The Lord Lives
SS Lesson for 03/31/2013

Devotional Scripture: Mark 16:4-6

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson exclaims about that Jesus, our Lord LIVES! The study's aim is to remind us that we have eternal hope because we have a living, eternal Savior. The study's application is to urge believers to live lives that reflect the hope and knowledge we have because Jesus Christ lives.

Key Verse: Luke 24:31

31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Imagine how those followers of Jesus must have felt on their way to Emmaus. All their hopes and dreams for the future had been crushed by the news of Jesus' death. The Messiah for whom they had waited so long had come. They were convinced that the man from Nazareth was God's promised Redeemer. Though it is possible that they did not personally witness His miracles, the stories of His extraordinary deeds were widespread. No one could do those things if He were not the Messiah. At least, they had (past tense) believed that. Now that He was dead, they did not know what to believe, Have there been those times in your life when circumstances made it hard for you to believe God's promises? "The tests are back, and I'm sorry to tell you it is cancer." "Sir, the principal wants to speak with you about your son." "We have appreciated your service to the company for the past twenty years, but——" In the midst of tragedy, God is able to bring triumph. Because He is in control of each person's life, victims can become victors. The disciples on the road to Emmaus were glad to talk with the stranger who joined them. When life caves in on you, talking about the difficulties can help. Luke's account of their discussion gives us a glimpse into the frustration they faced. Jesus talked too. Although they were prevented from recognizing Him at first, they must have been intrigued by His frank discussion of the Old Testament and His rebuke of their unbelief. However, it was the impromptu meal to which they invited Him that helped open their eyes to the truth. As the Lord broke bread for the meat, their spiritual eyes were opened, and gladness replaced the gloom. The psalmist declared, "He restoreth my soul" (Ps. 23:3). Without allegorizing the story of the Emmaus disciples, it is worth noting that their day of tragedy became a day of triumph after they spent some time with Jesus. He emphasized knowing and believing the Scriptures. The fact of Jesus' death seemed to mock their understanding about who Jesus was. Cold, hard facts can be stubborn irritants that drain our resolve and weaken our confidence. But faith does not deny the facts or distort reality. It forces us to trust God's control because we realize He alone can move mountains and calm seas. Of course, He does not always do things the way we would like. Sometimes He calms the storm, and sometimes, instead, He calms us. Life is difficult at best. Even as believers, we realize we are no longer living in the Garden of Eden and have not yet reached heaven. Viruses attack the bodies of believers as well as those of non-Christians. Our homes may burn, and our children may fail just as often as do those who do not love God. Like-the Emmaus disciples, we can be blinded by earthly circumstances. We need to remind ourselves that God never guaranteed everything in our lives would be good. He promised instead that all things would work together for good (Rom. 8:28). That is how He continues to restore our souls.

Commentary from Barnes Notes

[Their eyes were opened] The obscurity was removed. They saw him to be the Messiah. Their doubts were gone, and they saw clearly that he was risen, and was truly, as they had long hoped, the Saviour of people. It is not meant that they were before "blind," but that they did not know until then who he was.

[He vanished out of their sight] He suddenly departed. It does not appear that there was anything miraculous in this, but, during their surprise, he took the opportunity suddenly to withdraw from them.
Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The concept of the major outlines came from reviewing the Scriptural Text.

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Lesson Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In some traditions, a wake is held in the home of the deceased after a funeral. The body of the deceased is present in this ceremony, and food and drink are served to those who have come to pay their respects. In some churches, a meal is held in the church fellowship hall. But no matter what the tradition, everyone eventually goes home after a funeral. We cannot stay at the church, the funeral parlor, or the cemetery very long. We go home. Jesus died less than 24 hours after he celebrated a Passover meal with his disciples. His body was buried late on a Friday afternoon, a rushed interment to beat the arrival of the Sabbath that began at sundown (John 19:31). The stunned disciples stayed together (John 20:19), but they shared sadness and shock more than food or drink. There had been no proper funeral for their friend and teacher. The next day, Sunday, some of Jesus’ disciples apparently did what we do after a funeral: they started for home. Two set out for Emmaus, a village outside Jerusalem. The unexpected turn that this trip took is the subject of this week’s lesson.

