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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**April 15, 2018**

**2018 Easter Epilogue**

**Luke 24:13-27**

**Prayer:** *Father, again, we are heavy-hearted just because of one member of the body is hurting, the body itself is hurting and so we just with that heavy heart come before you this morning seeking your grace, seeking your Holy Spirit's power. Lord, we want to lift you up, we want to just recognize that you are the source of our strength and joy. As we open up your word this morning again, Lord, we're going to be looking back, backwards at Easter as well and so I pray that your Spirit would guide us, that you would give us the privilege of your Holy Spirit's presence and that this would be of permanent value. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, it has been a few weeks since Easter and being that Easter is really a holiday that has a whole week of prologue and that it's probably in my view the most glorious day of the year, I thought it's appropriate to add to Easter an epilogue not only because Easter is the most marvelous time of the year but also because there are lessons that we can learn and relearn from one man to whom the Easter story was something that he got hopelessly wrong.

The man's name was Cleopas. And Cleopas was a very, very unhappy man. It had been three days since Jesus Christ had been executed by the Roman government at the behest of the Jewish authorities, and he still couldn't believe what he had seen. You know as far as these events go, the cross was really a rather minor affair politically speaking. This was not the execution of anybody of great note, this Jesus was not a great political enemy or even some notorious criminal, he was simply a thorn in the side of the Jewish religious leaders who eventually found a way around their own laws and the laws of Rome itself in order to have him permanently removed. Cleopas was one of those who had placed his faith in Jesus or at least so he thought. And we have in Luke's gospel a conversation that he was involved with that took place shortly after the crucifixion. This is Luke 24 starting at verse 13. It says this: *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.*

Just imagine what an awful conversation this must have been. Jesus Christ was dead and it wasn't like the death of a friend or a relative, it was much, much more than that, it was the death of the one they thought was God's Messiah. For three years now they had been following Jesus. They had to have heard about the great and the mighty deeds that he had done, how he had fed huge crowds, how

he had healed the sick, how he'd even raised the dead. I think it's safe to say that these two knew Jesus about as well as the disciples did, but that's not very much at all. We've been studying the Gospel of John and we have seen repeatedly over and over again that the disciples themselves just could not get, they could not perceive who it was that was living in their midst. Well it turns out that Cleopas literally couldn't see Jesus. Verse 15 says: *While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad.* So walking alongside them is two men walking along and here comes Jesus and he overtakes them and they don't recognize him at all because they can't, and he says to them what are you discussing? And they can't believe what they're hearing. I mean to put that into context, just imagine it's the day after 9/11 and the twin towers are in absolute rubble and you're right outside New York City and you're walking and you're in some kind of subdued conversation and a complete stranger comes up and he says, "Hey, what's going on?" Verse 18 says: *Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?"* Well again given the context, this question appears almost bizarre. In fact

the question is so out of place that the strangers, they stop right there and they ask him, "Are you a visitor to Jerusalem?" I mean you can almost hear the pain and the anger in their voices. They're basically saying are you a tourist or are you just ignorant? These travelers are not just unhappy, they are existentially unhappy. See this event that had taken place, that event challenged their very existence. I mean they thought Jesus had the answer to the most fundamental question that every one of us asks. And again, picking up on verse 9: *And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."* See Jesus had been their answer and then Rome and the cross had just come in and snatched it all away. *"But we had hoped that he was the one," they said.* Well, God said that Jesus was that one, that he was the one to redeem Israel but God's redeemer was much, much bigger than the Israel that they had imagined. God said this same Jesus they saw crucified was not only the redeemer of Israel, he was also the creative force that had produced the universe. *John 1 says: In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him*

*was life, and that life was the light of men.* God also said that Jesus himself was the creative force that literally infused life itself into creation.

