

# “What Resurrection Looks Like” by Grace Fowler

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## Third Sunday of Easter

Good morning! I am so excited to be worshipping with you today.

I want to break down this story with you all and then dive into what it means to me. The first thing we have to do is put ourselves into the story. When I was in college, I was in a bible study/ministry group called Intervarsity. The most important thing I learned from that ministry was to put myself into the shoes of the people living the bible story. As 21<sup>st</sup> century readers, it is really easy for us to pass judgement on bible characters. We tend to bring a moral superiority to the bible. Well we treat women better and would always understand Jesus' teachings and would never doubt a promise from God.

That is because we read the bible through the lens of the resurrection. We get to see the fulfillment of the promises in Jesus Christ! So before we tackle the gospel, it is wise to set aside some of those 21<sup>st</sup> century ideals for a moment and just live into the reality of the disciples. As we go through the text, keep in mind that the disciples don't have the resurrection goggles that we have.

First, it's been a crazy weekend for the disciples. I'm sure most of us in this room were exhausted after Easter weekend. I personally went to church 3 times in 3 days. #humblebrag. But seriously, that's more church than I am used to attending. Not only have these men just taken part in a week long religious festival, but they have had a traumatic series of events follow. The confusion and tragedy of Good Friday, the anxious waiting of the Sabbath, then the finding of the empty tomb on Sunday. Which through our eyes is a glorious sign of the resurrection, but to the men, is a sign of more trauma on the worst few days of their lives. The previous passage in Luke tells us that they thought the women were telling an "idle tale." Most likely they think that someone has stolen the body of Jesus.

Now they are on a journey out to Emmaus. According to Luke it is seven miles away from Jerusalem. That's a long ass walk! After an emotionally draining weekend, I personally don't want to walk 7 miles. I had to sleep all day after the Women's March because I was so worn out! And they meet this stranger on the road. A stranger who is eavesdropping, a pet peeve honestly. This stranger doesn't seem to have heard about the goings on of the last few days. This event rocked the city. Every Jewish person was gathered for the Passover rites in the temple. If you weren't at the trial of Jesus, you had probably had heard about it before you left the city. If this "man" on the road hadn't heard of what happened to Jesus, it's likely that these men thought he wasn't Jewish. So it is interesting that they continue to speak to a potential Gentile.

Next Cleopas and his companion admit to what they hoped for Jesus. Jesus was condemned and killed at the suggestion that he was the Messiah. Yet these men are willing to open up to a stranger on the road about their hopes for a messiah. Perhaps because they think that he is a Gentile, they feel safer. Perhaps they are so removed from the city that they don't feel the urgency of the situation anymore. Either way, they are pouring out the whole story.

The next chunk of the passage retells the encounter the women had at the tomb. Typically, when a story is retold in the bible, it's time to listen up. Repetition is important in a culture that was largely oral at the time. Luke writes out this account of the women twice. Although the previous passage had described the women's recounting of their experience as an idle tale, it was impactful enough to be retold. Luke easily could have written Cleopas saying that it was Peter who found the empty tomb. With this repetition of the women's account, they are further solidified in the resurrection story, something that Jesus would have approved of.

Now finally we hear Christ speak! He calls them foolish ones and slow of heart, then begins preaching to them. What a whirlwind. I can only imagine the two men on the road recoiling at being called fools! They haven't realized that this is Jesus yet. This is still a possibly Gentile stranger on the road! Yet something was stirring in their hearts. As they reach the town, Jesus starts to take off. The men stop him and ask him to eat with them. To me, this is a great picture of community. These people are still reeling from the crucifixion and the empty tomb. But they welcome a stranger into their homes to share a meal and stay the night. What a wonderful way to approach someone who called you names on the highway!

Finally, we see Christ revealed and then immediately he disappears. When first approached this part of the story I was baffled. Luke means to tell us that Jesus' first interaction

with his disciples, post-resurrection, is to show up, call them names, lecture them, then disappear? That seemed a little off character for Jesus. It wasn't until I continued reading that I realized two things. One, these men need to go back to Jerusalem. Most of the disciples were still in Jerusalem and these guys were wandering off into the desert. Jesus still needs to appear to all the disciples for the Ascension. So, this appearance is to convince them to come back for a group meeting. Jesus probably would have known that they would immediately return to tell the rest of the group what they had seen. To further confirm the women's story and to figure out what to do now that Jesus is back! Second, Jesus is newly resurrected. His full godhood has been revealed. He has not only come back to life, but defeated death. He doesn't have to play by the rules of Earth anymore. He can pop in and out of rooms whenever he wants. This is triumphant Jesus, who has fulfilled his mission on earth, conquered death and torn the veil. He's showing his followers that he isn't just a radical man, but is truly the Son of God.

Verse 32 is perhaps the moral of the story for me. Hindsight is 20/20. How many times have I been in the presence of the Spirit and not realized it until hours later? Or reflected on my life and seen God working, yet not realized it in the moment. Sometimes you need to see the whole trail of God working in your life before you can make the connections. I don't think I would have realized who Jesus was on the road. I would have missed the tree for the forest. But we can't blame the disciples for not recognizing him. They had never experienced a resurrection before. There was nothing in their world view or schemas to account for seeing a man on the road, a man who they had seen killed several days earlier.

But we have seen the resurrection! And what a glorious event it was and continues to be! We can connect the dots from prophecy to Messiah. I don't want to assert that this will make reading the Bible smooth sailing every time. I think it

means we can rest easy in the knowledge that God's promises come to fruition. I'll admit that isn't always easy for me. I often get the tunnel vision of the present and get angry with God for not answering me immediately. I forget to rest on the history of God's people, of the knowledge that God works slowly. I will still wrestle with unanswered prayers and times of silence, as I think we all should do. But it won't drive me away from my faith like it has done in the past. Maybe God won't bring me financial aid as soon as I ask for it, but I know that God fulfilled the ultimate promise of salvation and resurrection. God themselves could defeat death! That's enough for me to say alleluia every day.

Thank you.