The Gospels highlight the role of the 12 apostles, but there were other followers of Jesus as well. We see this in the plurality of candidates available to replace Judas (Acts 1:23). The other, non-apostolic disciples included both men and women (see Luke 8:1-3). About 120 of them were gathered together in Jerusalem sometime between Jesus’ resurrection and the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 1:15). Our story today concerns two such disciples. The name of one is given as Cleopas. We have no other confirmable information about this man. But one intriguing suggestion is that he is the same as the Clopas of John 19:25, mentioned as being the husband of one of the women named Mary who stood by the cross as Jesus died. That leads to the further theory that the other, unnamed disciple in today’s lesson could be that Mary. If these two are husband and wife walking back to their home village of Emmaus in Luke 24:13, that would throw a certain light on today’s story regarding the hospitality they offered to Jesus. But if (1) Mary the wife of Clopas is the same as “Mary the mother of James,” who had witnessed the empty tomb (Luke 24:10), and (2) Luke 24:22-24 establishes that the two disciples in today’s text had not witnessed the empty tomb, then (3) the unnamed disciple of today’s study would not be Mary the wife of Clopas. Jerusalem was the largest city in the region, perhaps 30,000-50,000 in population. It was surrounded by many small villages of a few hundred people each. The residents of these villages tended vineyards, fields, orchards, flocks, and herds. The temple city of Jerusalem was fed economically by these villagers, who traveled to Jerusalem several times a year for festivals and to pay an annual temple tax.

Emmaus was one such village. Today we are uncertain of its actual site, since the village was likely destroyed in the Roman military campaign that swept through Palestine in AD 66-70.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

When Jesus met with His disciples for the Passover, He instituted the Lord's Supper to commemorate His death. Little did His followers realize that they were soon going to witness what communion was meant to symbolize. After leaving the upper room, the Lord and His apostles made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. There the Saviour agonized in prayer over the events that were about to unfold. After being betrayed by the traitor's kiss and arrested, Jesus was led away to several hearings that culminated in His
condemnation and crucifixion. Meanwhile, the disciples fled into the darkness. Most of them went into hiding for the immediate future. The ensuing hours must have tested the faith of the apostles as it had never been tested before. With Jesus’ crucifixion, their hopes were dashed. That, of course, all changed on the third day when Christ arose. Though at first they doubted that this had actually occurred, before long Jesus’ disciples were convinced that the resurrection was true.


In this section, the scene is set. The characters are Jesus and the two men, one of whom is named Cleopas. Let us look first at our Lord and then at the two men. The Lord appeared to these two men as a man. From His appearance one would have thought of Jesus as only a man. From Mark’s gospel (16:12) we learn that Jesus appeared to these two “in a different form.” This might only mean that Jesus appeared to the men in His resurrected body, but it seems to mean that He appeared to them in a body that was not immediately recognizable in appearance. Might this mean, for example, that the nail scars were not apparent, so that all the tell-tale indications of His identity would have been concealed? Not only did Jesus appear to these two as a man, He also appeared to them as one very much like them. He too was a traveler, it would have seemed. He was, like them, walking to Emmaus. To be more accurate, it appeared that He was walking further than Emmaus, for He acted as though He would go on when they stopped. Strangely, it would seem, Jesus even appeared as one slightly below those with whom He traveled. By this I mean that Jesus was perceived by these men either to be totally “unplugged,” totally aloof to what was going on, or somewhat slow on the uptake. The words of these two men to Jesus were a mild rebuke, as though as to say, “Come on, man, get with it!”

Now let us turn our attention to these two men. These men were disciples, men who were intimately acquainted with and associated with the eleven. Luke referred to them as “two of them” (verse 13), the “them” obviously referring back to the eleven apostles (Luke 24:9-11). From what they tell our Lord, they were privy to all that had taken place and to all that was reported to the apostles by the women. They were not numbered among the eleven, but they were closely associated with them. They were, in truth, disciples of our Lord. These disciples were, however, very discouraged. They had, for all intents and purposes, given up all hope. Their faces were sad and downcast (verse 17). They had hoped that Jesus was the Messiah (verse 21), but due to His death they had concluded that He was only a prophet—a true prophet of God, a powerful prophet, but only a prophet, who died like many of the other prophets of old.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Jesus Was Crucified, Buried and Resurrected (Luke 24:13-21)

13 Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem.
14 And they talked together of all these things which had happened.
15 So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.
16 But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.
17 And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"
18 Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"
19 And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,
20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.
21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened.
Jesus did suffer

Suffering prophesied in Scripture (Luke 24:45-46)

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,

Suffering foretold by the prophets (Acts 3:18)

18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.