You know the term that we translate as "the word" is actually in Greek the word "logos." And that word itself means "that which gives meaning to." It's the very same word that we use, that we use as the root for "logic." That's what gives meaning to. And in verse 14 of John 1 God tells us that the logos, the word, the one who gives meaning to, that at some time he became a human being and that he lived among us. *John 1:14 says: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* God says in Jesus was life. I mean he wasn't just a creative source, he was the well that meaningful existence came out of. I mean without Jesus we have an existence that is summed up perfectly by Shakespeare in the words of *Macbeth* where he says: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." See life without the logos of life means nothing. Life, life with Jesus is not only eternal, its daily expression signifies what we are here for and that is the glory of God. You see Jesus taught us that we were creatures created in the very image of God to give praise and

honor and worship and glory to him. He taught us that we were designed by God for worship and that worship is what we are put on earth for. *Romans 12:1* says: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your spiritual act of worship.*

I mean it was C.S. Lewis who pointed out that praise and worship is literally programmed by God into our DNA. There's no other creature programmed for praise like human beings are. You know fish and birds and grazers and hunters, they don't consciously praise anything because they're not human beings. They're not built that way but we are. In fact only human beings are built that way. Only humans are designed by God to give praise and honor and glory back to their creator and the horror of human fallenness is a refusal to see that. I mean you ever notice that all of creation knows why it's here with one exception? That exception is us. I mean birds fly and fish swim and cattle graze and hunters hunt and they answer their own question of meaning by what they do. Fish clearly are designed for swimming, so they swim. And birds are clearly designed for flying, so they fly. I mean that's what they do. What are human beings designed for? I mean what do we do? Why are we here? And where do we find meaning for our lives?

See the reason Cleopas was so downcast was that he saw the very one who gave his life meaning, he saw him executed. I mean what was he

to do now? Cleopas's problem is really our problem. You see without Jesus, without the logos, there really is no logic at all to life. There's just life itself. You know we're born, we grow up, we go to school, we get a job, we find a spouse, we get married so that we can have kids who then grow up, go to school, get a job, find a spouse and then just repeat the pattern over and over and over again. We're born, we grow, we reproduce, and then we die. I mean how is that any different than the animals that are surrounding us? You see, without Jesus we are just the smartest of the animals which may matter a lot while we're living but it doesn't matter a whit when we're dead. I mean then the best I can hope for is that I am just like the animals, that I'm just fertilizer. God says otherwise. God says in *Hebrews 9:27*: *And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.* Jesus came to bear that judgment for us. Cleopas and his friends, they just didn't get it. They couldn't understand it. He said -- this is Cleopas: *"Our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel."* See, redeemers don't get crucified. I mean Cleopas was downcast, he was distraught because his reason for praise was dead. He had -- quote -- *"hoped that Jesus was the one"* and now by dying, Jesus had failed to be that one and Cleopas's hope had died when Jesus died. I mean he was supposed to redeem Israel, to usher in a new day

where the nation would no longer be under the thumb of the Roman Empire. And Cleopas and his friends had seen this great power, they'd seen these great miracles in the life of Jesus only to see that life snuffed out like that of a common criminal's. They could still hear the words: *"He saved others, but himself he couldn't save,"* and all the hope that they had invested in their Messiah was now lying dead and buried. Jesus was life's answer but now Jesus is dead, now he's gone. Cleopas had a good reason to be unhappy, but Cleopas was also highly uninformed. You see, he was ignorant of the fact that God had a plan far grander than he had ever assumed. I mean he really only thought of Jesus as an earthly ruler of an earthly kingdom because he never really connected the dots that God had sprinkled throughout the whole Old Testament. And Jesus himself preached over and over again the good news of the kingdom that he was bringing and over and over again he made it crystal clear that the kingdom of God was not going to be political, it was going to be spiritual, that there were two kingdoms that were at war and it was a war that had existed for eons. We've seen it described in *Revelation 12* which tells us: *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And that great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world -- he*

was thrown down to earth, and his angels were thrown with him. So here's Satan, he's thrown down, he's hurled down to earth and he then proceeds to systematically destroy the place that he's thrown to. Scripture tells us that Jesus spent much of his time on earth undoing what the devil had already done. *1 John 3:8* says flat out: *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.* Well Cleopas thought Jesus's plan was far more political. He said: *"We were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel."* He made the same mistake that many others do, he thought of Jesus as a political ruler alone. I mean there were others who thought of him as a revolutionary, maybe as a teacher, maybe a prophet, very few thought of him as a sin bearer, as a flawless substitute for his sheep. Like I said, Cleopas was sadly uninformed. I wonder if Cleopas ever heard what Jesus had to say about his sheep. I mean he said in *John 10* he said: *"I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for my sheep."* Cleopas got the first part but he clearly missed the second part, that was the dying part. I mean, did he hear what Jesus said well before he was arrested and crucified? Did he hear what he said in *John 12:31* where he says: *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."* He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. Well Cleopas had seen Jesus lifted up from the earth, crucified, just as he said he would but he never connected

