

# SECOND PRESBYTERIAN

Roanoke, Virginia

Easter Sunday

April 20, 2025

## *“Wisdom Resurrected”*

Wisdom Sermon Series Part VII

*Luke 24:13-27*

**George C. Anderson**

I may have already shared this story before, but I love telling it.

Years ago, I pulled a notebook of sermons off a shelf. It used to be the practice of one of the minster groups I meet with for us all to bring materials to share—

- illustrations,
- book reports,
- sermons,
  - that sort of thing.

I kept notebooks—

I kept notebooks of sermons.

I was at a loss as to what to preach that Sunday, so I turned to one of those Sermon notebooks for inspiration. Sometimes, reading other people’s sermons helps get the homiletical juices flowing.

I opened the notebook somewhere in the middle and landed in the heart of a sermon. Jackpot! The sermon opened up a familiar passage in a fresh way. I was able to hear and understand the passage in a way I had never understood it before. I realized that the way I thought of this passage was all wrong. Now I had a different understanding—a deeper understanding.

Excitedly, I flipped back to see which of my preaching buddies had written it. The name under the title? ***George C. Anderson.***



The new wisdom of the sermon was old wisdom that needed resurrecting.

Something of the same happens in our passage. Listen for what I mean as I read from Luke 24, beginning with verse 13, and listen for God's fresh but ancient Word to us today.

<sup>13</sup> Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, <sup>16</sup> but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"

They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> 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?" <sup>19</sup>

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, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> 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." <sup>25</sup>

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup>

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

"We had hoped..."

The words *drip with disappointment*. These Jesus—followers had dared to believe that Jesus was the Messiah—the one who would usher in a new age.

They hoped, of course, for the good of the world—

Jesus certainly did—

but what they *longed for*, deep down, was for Jesus to restore Israel.

Make Israel free again.

Make Israel strong again.



Not that they wanted to go back to the way things were—those days when Israel was free and had a real king and not a puppet king placed in power by Rome. They did not want to go back to kings like Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh—kings who proved the truth of the axiom that “power corrupts.” What they hoped for was for a new Son of David to deliver Israel to independence and prominence, and be the king that even David failed to be—

- the shepherd-king who would always protect
  - Israel’s vulnerable, poor, widows, and children.
- A servant, yes,
  - but a servant with real power.

That’s old wisdom that comes from reading Judges, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles a certain way—this dream

- of Jerusalem shining like a city on a hill,
- of Israel being the nation before whom all others would bow—
  - and when that happens,
    - God’s kingdom being realized here on earth.

They hoped Jesus was the one to make it happen. But, like others who dared to challenge the empire, Jesus was crucified. And now..., that’s that.

Well OK, there’s a rumor. Some women found the tomb empty. A few of their friends confirmed it. But that was three days ago. Nothing’s changed.

Herod—still king.

Caesar—still calls himself a god.

Zealots still out to get Romans,

Pharisees still out to embarrass the Sadducees,

everyone still out to shun the tax collectors

and despise the Samaritans.

Even if Jesus were alive again, what’s the point?

Then a stranger joins them. We know it’s Jesus, but they don’t. If Jesus wants to restore their faith

- in God,
  - in the Bible
  - and in everything that they hoped for,
- perhaps he should just yell, “Surprise, it’s me”, and then cue

- the tears,
- the laughter,
- the hugs—
  - and maybe the celebration that their hopes for Israel were not in vain.



But the problem is that their old wisdom *is not old enough*.  
They have faith in God,  
but their faith can't include a crucifixion.  
They have hopes,  
but their hopes are limited to the nation of Israel.  
They know their Bible,  
but they've forgotten some of what the Bible says.

So, Jesus joins them quietly staying hidden.  
He walks with them.  
He listens to them.  
He teaches them.

He doesn't pull out a scroll and says, "Look, I'm right there in Isaiah 53." He doesn't treat Scripture like a codebook. Instead, he helps them re-see the whole arc of the story of God. He takes them deeper—to the older wisdom.

That in God's story:

- Suffering is inevitable
  - And is not always a detour
  - but often a doorway.
- Deliverance often comes through sacrifice.
- God is seen most clearly in mercy.
- The goal isn't domination
  - it's reconciliation.
- The promise is not just for Israel—
  - but for *all* nations.

