



“KEEP HOPE ALIVE”

WE WILL SURVIVE THIS TOO

LUKE 24:13-33 (NRSVUE)

A Sermon BY

Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

**NOVEMBER
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Date: November 10, 2024
Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley
Sermon Title: **Keep Hope Alive** (We Will Survive This Too)
Scripture: Luke 24:13-33 (NRSVue)

¹³Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles 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. 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 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 us while 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.

SERMON SUMMARY

In the first part of his new sermon series titled "We Will Survive This Too," Pastor Wesley opens his sermon by setting the scene from Luke 24:13-33, where two of Jesus' followers, Cleopas, and an unnamed disciple, are on a seven-mile journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Pastor Wesley explains that the road to Emmaus is a metaphor for dealing with devastating disappointments and unexpected outcomes. He reminds us that everyone will face their own "Emmaus" at some point in life, a time when dreams shatter, relationships break down, sickness strikes unexpectedly, or losses mount. Everyone will eventually encounter a moment like Cleopas in verse 21, when we utter the painful words, "We had hoped."

Pastor Wesley emphasizes that there are few things more traumatizing than the death of hope. When hope dies, feelings like anger, frustration, worry, hatred, fear, and anxiety can easily take over. He points out that, like Cleopas and the unnamed disciple, many of us are dealing with hurt and disappointment in the aftermath of the recent election. While our faith in God may remain strong, our hope feels diminished.

In this moment of wavering hope, Pastor Wesley invites us to place ourselves in the shoes of Cleopas and the unnamed disciple while they are on this journey. These men are leaving Jerusalem because they can't bear the disappointment of Jesus's death any longer. While walking, Jesus suddenly appears and begins to walk with them. Pastor Wesley highlights that the resurrected Savior doesn't just show up when everything is going well; He shows up on our roads to Emmaus, in our moments of confusion, and doubt, and when our hope feels like it's hanging by a thread.

However, the disciples don't recognize Jesus. Pastor Wesley suggests that their lack of recognition was not due to Jesus being in disguise or cognitive impairment of the disciples; rather, they simply weren't ready to see Him. Like these disciples, sometimes, life's disappointments can blind us to God's presence, making it hard to recognize God's work in our lives.

As the disciples reach Emmaus, Pastor Wesley describes how Cleopas, still not recognizing Jesus, invites Him to stay for a meal. In Cleopas's house, Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them. Pastor Wesley points out that this might not seem unusual if it were Jesus's house, but it's actually Cleopas's house, and yet it's Jesus who is serving them. This act serves as a reminder that when we invite Jesus into our lives, He doesn't just visit, but He sits with us, prepares a meal, and cares for us in a way that only a Savior can.

As Jesus breaks the bread, the disciples recognize the act and, in that moment, their eyes are opened. They realize that this was not the first time Jesus had broken bread and fed others. Pastor Wesley draws a parallel to the challenges we face, especially in light of the election. This isn't the first time we've been disappointed by election results or faced circumstances beyond our control. Just as we've made it through similar trials before, he encourages us that we will survive this one too!

As Pastor Wesley concludes the sermon, he highlights how, after encountering Jesus and having their hope restored, the disciples decide to return to Jerusalem. Despite the fear and defeat they had felt there, they went back. Pastor Wesley encourages us that, like the disciples, even in the darkest times—no matter the political landscape or the sense of defeat many of us may feel—we must return to the fight. Knowing that Jesus is with us, we are called to face the darkness and continue the work God has set before us.

KEY POINTS

1. In Luke 24:13-33, Cleopas is walking with an unnamed disciple. Pastor Wesley points out that whenever a person is unnamed in scripture, it invites us to insert ourselves into the story.
2. At some point, you will find yourself on the road to Emmaus – facing devastating disappointments and unexpected outcomes, which may distort your discernment.
3. Cleopas speaks three of the most discouraging and destructive words in all of scripture: “We had hoped.”
4. Like Cleopas and the unnamed disciple, when you face a situation that feels overwhelming (where you “just can't take it anymore”), sometimes it's best to step away and take a deep breath to get yourself together.