the dots. He was distraught about Jesus's death because he was badly uninformed and all he saw was this tragic miscarriage of justice resulting in the execution of an innocent man. Well you know, God saw the very same facts from an entirely different perspective. Jesus was about to drive out the prince of this world by using the devil's own tools against him. You know the prince of this world, that is the devil, saw the cross as a public humiliation and a repudiation of Jesus by the very people he had come to save. God saw it as a public demonstration of his son's substitutionary atonement for us. Jesus, the perfect one, offering himself as the sacrifice for his fallen and imperfect sheep and so both sides had a huge stake in the outcome of this. I mean Jesus came to die in our place as our perfect substitute. Were he to fail in that mission, if he had sinned at any point in his life, if he had sinned at any point in undergoing his death, he would have no longer been a flawless substitute for us. His sacrifice would not and could not be accepted by a perfectly holy Father and he would have stayed dead and buried. Cleopas saw the cross and all he could see was the dead Jesus. I mean that's what the whole world saw. That's what they were looking at for three days until an angel announced he is risen, just as he said.

See the resurrection that we celebrate on Easter was the Father's proof that his Son's sacrifice had indeed been perfect, that our

sin debt had been paid in full. The proof was an empty tomb. That rolled open stone proved that Jesus's perfection was accepted on our behalf, that the prince of this world Satan no longer could use our sin as his claim to us because that sin was now paid for in full. Jesus had turned the tables on Satan. God declared as such in *Colossians 2:14*. It says: *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.* Cleopas only saw a man named Jesus nailed to a cross. And what he saw as tragic defeat God saw as a greatest triumph in human history.

So we ask how in the world could Cleopas have missed this so badly, so terribly? Well we know how unhappy he was, I mean that certainly affected his judgment. We know that he was certainly uninformed about God's plans and intentions but how he missed God's prophetic word, that just escapes me. You see, God didn't leave us to guess what his plan was going to be, he stated it repeatedly and prophetically from Genesis to Revelation. I mean at the very beginning in the Garden of Eden right after the serpent had successfully tempted Adam and Eve God says to the serpent in

*Genesis 3: "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* At the cross all of that came to pass. I mean at the cross the serpent did indeed strike Jesus's heel, but it was Jesus who crushed his head by removing the power that he had over us. I mean that prophesy was given right after Adam and Eve fell thousands and thousands of years before the cross. Cleopas had to have heard that the Messiah would suffer, he had to have heard about Isaiah the prophet and what he wrote. He had to have heard of *Isaiah 53*, which was written seven centuries before Jesus was even born. And instead of predicting the triumphant political ruler wresting from Rome Israel, it spoke instead of a rejected sin bearer taking on our sin. Isaiah said: *He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has*

*laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth. Now who could that possibly have been but Jesus? And what did Isaiah say? Wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement that brought us peace was upon him, that he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, I mean, Cleopas had to have seen that unfold before his eyes. Psalm 22 is even more specific and that was written a thousand years before Jesus was even born. It opens up with the very words that Jesus cried out from the cross: "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" And then it goes into a graphic description of exactly what happened at the crucifixion. Psalm 22:7 says: "All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; he trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" And then in God's word a thousand years later we see that exact mocking coming from the high priest who had Jesus arrested. Matthew 27 says: Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself he cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe Him." Well didn't Cleopas hear that? You know Psalm 22 goes on to say: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has*

*encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." And one thousand years after this Psalm is written these incidents happened exactly as predicted. John 9:23 says: When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom, so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfill the Scripture which says, "They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." So the soldiers did these things.*

Well, didn't Cleopas see the soldiers dividing Jesus's garments? Didn't they see him piercing his hands and his feet? Couldn't they put -- couldn't he put two and two together? When that Psalm was written ten centuries earlier, Rome didn't even exist as a power and crucifixion had not yet even been invented. I mean surely Cleopas had access to the Psalms. And there we find about the cross and the garments and the piercing, I mean, these were all dots the size of beach balls. So why didn't he connect the dots? I mean there's blindness, it's almost comical. I mean if you go back to the text that I read at the beginning of this message, you find a very unhappy, a very uninformed Cleopas and friends, they're

telling the Jesus he can't recognize how disappointed he is in Jesus.

