

Title: Seeing Hope

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Text: [Luke 24:13-35](#)

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The prescription for your vision has changed. Maybe you didn't know this, but it is true for all of us.

I'm always amazed by this experience. I remember when I got glasses in 3rd grade. I've worn them ever since. The optical store was in the basement of my doctor's medical building. There was a

window well along the top of the far wall. A week after my doctor gave me the bad news that I was destined to wear glasses, a woman gently placed my first pair of prescription lens on my face. She then said, "Look out that window and tell me what you see." With excitement, I shouted, "Leaves!" I saw leaves on the tree. With my new prescription, I could see something again, something I'd didn't realize I'd stopped seeing.

Many of you tell a similar story about getting contacts or glasses. And you, like me have this experience again and again. Our vision changes throughout our lifetime and the prescription changes. I'll get a new pair of glasses, leave the store and look at the world again. It's sharper, back in focus. But occasionally, it takes time for you to adjust to the new prescription, to be able to see clearly again.

Physical changes aren't the only thing that has an impact on seeing. Something can happen and suddenly the world looks different. Sometimes, it is so powerful, so transformative that it causes instant insight and vision. Other times, it is so traumatizing that it creates dark spots even blindness. It is so psychologically distressing that it is hard to see hope. It takes a new and significant shift to return our vision to its former perspective, or better yet, to an improved and healthier way of seeing.

For such a time as this, we come to our second Easter story since celebrating the resurrection. It requires us to backtrack to Easter evening when we find two disciples of Jesus blinded by the events of the last few days. Like us, they could not imagine what they experienced and the implications for their lives.

They had no doubt followed Jesus into Jerusalem and experienced that glorious coronation parade when huge crowds shouted as if Jesus was a king. They likely continued to journey alongside him through the joyful Passover week. But then came Friday. Perhaps they witnessed Jesus' crucifixion; or maybe, they scattered with the rest of the disciples, terrified by what that glorious vision had turned into. It was a nightmare and they hid with the disciples, locked behind doors, grieving the loss of their leader and the destruction of hope.

On Sunday evening, they make their way home to Emmaus, seven miles outside of Jerusalem. It was just a two-hour walk but it felt longer. The road of grief always feels longer than it is. How long has it been for us? Just five and a half long, long weeks. Downtrodden and discouraged, blinded by grief, they were returning home to resume what they imagined would be a very different life. We are told that they were talking about all of the things that happened. That's what you do when tragedy strikes and when the world as you know it is suddenly changed. You ask yourself, "How did this happen?" "Why did this happen?" You try to process things to see through the darkness and find a way to move forward with your new prescription. "While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him." (Luke 24:15-16)

It is a mystery. How is it that two of Jesus' disciples were not able to recognize him? Throughout the ages, scholars have asked that question. There are lots of answers, but I think it was their grief. It had stolen their sight. They were so downhearted, so convinced that life as they imagined it was over that they couldn't see. Their hope for a more beautiful world was gone. They stared at the ground ahead of them, kicking dust as they plodded along, barely noticing that a stranger who had joined them.ⁱ

Jesus asked, "What were you talking about as you walk along?" "They stood still, looking sad (Luke 24:17c). Do you feel the pain they are experiencing, the darkness that is enveloping them? It stopped them dead in their tracks and they looked at Jesus like he had just dropped in from some planet from a distant galaxy. One of them whose name is Cleopas said, "Are you kidding? Where have you been? "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" (Luke 24:18)

Jesus makes it worse by saying, "What things?" Can you imagine being approached by someone in the grocery, someone you know but who doesn't recognize you because of course, you are wearing that mask you made out of your old spring break t-shirt? He asks, "What's going on around here? What's with the masks, the gloves, all the sanitizer? What's up with this?"

What would you say? "What is up with you? Are you the only person that doesn't know, doesn't see what's going on? There's a pandemic!"

And that's the way Cleopas answers, telling Jesus of the tragedy that was so great, so vision shattering that everyone knew about it. He started talking to Jesus, about what they saw in him, about the hope they had in him, about seeing hope that as the Messiah, he would change the world. But then he was betrayed, crucified and laid in a tomb. All of this had destroyed their vision and their hope was gone.

To this Jesus responds, "Didn't you know this had to happen? Didn't the Messiah have to suffer and die and be raised from the dead? They are confused and perplexed. Grief does that to you. What in other circumstances, you could easily see, is now hidden from your eyes. It takes time to adjust to the new prescription. And for the next hour, Jesus tries to help them see again, leading through the Old Testament, showing them the places where the story of the Messiah, his story, and giving testimony to his sacrificial love. Even as he talked to them about the foreshadowing of his death and resurrection found in scripture, they were so overwhelmed with grief, they couldn't see.

Finally, they reach their home and Jesus starts to go on. But these two will not have it. They followed Jesus and become his disciples. They knew the challenge that Jesus makes about strangers, about hospitality, the importance of sharing meals. They bid this stranger stay, living out the teacher's command. Little did they know that invitation was in going to lead to seeing hope again.

Jesus agrees and when they go to the table, he takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them. And even though their prescription had changed, even though they were having difficulty seeing, this scene was so familiar, so typical of the last three years of ministry with Jesus, suddenly everything becomes clear again and "...their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight." (Luke 24:31)

Luke summarizes the story by simply said, "...he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread." (Luke 24:35)

Seeing Jesus breaking bread transformed everything. It gave them hope. It brought instant clarity and sight. It said to them that the death and resurrection of Jesus was God's way of overcoming darkness, that His love conquers everything, even death itself. Suddenly, they could see again, like they had new eyes. In breaking bread, they had a "second sight" and it was filled with hope.

We can have this too. It happens. It might have happened to you. It has happened to me. As we age, our vision can improve. This is a result of increased refractivity of the nucleus of the lens, which causes myopia. Whereas when younger, you needed a stronger prescription to see, your vision changes, and now you need something different for the world to be in focus. Doctors call this phenomenon "second sight." It is essentially a new set of eyes, resulting from the natural course of aging. A new set of eyes requires a new prescription. ⁱⁱ

Jesus gives us this "second sight" and if ever there is a time and need for this, it is now. People are traumatized, fearful, uncertain, depressed. Our future, whatever we imagined, has changed. These experiences cause all of us to have a different world view; in the pandemic, our prescription has changed.

But our perspective has not. Our hope is still there. To find it and claim it, we have to regain our "second sight." Jesus gives a way to see, a window to look through as to see again. It's at this table where, in the breaking of bread, we see not just Jesus' death and suffering on the cross, but the redemption that comes with resurrection. God took something awful and transformed it into our defining story. As Christians, this is how we see the world.

We believe that there is always hope. We can find it and claim it, every time we gather at this table, remembering that as Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to us, he offers a window to "second sight."

It may not yet be safe to come out of hiding but we can at least, through the gift of our faith in Jesus, through the gift of breaking bread with a risen Savior, look out the window. I pray you will do that, not through the lens of a pandemic but through the gift of resurrection.

Go ahead. Look out that window. I tell you what you'll see. You'll be seeing hope, resurrection hope.

ⁱ Wagner, Lori. Second Sight. Retrieved by subscription at sermons.com.

ⁱⁱ Wagner.