Jesus is teaching them *what they already know*, but *had sort of forgotten*—things he taught them earlier on that hillside when he preached about Moses and the prophets in the *Sermon on the Mount*:

- That the blessed ones are not the powerful
  - but the meek, the poor, the persecuted.
- That being right with God
  - means giving out of one's abundance to those in need.
- That righteousness starts in the heart—
  - not just in behavior.
- That we're to pray not for our will,
  - but for God's.
- That we're not to puff ourselves up,
  - but to live humbly;
- That we are to love



- ourselves,
- our neighbors
- our enemies;
- That justice is for all,
  - and mercy for anyone who needs it.

He taught them (and teaches them now) what life should look like—*not* just in Israel, but in the world. What God intends for *all humanity* is the oldest wisdom there is.

- That the Law and the Prophets were never about privilege.
- Never about perfection.
- Never about insiders getting the upper hand.

Always, the oldest wisdom was about radical love that:

- sacrifices for others.
- breaks down barriers.
- and sees every person as God's child.

Jesus teaches these travelers-  
he reminds them-

he resurrects for them-

the *very first thing* some of us learned in Sunday School;  
that *God so loves the world*.

Do you remember what it feels like to remember what you forgot?

- When a writer remembers why she writes,
- When a father remembers how deeply he loves his rebellious teen,
- When a spouse remembers what the vows were for?

It's like *there is a fire in the fireplace again*.

Those two on the road? As Jesus speaks, the fire is in the fireplace again.

Their hearts burn within them because they remember.

They *feel* it again,

that God's love is not just wide enough for everyone in a nation,  
but is *wider* still—

wide enough for the world.

Isn't it written in the book of Isaiah:

"In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established... and all nations will stream to it." and



"God will bring foreigners to my holy mountain... for my house will be called a house of prayer *for all nations*."<sup>1</sup>

Micah, Zechariah, Joel, Malachi—they all remembered the old, old promise to Abraham: that through him, *all nations* would be blessed.<sup>2</sup>

So, this stranger, walking the road with the two travelers, brings them back—not to hope for one nation, Israel, but hope for the whole world. He reminds them why we must:

- see the dignity in every person,
- work for justice for all people,
- show mercy to anyone in need:
  - the sick, dying, and outcast;
  - the widow, orphan, and sojourner in our midst;everyone  
regardless of race, nationality, status;  
that we are to make sacrifices for those we love  
and also for enemies as we work for reconciliation.

Why?

Because *that* is selfless, sacrificial love. That is *the* love that raised Jesus from the dead. And *that* is the love that raises us too and brings us into the resurrection.

No wonder the travelers later recognize the stranger to be Jesus when he sacrificially breaks bread and generously shares it with them. It is not just Jesus they recognize. They recognize the truth of his sacrifice.

Friends in Christ, much of the wisdom we need right now is the wisdom we've forgotten. But it's an old wisdom that can be resurrected. Just as Jesus rose from a tomb, this wisdom can be resurrected from Scripture.

And because Jesus is risen, he is with us even when we do not recognize him, talking to us if we will listen. He is teaching us... reminding us... what we know to be true; That God so loves the world.

Let's not walk away from Jerusalem in turmoil  
but towards it with renewed hope—  
not away from community to escape its struggles,  
but towards it to work for its good.  
Toward broken bread.  
Toward reconciliation.  
Even with the sacrifice and suffering it brings.

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 2:2-4.56:6-7

<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup> Micah 4:1-2, Zechariah 8:20-23, Joel 2:28-29, Malachi 1:11.



As we do, we are already walking with Jesus and into our resurrection.

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**Charge at the End of the Service:**

Wasn't it supposed to work out?  
Wasn't one side—right side—supposed to win?  
Weren't we supposed to get right how we govern so that justice is for all?  
Wasn't there someone who was going to lead us to victory,  
    solve the problems,  
    and bring us all together,  
        where "Never again" leads to "Never happens"  
        where our children will be safe,  
        where our descendants will be fine,  
        and all is right with the world?  
And then we remember, that is not the world we live in.  
    Death is a part of living,  
    suffering is a part of living,  
        and we don't have answers to all the questions or  
        solutions to all the problems.  
And sometimes love requires sacrifice,  
    and serving the good brings suffering.

But we are not alone. Jesus walks with us, and would guide us to love selflessly, show mercy and work for the reconciliation of the world.

When we do that, we walk in the light of the resurrection.