Suffering that added to Jesus' perfection (Heb 2:10)

10 In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Suffering that was predicted (1 Peter 1:10-11)

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

Suffering that Jesus gave as an example for us (1 Peter 2:20-21)

20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

Suffering in His body (1 Peter 4:1)

4 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

Jesus was crucified

Jesus was crucified at the third hour (Mark 15:25)

25 It was the third hour when they crucified him.

We can be assured that Jesus was crucified (Acts 2:36)

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Jesus was crucified because His own countrymen wanted Him crucified (1 Thess 2:14-15)

14 For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, 15 who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men

Jesus was crucified because the chief priests and rulers requested death (Luke 24:20)

20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him;

Jesus was crucified and the Roman soldiers verified it (John 19:31-35)

31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. 32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. 33 But when they came to Jesus and found that he was
already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. 35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

Jesus was buried

Jesus was buried and it is confirmed by the Gospel (1 Cor 15:3-4)
For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Jesus was buried because it was prophesied (Isa 53:9)
9 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Jesus was buried because Joseph buried Him (Matt 27:57-60)
57 As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. 58 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. 59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Jesus was buried but God raised Him from the dead (Acts 13:29-30)
When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead,

Jesus was resurrected

Jesus was resurrected and He appeared to the eleven disciples (Mark 16:14)
14 Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

Jesus was resurrected and He appeared to Simon (Luke 24:34)
34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

Jesus was resurrected because it was prophesied (Acts 2:29-32)
29 "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

Jesus was resurrected and therefore He is the living hope (1 Peter 1:3)
3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Jesus was resurrected through the power of God (2 Cor 13:4)
4 For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.
Jesus Experienced (Luke 24:28-30)

28 Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther.
29 But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them.
30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Jesus experienced in our daily lives

*Experienced daily through Jesus' reconciliation (Col 1:21-22)*

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation

*Experienced daily through being chosen in Jesus (Eph 1:3-4)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

*Experienced daily through grace given in Jesus (2 Tim 1:9)*

9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

*Experienced daily through hope in Jesus (1 Peter 1:13)*

13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Jesus experienced through His abiding in us

*Jesus abiding in us means that we also abide in His love (John 15:9-10)*

9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

*Jesus abiding in us means that we can be fruitful (John 15:4-6)*

4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

*Jesus abiding in us so that we may be confident and unashamed when Jesus returns (1 John 2:28)*

28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

*Jesus abiding in us so that we can walk as He walked (1 John 2:6)*

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.
Jesus abiding in us means we have confessed Jesus as the Son of God (1 John 4:15-16)

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Jesus experienced through His blessing upon us

Jesus blesses us with the promises made to Abraham (Gal 3:14)

14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Jesus blesses us with spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Jesus blesses us when we are persecuted in His name (1 Peter 4:14)

14 If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

Jesus blessed us by redeeming us and making us His people (Titus 2:13-14)

13 while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Jesus Fully Realized (Luke 24:31-35)

31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.
32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"
33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together,
34 saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"
35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

Jesus realized through spiritual eyes

Spiritual eyes that see God at work (2 Kings 6:17)

17 And Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes so he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Spiritual eyes that see because God has put His salve in them (Rev 3:18)

18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Spiritual eyes that see the wonderful things in God’s Word (Ps 119:18)

18 Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.
Spiritual eyes that have been enlightened (Eph 1:18)
18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Jesus realized through inner strength

Spiritual power in the inner being (Eph 3:16-19)
16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

God renews the inner being (2 Cor 4:16)
16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

God’s word brings joy to the inner being (Rom 7:22)
22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law

Inner being that God created (Ps 139:13)
13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Jesus realized through the assembling of His saints

Saints assembled to encourage one another (Heb 10:23-25)
23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Saints assembled in the presence of God (Matt 18:20)
20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Saints assembled for fellowship (Acts 2:42-47)
42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Saints assembled for prayer (Acts 1:14)
14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.
Jesus realized through witnessing

Witnessing about Jesus and Jesus only (1 Cor 2:1-3)

2 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.