And we pick up the conversation at Jesus's question in *Luke 24:19*:  
*And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and beside all this, it is the now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."* You see what we really have here is overwhelming evidence that not only was Cleopas unhappy, not only was Cleopas uninformed but he was also filled with unbelief. I mean he starts off by telling the "Jesus" that he doesn't even recognize that this Jesus who had bitterly disappointed him was a powerful prophet in word and deed who had been crucified and buried. Well, that's a dot. And then he tells Jesus that he's heard that the tomb is empty. That's surely another dot. And that he's also heard that there's eye witness

accounts of an angel announcing that this Jesus is alive. There's another dot. That he also heard other eye witness accounts saying that friends had found the tomb empty, another dot. And yet he never connects the dots. And he thinks isn't all of this just so awful? You've got to remember, Jesus has overtaken them. They're the ones who are silent, downcast and defeated. They rebuked Jesus's feigned ignorance of the events of the last few days. Now they find Jesus in turn is about to rebuke them. *Luke 24:25 says: And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.* Basically Jesus is telling Cleopas, hey, Cleopas, the dots were all there right in front of you all the time. *"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken!" he says.*

You know I've been awfully hard on Cleopas this morning and in some ways that's really quite unfair because basically Cleopas is us. We are Cleopas. See those words were not just for Cleopas, they were for us as well because we, too, are the foolish ones. You see we all have far more dots than Cleopas really ever had and we have the whole of scripture, we have the whole of history, we have all of science and all of the failed attempts of skeptics to prove that

the tomb was really not empty. So why don't all of us believe? Well the answer to that one is actually quite simple. It's because we don't see things as they are, we see things as we are. We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are. We become the final filter that determines if we will accept things as they really are or as we really are.

Case in point, Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. The Pharisees, they got eyes just like everybody else and they see with their own eyes, they see a man so far dead that he's beginning to rot and they see with their own eyes this man has come back to life, and they conclude not that this Jesus must be God but that his power is such a threat that he needs to die. We don't see things as they are; we see things as we are.

You know there's still a war going on between the kingdoms and part of the fallout of that spiritual warfare is the spiritual blindness every one of them has inherited from Adam. You know Cleopas didn't believe for the same reason that others don't believe and that is they can't. I mean Cleopas literally could not see the Jesus that he was speaking to because God wouldn't let him see. You know verse 16 says: *But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.* But you know the same is true for every single person who's outside the kingdom, but it's not God who is blinding them; it is Satan and his

minions. *2 Corinthians 4:4* says: *The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18* says: *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

You see, your non believing friends, neighbors and relatives all think the cross is foolish or unfortunate or unimportant because they can't see otherwise. They can't see that the cross is the pivotal event that divides unbeliever from believer. They just can't. And so we say, okay, well, if that's true then why bother telling anybody about Jesus? Everybody's blind, everybody's unseeing, everybody can't do anything about it. Well Jesus tells us why in *Matthew 19:26*. Jesus had just met a rich young ruler who wanted to follow him. And Jesus tells that rich young ruler that you're going to have to sell everything, give it all to the poor to lay up treasures for yourself in heaven and follow him and so the ruler goes away sad. Jesus goes on to say in *Matthew 19:24*: *"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* Well disciples hear that and they're stunned. They're blown away. They can't -- it doesn't compute because every single thing they'd ever been taught, everything they'd ever learned, everything they

understood said that wealth was an evidence of God's blessing. Here we have Jesus turning that entire concept on its head and he's saying that wealth was very often a curse. It's just -- it's too much, too much for the disciples. And verse 26 says: *When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Then who then can be saved?"* I mean if the wealthy aren't blessed by God then who in the world is ever going to enter the kingdom of God? Verse 26 says: *Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."* You see, Jesus was unequivocal, he said no human being is capable of leading another human being into the kingdom of God. And Jesus himself said in *John 6:44*: *"No one can come to me except the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."* And what he's saying is very simple. He's saying it's impossible for us to lead anyone into the kingdom by our own power. But here's why we still preach the gospel, because he went on to say: *"With man this is impossible, with God"* -- what? -- *"all things are possible."*

