

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Theme: How God Enters Our Hearts

Date: April 6, 2008 (Easter 3)

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Dear Christian friends,

Would you ever invite someone over to your house and then purposefully be gone when they come? That wouldn't be very nice, would it? Would you ever invite someone to come a visit you at your home and then lock the door and tell them, "*You can come down the chimney or climb in the window if you want to get in.*"? That wouldn't make much sense, would it? You would have to wonder if they really wanted to visit with you at all.

But it is exactly that kind of thinking which keeps Jesus out of the hearts and minds of every unbeliever. And it is also the kind of thinking that sometimes keeps God out of our own hearts and homes and lives. It is what prevents God from helping us with our problems and troubles. It is what keeps our faith weak and causes us to fall into many temptations and sins. We ask God for his blessings but then we lock the door by which he tells us that he would come to us and bless us. It just doesn't seem to make much sense does it?

What is that door by which God comes into our hearts and lives? What is the door that we sometimes seem to lock? How do we and so many others lock the door and cut ourselves off from God's power and blessings? These are the questions that are answered by the story in our text today, the story of Jesus and the Emmaus disciples. If you have waited and waited for God to help you, if you have asked and it seems that he's not answering, then this is a Bible story to listen to carefully. This is a story for every one of us. It's a story for people who have asked God for help, who have invited God, who have waited for God; but then knowingly or unknowingly have locked the door by which God comes to us. On the basis of God's Word before us today, then, our sermon theme is ***How God Enters Our Hearts***. 1) Sometimes we are slow to recognize his ways, but 2) his way is the only way to truly bring lasting comfort.

None of us has ever felt more forsaken by God than the two men walking to the town of Emmaus on the evening of that first Easter. Their whole life, all their hopes and dreams, had come crashing down around them. They had been followers of Jesus. They had seen his miracles. They believed he was the Messiah promised by God. They were ready to follow him into his kingdom. But now as they walked along, they were sad and confused. There were so many unanswered questions on their hearts and minds. When a third man joined them on the way and asked them what was bothering them, the Bible tells us their reaction: **THEY STOOD STILL, THEIR FACES DOWNCAST. ONE OF THEM, NAMED CLEOPAS, ASKED HIM, "ARE YOU ONLY A VISITOR TO JERUSALEM AND DO NOT KNOW THE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED THERE IN THESE DAYS?"** Then they told the stranger why they were so sad. Jesus had died. His enemies finally caught up to him. They had heard rumors that Jesus was alive, but they didn't believe it. As far as they were concerned, it was all over.

Most of us have probably walked down a similar road as that of the Emmaus disciples. We have hopes and dreams for the future. But then things don't turn out the way we expected, and daily life becomes a drudgery. Our job didn't turn out the way we expected. Our marriage isn't quite what we had dreamed when we were younger, or we didn't have all the children we wanted, or the children we do have didn't turn out the way we hoped. We had always planned a happy retirement, but something happened we never thought about - our health started failing and things are not at all what we expected when we were younger. When there are more problems and troubles in life than anyone can list or mention, it feels as if we are all alone, abandoned, having no hope for a future. But Jesus is still there walking with us. That's his promise. But when Jesus comes to walk alongside us down the pathway of our life, we don't always recognize him. Like the Emmaus disciples we stand still with our faces to the ground disappointed that it appears that God didn't keep his promises.

Notice what Jesus does to help these two disciples. He doesn't suddenly say, "*Here I am, don't you recognize me?*" Sometimes the best *thing* a friend can do for you is to point out to you where you are making a bad mistake. And that is exactly what Jesus did for these two men. He stopped *and* looked at them and said **HOW FOOLISH YOU ARE**.