Witnessing about the hope we have (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, NIV

Witnessing about the mystery of Christ in God's Word (Eph 3:3-6)

3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Witnessing about Jesus using revelations from God (Matt 16:17)

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts by Bob Deffinbaugh

I believe you and I fall into the very same trap into which the disciples fell. We read and study the Scriptures through the grid of our own sin, of our own desires, our own ambitions and preferences. We arrive at our own idea of what God should be like, and what His kingdom should be, and then we rearrange the Scriptures, over-emphasizing some, and ignoring others, so that we have nicely (but wrongly) proof-texted our own thinking. How often do we do this in those areas of tension, where two seemingly contradictory things are somehow linked; for example, in the biblical truths of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, or in the areas of suffering and glory (our own, I mean). We would rather have one of these areas (the pleasant, warm and fuzzy one, of course) and reject the other. This we cannot do. We may, like the prophets, have to hold two truths in tension, seeking and praying to understand their inter-relationship, but we dare not reject one and hold to the other exclusively. When you think about it, Jesus could have identified Himself as the Lord to these two men, and then proceeded to teach them on the basis of His authority. As it turns out, Jesus taught them on the basis of the authority of the Scriptures. Think of it, instead of teaching this lesson as the Christ, He taught this lesson about the Christ, but as a mere man, as a total stranger, even as a man who seemed poorly in tune and not in touch with what was going on. The two disciples rebuked Him for asking what things were going on in Jerusalem. They saw Him as one who was ill-informed, out of touch. And yet, as such, Jesus rebuked them and taught them the most marvelous survey of the Old Testament ever taught. The men later recognized the impact of Jesus’ teaching—it set their hearts afire, not just because Jesus taught them, but because the Scriptures were taught accurately, and thus with their own power and that of the Holy Spirit. It was the Scriptures, then, as explained by Jesus Himself and as illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that opened the eyes of the disciples so that they were ready and able (in God’s timing) to discover who it was who was with them. We must come to the Scriptures looking for God to change our lives, suspecting our temptation to change God’s Word to conform to our lives. We must depend upon the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand the mind of God. And, we must read and study the Bible as a whole, not just in its parts. We must read and study the Bible in much bigger
chunks, and not simply race through a couple of devotional thoughts on passages randomly selected. It is the whole counsel of God which we must learn. Our goal should be to learn all that God has taught us about Himself, ourselves, the gospel, and our mission, not just the parts we like to hear, that make us feel good. Let us go to the Word of God so that He can rearrange us, rather than to rearrange His Word.

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

During the twentieth century, the Soviet Union was officially an atheist state where persecutions of Christians and the church were common. The final days of the Soviet Union witnessed a beginning of glasnost (meaning “openness”) in that society, and some interesting things happened. One of these took place during one of the last great May Day parades in Moscow. After the parade’s seemingly endless procession of troops and military equipment, a small, ragtag group entered Red Square. The group consisted of shabbily dressed priests and other Christians—those who had felt the government’s persecution firsthand. The leader carried a large cross, which he raised high as they approached the reviewing stand. On the reviewing balcony was Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the ruler of that Communist empire. The small group stopped in front of and below this powerful man and his entourage, the masters of millions of people. The huge crowd watched with interest, and a hush came over the people when the Christians stopped. The leader, holding the cross, raised his voice as he said, “Mikhail Sergeyevich, Christ is risen!” In a world soaked with unbelief, this message never changes. Christ is risen from the dead. The world can never be the same because the Son of God has conquered death. May our hearts burn with the reality of the risen Lord!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. We often fail to see the great things God is doing right in front of us (Luke 24:13-16)
2. How foolish we so often are to assume that God is unaware of what we are concerned about (vs. 17-18)
3. Lack of faith causes us to become disillusioned about things we ought to have been ready for (vs. 19-21)
4. We may be slow to perceive, but the Lord knows how to break through our dullness (vs. 28-31)
5. When we truly encounter the Lord, we just have to tell others (vss. 32-35)