You see the God of this age, Satan himself is still at work today and he works mightily to make sure that none of us ever connect the dots. I mean he wants you to think that even the dots themselves are ridiculous and he's been wildly successful. You know for many the whole idea of any God man bearing my sin is just -- that's just

foolishness. No matter how hard I try, I cannot make you believe that Jesus is who he says he is, that he's God in the flesh, that he's the good shepherd who came to earth to ransom his sheep with his own blood. I'm not capable of overcoming the God of this age who is far more powerful than I am, but I can introduce you to someone who is far more powerful than he is. In fact he may be overtaking you right now. In fact he may be walking and talking to you this morning just like he did with Cleopas and his friend. They were existentially unhappy, uninformed and unbelieving when Jesus overtook them because they thought the meaning of life itself has died. And perhaps you sense that same type of meaninglessness. Perhaps you've asked yourself what am I doing here? What is the point of this? What is the purpose of life? Well, Cleopas had the joy of life restored because God elected to show him that the logos, the very meaning of life itself, had gone to the cross to purchase eternal life for his sheep. And here we have Jesus opening up the entire word of God to show everything that had taken place was exactly as God planned it. In verse 27 he says: *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* And Cleopas says: *"Didn't our hearts burn within us as He opened the scriptures to us?"* And you know why his heart was burning? His heart was burning because the meaning of life that he had thought had died was not only very much alive but he was there among them

proving and demonstrating that life in the kingdom was the only life that had meaning. The logos, the one who gives life its only logic had risen from the dead and was now walking beside them. And if you notice it was Jesus who overtook them. Cleopas and his friend are walking, Jesus he is the one who comes up to them. It's Jesus who pursued and overtook them.

So perhaps the same Logos is pursuing you. And when he does, the first thing you notice is that maybe for the first time the dots start to line up. Maybe you start to think for the first time the foolishness of the cross is not so foolish after all and if you get to that place, you didn't get there on your own. You see it's impossible to come to God on your own but you're never alone. Jesus said: *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."* And if this gospel makes sense to you, it's because God is visiting you just like he visited Cleopas. Don't think it's anything out of the ordinary when it comes to God's grace.

This is how Paul Tripp writes, he says: *"In Luke 15 the Pharisees came to Jesus and ridiculed him for 'receiving sinners.' They were wrong. Jesus does not receive sinners. He pursues sinners. He pursues sinners like a shepherd pursues a lost sheep, like a woman pursues her lost coin, like a father runs after his lost son."*

Jesus runs in pursuit of sinners. If Jesus is overtaking you and you don't know what's next, well that's the time to talk to somebody, talk to a deacon, talk to an elder, talk to a friend 'cause we would love to have you enter the kingdom of God. But you know if he has overtaken you, if he has given you his life, if he's given you his logos which is the meaning of life itself, then praise him for his great and precious gift. But if you're struggling, if you're struggling and it seems like Jesus is altogether dead for you just like it seemed to Cleopas, well then maybe unbelief has crept up on you just like it did on Cleopas. Maybe you've lost the ability to see the dots that God has dropped into your own life like Cleopas lost that ability. I mean we look at those dots and we're amazed he couldn't see them. But maybe it's our struggles that make us hard to see them as well. It's easy to miss a gesture, it's easy to miss a phone call, a text or even a miracle that God is sending simply because our pain is blinding us.

I'd like us to take a minute to just ask us to ask God to show you where he's been in your pain and in your struggle, to ask if I missed the dots like Cleopas has. I mean, his heart burned within him when Jesus opened the scriptures to him. Have you asked God to do just that? I know he will because he's done it for me repeatedly. And one of the ways that I know that he's done it is

also connected to one of my all time favorite verses, a verse that I repeat all of time when I get in those kind of mindsets. It's *Proverbs 3:5: Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.* Well you know, there's a time to do that and the time to do that is when your understanding is leading you in the wrong direction just like it led Cleopas. That's the time to trust his understanding, not yours, his. Trust his understanding rather than your own and then do what comes naturally to the creatures he designed for this in the first place, praise him, glorify him, and worship him. Let's pray.

*Father, again I just want us to take a minute to ask you, especially any of those of us who are in pain, we just saw last night that life can turn on a dime, we see how quickly a heart attack can just change the periphery of everything and how easily pain can come crashing into our lives and how easy it is to get just like Cleopas got, absolutely befuddled, absolutely unbelieving of what was taking place, absolutely relying on his own understanding which was giving him nothing. Father, this morning I pray that each and every one of us could ask you to show what dots have you dropped into their lives, what gestures, what phone calls, what notes, what texts, what emails, what miracles are you doing in the lives of those who are in pain that they may have overlooked,*

*that they don't see your fingerprints on. Father, I pray that we would grasp that your fingerprints are all over our lives, all over every part of our lives. We just need to find them. And so I pray this morning you would help us to find them, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*