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Undercover Savior

Luke 24.13-35

Series: Holy Week 2025

The Village Church

April 20, 2025

I. Introduction

- A. Larry O'Donnell, President and COO of Waste Management, Inc., left his corporate offices in Houston, cultivated extra facial hair, left his suit and tie at home, and donned the hard hat, company overalls, and safety vest of an entry level employee
 1. And he reported for duty as a trainee every day for a week at a different Waste Management facility
 2. He adopted a new name
 3. A fictional back-story was created so he would gain entrance into the culture of the workplace
 4. He cleaned porta-potties, sorted waste at a recycling plant, and collected garbage in a landfill
 5. And within a week, he was even fired by one of his supervisors
 6. A camera crew followed him around recording his experiences
 - a. And, of course, a reasonable explanation was offered for the camera presence
- B. At the end of the week he recounted all that he learned
 1. Processes that needed to be improved
 2. Ideas that employees had that could easily improve working conditions
 3. But mostly, the impact was personal
 - a. He learned how hard the jobs were that his employees were called to engage
 - b. He was swept into the personal and family challenges of his employees whose family crises, health challenges, and financial woes would cast a cloud over their work-a-day world
 4. And finally, at the end of the episode the employees with whom he worked were called to corporate offices based on some pretense
 - a. And he revealed to them who he really was
 - b. What he had learned
 - c. How they had helped him to understand their lives in ways he never would have dreamed from his corporate office
 - d. And he rewarded many with benefits corresponding to their personal circumstances and company roles
- C. That was the first episode of the reality TV series Undercover Boss
 1. The show was originally syndicated by CBS, but it was actually a spin off of similar show in Britain

2. It ran for 11 seasons beginning in 2010
3. A wide range of company executives went undercover during those years, including 7-Eleven, Choice Hotels, Frontier Airlines, and NASCAR
- D. The show has had a remarkable run
 1. Which is interesting, because the first episode of Undercover Boss was recorded 2,000 years ago
 2. Collette read it for us
- E. Jesus was the first Undercover Boss
 1. And He was the boss, not just of a company
 - a. But the boss of everything

II. **The Target**

- A. Now to go undercover you have to have a target
 1. Who are you going to engage?
 2. Jesus decided on two guys taking a walk
- B. **Luke 24:13–14** (ESV) —
 1. 13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem,
 2. 14 and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened.
- C. These guys were not random
 1. They had just left Jerusalem and were on their way home
 - a. But they had just come from one of the most significant events that had ever taken place in Jerusalem during the feast of Passover
 2. And their heads were spinning about all the things that had happened over the last several days
 3. We all remember where we were when significant events had taken place
 - a. We know where we were when JFK was assassinated
 - b. We know where we were on 9-11
 4. This week would have been one of those occasions for these guys and it would occupy their thoughts and their conversations

III. **The Approach**

- A. So, now what?
 1. If you're going undercover, you've got to make the first move
 - a. The approach is critical
- B. **Luke 24:15–16** (ESV) —
 1. 15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.
 2. 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.
- C. So Jesus just saunters up and walks with them
 1. It doesn't seem like anybody else is walking with them; they seem to be by themselves
 2. But people from Emmaus walk that road all the time

- a. Emmaus was not unlike many other towns on the outskirts of notable cities
- b. It was a non-descript town; it has not even been identified today
- c. It probably was on the way to somewhere else
- d. You probably didn't go to Emmaus as a primary destination unless you lived there
- e. And as we'll see later, it appeared that this stranger was intending to pass by Emmaus on the way to somewhere else
- 3. So while it may not have been typical to be joined by a stranger, it was not all that out of the ordinary
- D. What was out of the ordinary was that they didn't recognize Jesus
 - 1. As we'll also see in a few minutes, they had been disciples of Jesus
 - a. Not included in the original twelve (now eleven) disciples
 - b. But clearly in the larger entourage of followers
 - 2. Maybe Jesus' resurrected state was different enough that his appearance didn't ring any bells with them
 - 3. Or maybe Jesus wore a hoodie so they wouldn't recognize Him
 - a. Or a Covid 19 mask?
 - 4. Or maybe something supernatural was doing on here
 - a. The text does say "... their eyes were kept from recognizing him."
 - 5. But to these guys, Jesus was just a tag-along stranger

IV. **The Contact**

- A. Now to go undercover, you've eventually got to make contact
 - 1. You've got to initiate an interaction
- B. **Luke 24:17** (ESV) —
 - 1. 17 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.
- C. Now they don't yet recognize Jesus, yet this is the way Jesus often engaged people
 - 1. By asking questions
 - a. Questions about themselves
 - b. Questions about what concerns them
- D. "You're obviously engaged in a serious conversation about events; what is it that you're talking about?"
 - 1. If you're going to walk with these people, you might as well be aware of what occupies their thoughts
- E. That's a good example for us, isn't it?
 - 1. Learning how to be interested in other people's stories is really the first step developing relationships
 - 2. And it's through relationships that we're eventually able to share our Christ-story