What kind of comfort is that to tell two friends that they are foolish? According to the risen Lord Jesus it was the right thing to do. These two men were sad, they wanted to believe Jesus was the Messiah, they wanted his help, they wanted him to be alive; but it seemed so hopeless. In other words, they wanted Jesus to help but then they locked the door so he

couldn't come in. That's when Jesus told them what the door is and how to open it: **HOW FOOLISH YOU ARE, AND HOW SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN! DID NOT THE CHRIST HAVE TO SUFFER THESE THINGS AND THEN ENTER HIS GLORY? AND BEGINNING WITH MOSES AND ALL THE PROPHETS, HE EXPLAINED TO THEM WHAT WAS SAID IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES CONCERNING HIMSELF.** Jesus pointed the Emmaus disciples to the Bible. The Bible is how Jesus comes to us, it's the only door by which he enters our hearts and homes to bring comfort and joy and strength into our lives. The Emmaus disciples were sad; their troubles got them down because they were not using their Bibles. They wanted Jesus so badly, but they had not read the words by which he would talk to them.

Everyone wants to be happy. As Christians we realize that being happy has something to do with God and God blessing us. And so we go about trying to get God into our lives in a variety of ways.

- 1) We talk to God and ask him to help us in our prayers. But then we don't open our Bibles to listen to God's answer to our prayers.
- 2) We try to be good. We think that being good to our family and neighbor will make us happy. We realize that sometimes our troubles are caused by our own sins, so we try to change our behavior and correct our faults. But we get frustrated because it only lasts for a little while and then we fall back into the same old selfish sins again.
- 3) We say we want to have God in our life but we try to invite God in by inventing our own message from God. Instead of sitting down and opening our Bible and reading God's Word, we think to ourselves, *"I just know what God wants in my heart."* Sometimes we are so very slow to open our Bibles by which God can and does work permanent change and bring blessings that last. Others believe in dreams and claim that's how God speaks to me. Still others look to the stars and horoscopes and superstitiously believe God sends messages through little things that happen in their life; even though God says that he hates superstition.

How foolish to try to drag God down the chimney or through the window, when all the time he is standing at the door and knocking with his Word in the Bible. **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND OBEY IT,** he promises. **IF YOU CONTINUE IN MY WORD, YOU WILL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE...WHOEVER HEARS THESE WORDS OF MINE AND PUTS THEM INTO PRACTICE IS LIKE A WISE MAN WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE ROCK.**

Not only was Jesus a friend to the Emmaus disciples but he's also our friend. But he will never appear to us visibly on this earth and say, *"Here I am to help you."* Many of our troubles and sorrows, much of our sin and sadness in daily life is because we lock the door to God's Word in the Bible. Why shouldn't our Friend Jesus come to us, too, and say, *"How foolish you are not to read your Bible."* How foolish when every home has been blessed by God with two or three Bibles and a Catechism to explain the Bible in simple language. How foolish when commentaries like the People's Bible take away every excuse about the Bible being too difficult to understand. How foolish when there are so many different Bible Classes to choose from in the congregation, including the Sunday morning class with many people, the Wednesday morning class with only a few people, the Tuesday ladies groups, the Wednesday night class and even Adult Information Class. How foolish when the Meditations and the Forward In Christ provide daily devotions and studies of God's Word. How foolish it is not to read the Bible when faith comes from hearing the message; when Jesus promised that we will be blessed if we hear and hang on to his Word; when he said the truth will set us free and when Jesus comes to us in the Bible with all of his power and strength and blessings. How foolish it is to slam the door by not using the Word of God every day.

Soon the days of our life on this earth will be over and we will no longer walk on this earth. The time to open the door to our loving and living Friend Jesus is now. In that Word of God we are daily pointed to the cross of Jesus and the empty tomb, and all the blessings that flow from the forgiveness of sins and the promise of heaven. When Jesus opened the Bible for the Emmaus disciples, before they even knew it was Jesus, they received comfort and strength. They said, **WERE NOT OUR HEARTS BURNING WITHIN US WHILE HE TALKED WITH US ON THE ROAD AND OPENED THE SCRIPTURES TO US?** May God lead us also to open our Bibles so Jesus can come to us with all his blessings. Then we may pray, *"When other helpers fail and comforts flee, Help of the helpless, Oh, abide with me."* Amen.