5. You can't walk the road to Emmaus alone. You only survive Emmaus by remembering that "I" always needs a "We."
6. The Lukan author reminds us that the resurrected Savior doesn't only show up in the good times, but He will show up on our roads to Emmaus as well.
7. When Jesus was invited to Cleopas's house, He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples. This shows that whenever you invite Jesus into your life, He will take care of you.
8. The disciples only recognized Jesus after they realized, "We've been here before," and remembered that they had seen Jesus do this before.
9. Once we know that the Lord is with us, we must face the darkness and return to the places we thought we couldn't handle to continue the fight.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU QUESTIONS

1. In reminiscing on his love of movies, Pastor Wesley mentioned how he enjoys binge-watching Alfred Hitchcock movies because it reminds him of his father. In difficult seasons, what kind of activities bring you comfort?
2. According to Pastor Wesley, Cleopas's words, "We had hoped," are three of the most discouraging words in all of scripture. Can you think of three words (or a short phrase) that have been impactful to you, and why?

INTO THE BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. During Sunday's sermon, Pastor Wesley referenced several scriptures we can refer to when our hope is failing (e.g. [Hebrews 11:1](#), [Romans 8:28](#), [Isaiah 40:31](#), [Psalm 27](#)). Is there any particular scripture that you lean on when you need hope restored?
2. In Luke 24 we learn that Cleopas and an unnamed person traveled to Emmaus to discuss the events that recently transpired. From a theological standpoint, Pastor Wesley invites us, when we see an unnamed person in the Bible, to insert ourselves in that scripture/event. Can you think of other unnamed individuals in scripture? Of the characters and stories mentioned, which one resonates with you the most, and why does it speak to you personally?

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on a time when you, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, felt confused, lost, or overwhelmed by life's challenges. How did Jesus reveal Himself to you during that season, even if you didn't recognize it at the time? What steps can you take now to look for signs of His presence in your current struggles?
2. The disciples were so caught up in their pain and disappointment that they did not initially recognize Jesus walking with them. Are there areas in your life where pain or past trauma has kept you from seeing God's hand at work? In what ways can embracing your healing journey allow you to better serve and minister to others who are struggling?
3. Jesus engaged the disciples by asking questions and listening to their pain before offering comfort and revelation. In your own journey, how often do you take the time to sit with your emotions and bring them before God? What might it look like for you to allow God to "walk beside you" and listen to the deepest parts of your heart this week?
4. When the disciples finally recognized Jesus, it was during the breaking of bread—a moment of intimate fellowship. What are practical ways you can cultivate spaces of communion and connection with Christ in your daily life, especially when you feel lost or discouraged? How can engaging in these practices help you keep hope alive in difficult seasons?
5. In the sermon, the disciples' hope was restored when they invited Jesus into their home. What does it mean to invite Jesus into our lives when faced with systems that dehumanize or marginalize us? How can we draw strength from our lived experiences in a world that often fails to affirm our worth?

***"CAN I PUSH IT?"* QUESTIONS**

1. Pastor Wesley powerfully titles Sunday's sermon after Rev. Jesse Jackson's famous quote, "Keep Hope Alive." This phrase has long been a rallying cry for resilience in the face of adversity. However, in a society where systemic injustice (i.e. racism, sexism, classism, economic inequality, gender inequality, and political disenfranchisement) continues to persist, is simply maintaining hope enough? Could it be that, at times, "keeping hope alive"

might unintentionally enable oppressive systems to remain in place, without the necessary action to dismantle them?

