every Easter Sunday…

- He promised us something far better than that…that He would send His Son as the perfect offering for our sin…and then so, there would never be any question that this sacrifice was accepted, He would raise Him miraculously from the dead on the third day…

- it’s like Jesus explained after the raising of Lazarus… **John 11:25–26 - Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”**

- friend---technology cannot make that promise…neither can science…or entertainers…or athletes…or financial planners…

- but do you who can?...our resurrected Savior…

- now you might say – why didn’t Jesus immediately reveal Himself to them?...that’s a great question…probably because He wanted their faith not to be located in their experience, but in the Scripture…

- and don’t you love verse 27, and don’t you wish you had the tape of that conversation?

- **Luke 24:27 - Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.**

**- explained – dier-main-eu-sen – hermeneutics – principles of Bible study**

- that’s what Jesus patiently did with these men…helped them adjust the nature of their hope with clearly understood Word of God…

- we don’t know for sure what passages he discussed with them…

**1. In the Old Testament**

- perhaps…

**- Psalm 22:16–18 - For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.**

**- Isaiah 53:12 - Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.**

**- Psalm 16:10 - For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

- and what’s both sad and instructive is – because these men were so focused on their idolatrous hope of Jesus being their political deliverer…they failed to rejoice as God’s Word was being fulfilled right before their very eyes…this was also…

**2. Consistent with what Jesus taught while He was with them**

- did you notice the detail at the end of verse 21?... **Luke 24:21 - 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.**

- the fact that Jesus didn’t cuff box them right up-side the head the moment they uttered those words shows supernatural restraint…

- because how many times had He taught that he would be raised again on the third day?...repeatedly…

**- Matthew 16:21 - From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.**

**- Matthew 17:23 - and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day. And they were deeply grieved.**

- had these men allowed God’s Word to fuel their hopes and desires…they wouldn’t be leaving town on the third day…they’d be staying for the excitement…

**3. Affirmed by the testimony of the women**

- this is an undeniable part of the Easter story…the women believed the message of the empty tomb before the men…

- wives, please don’t beat your husband up about that for the remainder of the shelter-in-place order, but there is no question about that…

- in fact, we don’t get the full force in the way these men told the story to Jesus…**Luke 24:22–23 - But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive.**

- that’s bad enough, right?...look up for a moment at verse 11…**Luke 24:11 - But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.**

### B. Consider how blinding our wrong desires and misplaced hopes can become.

- even though the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was predicted it the OT, taught by Christ, and affirmed by eye-witnesses…people like this thought it was non-sense…

- aren’t you glad that Jesus loved them so much that he didn’t leave them in that condition?...

- and as I said earlier – this may be the lowest attended Easter Sunday in the nearly 2000-year history of Christ’s church…but is also may be the most productive…in terms of men and women choosing to repent and believe in Christ…

- sometimes it takes a hope to completely fail…before a person is willing to consider an alternative…

- can I ask you in the quietness of this moment…has there been a definite time in your life where you chose to admit your need, and then place your faith and trust in what Jesus Christ did on the cross on your behalf?...

- if not, I’d like to invite you to do that right now…and there’s no magical formula…but based on what we’ve been studying this am – perhaps something like – Heavenly Father, I recognize today that I need something far more than an exotic vacation, or a perfect family, or financial prosperity, or more entertainment and sports…I need a Savior who will pay for my sin and take change of my life…

- so I want to repent of my sin and place my trust, and my hope, in the death, burial, and resurrection…

- if you would be willing to make that decision today – here’s the promise of Scripture…**Romans 5:1–5 - Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

- now, where does all of this leave people who have already chosen to become followers of Jesus Christ?

- the answer is – the same thing that happened to these men…

**- Luke 24:33–35 - And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.” They *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.**

- all of a sudden, their self-centered desire melted away when they truly believed the Savior was alive…

- we could say it this way…

## III. Embrace the New Direction the Reality of the Empty Tomb Provides

### A. For our disappointed vacationer

- there’s nothing wrong with saying – I really would have liked to have gone on vacation and I’m disappointed that it didn’t happen…

- there’s something very wrong with saying…I must go on vacation and if that hope doesn’t come to fruition, I’m going to be mad and grumpy with every person under my roof…

- because for a follower of Jesus Christ, the reality is…we’ve all going on vacation…and when we get there, it’s going to make Disneyland look like Secaucus, NJ…

### B. For our disappointed family member

- unreasonable hopes for a perfect family can be completely transformed by rejoicing that the tomb is empty…

- how about right-sizing your hopes to look for ways to live in the power of the resurrection even when others around are disappointing you?...

- how about seeking to become a fulfillment of Paul’s prayer to the Ephesians…**Ephesians 1:18–20 - *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*,**

- for a dad working at home – instead of placing your hope on accomplishing the same amount of work as you would in your office or else you’re going to be a terror to live with…how about saying – wait a minute – the tomb is empty, and I’m going to ask the Lord to give me His power to respond to the challenges that working at home provides…

- or for the mom who now has kids at home, and you’re frustrated with all the extra work that not having them in school produces…and all the challenges of keeping them occupied and heading in the right direction…

- every time one of them sins, it’s an opportunity to be reminded why Jesus had to go to cross in the first place…

- and to believe that your hope does not lie in you being the perfect teacher, or mother, or homemaker, or person who is also trying to get your office work done at home if that is your lot…

- but instead to say – my hope is found in nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness --- so I’m going to do the best I can…but I’m not holding out for a perfect family…I’m holding onto a perfect Savior…

- [develop – principles for kids]…

**C. For our disappointed financial manager**

- I don’t want to minimize the stress this season may be causing you…but this might be a time for us to learn about the beauty of contentment…

**- 1 Timothy 6:6–9 - But godliness *actually* is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.**

### D. For our disappointed church members

- are we disappointed that we haven’t been able to gather together, even on Easter Sunday?...sure…

- but we’re not hopeless, are we?...because if Jesus is alive, that’s all we need…

- and we don’t know when we’ll be able to meet again…but we’re not placing our hope in that…our hope is that the tomb is empty…and there may be more opportunities for redemptive conversations in the season we’re in right now, as we seek to rely on His resurrection power…