2. In the sermon on Sunday, we are challenged to return to places of defeat and darkness to continue the fight for justice. How do we navigate the emotional toll of constantly confronting systems of oppression – whether in the workplace, politics, church, or other social spaces? How can we ensure that our resistance remains fueled by hope rather than burnout?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. Pastor Welsey shared that when hope dies, emotions like anger, frustration, and fear can easily take over. In what ways have you personally experienced these emotions when hope seemed to fade? How can we guard against these emotions overtaking us?
2. The disciples didn't recognize Jesus during their walk to Emmaus, not because of any cognitive failure but because they weren't ready to see Him. In what ways might societal systems – such as heteronormativity, patriarchal structures, or economic inequality – blind us to the presence of transformative change or opportunities for justice? How can we prepare ourselves to see and act when change is within reach?
3. Pastor Wesley shared an illustration about his dad not understanding the beauty of a rug being constructed from the backside, only to realize that the true design was visible from the front. Can you share a time in your life when you were only seeing the “backside” of God's work? How did you navigate that season? What helped you trust what God was doing in that season?
4. Pastor Wesley talks about the importance of facing difficult circumstances, even returning to places of defeat, to continue the fight. He uses the example of the disciples who, despite their fear and disappointment, returned to Jerusalem to fulfill their purpose. What are some “Jerusalem” moments in our personal lives that we need to confront, no matter how painful or discouraging?
5. Pastor Wesley invited us to see ourselves as the unnamed person walking with Jesus. Considering the recent election results, how might your personal

experiences, emotions, or expectations about the outcome affect your ability to recognize where God is moving right now? How can remaining open to God's presence, even amid political turmoil or disappointment, change your perspective and strengthen your faith journey?

INDIVIDUAL OR VILLAGE STUDY

SPIRIT WORK/ACTIVITY:

Option One:

Guided Journaling (10-15 minutes)

- Find a quiet space and reflect on the following prompts:
 - **“We had hoped...”** Write about an experience where you felt disappointed or where things did not turn out as you expected. How did this impact your faith and your outlook on life?
 - **“God on my Emmaus Road”:** Reflect on a difficult season where you didn't initially recognize God's presence, but looking back, you can see that God was walking with you. What were the signs you missed at the time?
 - **“Invitation to the Table”:** Just as the disciples invited Jesus to stay with them, consider how you can invite God more fully into your current struggles or uncertainties. What might you need to surrender or open up to God?

Option Two:

Each letter in **EMMAUS** provides a step to help you deepen your connection with God when facing disappointment, confusion, or despair, just as the disciples did on the road to Emmaus.

E - Engage with God in Prayer

When life feels overwhelming, take time to pour out your heart to God. Just as Jesus listened to the disciples on the road, He listens to your worries and fears. *Reflect:* What is weighing on your heart today that you need to bring to God in prayer?

M - Meditate on God's Word

The disciples' eyes were opened when Jesus revealed the Scriptures to them. Reading and reflecting on God's Word can provide clarity and comfort in your darkest moments.

Reflect: What passage of Scripture can you meditate on to renew your hope?

M - Move Forward with Faith

Even when you feel stuck, take small steps forward, trusting that God is with you. The disciples didn't stop walking, and it was along the journey that they encountered Jesus.

Reflect: What's one small action you can take today, trusting that God is walking with you?

A - Ask for Support from Community

The road to Emmaus was not walked alone; the disciples had each other. Share your struggles with trusted friends or faith communities who can encourage and pray for you.

Reflect: Who can you reach out to for prayer or support during this season?

U - Uncover God's Presence in the Ordinary

The disciples recognized Jesus in the simple act of breaking bread. Look for God's presence in everyday moments— God often reveals God's self in the ordinary.

Reflect: Where might God be showing up in your daily life that you haven't noticed?

S - Surrender to God's Plan

The disciples' disappointment came from unmet expectations, but they found renewed hope when they surrendered to Jesus' plan. Let go of what you thought should happen and trust God's greater purpose.

Reflect: What expectation do you need to surrender to find peace in God's will?

When you feel lost or discouraged, walk through each of these steps. Engage with God, meditate on God's Word, take steps of faith, lean on your community, look for God in the ordinary, and surrender your plans to God. Like the disciples, you may find that God was walking with you all along.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Video. The Bible Project: [The Resurrection of Jesus: Luke 24](#)