V. **The Hook**

- A. Now Jesus is fishing
 - 1. And when you fish, you've got to set the hook

2. That's true if you're fishing for fish or if you're fishing for men – as Jesus is doing
3. So Jesus has set the hook
- B. **Luke 24:17–18** (ESV) —
 1. 17 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.
 2. 18 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?”
- C. That's the hook
 1. That this stranger asks a question as if He has no idea what's been going on
 2. And that's so strange to these guys, that they can't believe it
 3. “What planet are you from that you really don't know what's been happening around here?”
 4. That's the intriguing thing about this stranger
 - a. He doesn't seem to know the current events of Jerusalem
 - b. He hasn't watched the 10 o'clock news
 - c. He hasn't read this morning's Jerusalem Times
 - d. And yet it's all anybody is talking about!
 - e. How could you miss it?
- D. Now Jesus knows the things that have happened!
 1. He's the main attraction for the things that have happened
 2. But He's set the hook
 - a. These guys are ripe for harvest
 - b. They are ready to talk

VI. **The Catch**

- A. So once you set the hook – next, you catch the fish
 1. Jesus asks the question, and they bite
- B. **Luke 24:19–21** (ESV) —
 1. 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,
 2. 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.
 3. 21 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 happened.”
- C. So these guys have clearly been following this Jesus
 1. Not just any Jesus – Jesus was a rather common Jewish name in those days
 - a. But they are specific: Jesus of Nazareth
 - b. That Jesus – the One who had captured the attention of so much of the nation
 2. They knew He was a prophet
 - a. That was clear from the way He taught

3. He taught with authority – not like the scribes and Pharisees
 - a. And He knew His Bible – knew the prophets
 - b. And everything He said confirmed what the prophets – from Moses through Malachi – had taught
 - c. And He even knew what they meant – which certainly wasn't the case with the scribes who couldn't seem to agree on anything!
 - d. He was truly a prophet
 - e. As Moses himself said...
4. **Deuteronomy 18:15** (ESV) —
 - a. 15 “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—”
- D. But He was also mighty in deed
 1. He did things that nobody else could do
 2. Even Nicodemus recognized that He must be someone really special:
 3. **John 3:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 ... “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”
 4. This was a guy who cast demons out of people
 - a. Who made a blind man see
 - b. Who made a paralytic walk
 - c. Who even raised the dead!
 5. These guys knew who this Jesus was – at least that He had resume of the long awaited Messiah
- E. But that was the thing
 1. They killed Him!
 - a. Now the Romans killed Him; only the Romans could crucify someone
 2. But these guys knew the story behind the story
 - a. They place the blame squarely on the Jewish authorities
 - b. “... our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him” they said
- F. That had dashed their hopes
 1. “But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel...”
 2. But what did that mean?
 - a. Well, most likely that this Jesus, should He be the Messiah, would have liberated the Jewish people from the Romans occupation
 - b. And reestablish the true nation of Israel
 3. But now that possibility was done; finished; forget about it
- G. And in the three days that followed, they had pretty much forgotten about it
 1. They had given up
 - a. Jesus must not have really been the Messiah
 - b. He was dead
 - c. And not mostly dead; all dead
 - d. And buried

VII. The Puzzle

- A. But just when they managed to put this strange chapter behind them and move on in their lives, a bunch of women show up and completely upset the apple cart!
 - 1. They completely throw all the followers of Jesus into a frenzy!
 - 2. [I'm not saying that women in general do that... but these women certainly did!]
- B. **Luke 24:22–23** (ESV) —
 - 1. 22 “Moreover, some women of our company amazed us.
 - 2. They were at the tomb early in the morning,
 - 3. 23 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.”
- C. Seriously?
 - 1. This is crazy!
 - 2. And they told their strange traveler that they didn't believe them at first
 - a. [That's right – the women thing again!]
- D. But then, some of their story got corroborated
 - 1. **Luke 24:24** (ESV) —
 - a. 24 “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.”
 - 2. Now what are they supposed to believe?
 - a. And what are they supposed to do about it?

VIII. The Clues

- A. Well, these two need some counseling
 - 1. Good thing that the Wonderful Counselor happened to be walking with them! (**Isaiah 9:2**)
 - 2. And He starts by giving them some clues to help them make sense of it all
- B. **Luke 24:25–27** (ESV) —
 - 1. 25 And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
 - 2. 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”
 - 3. 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
- C. I love counselors like that
 - 1. Here's how He starts:
 - a. “You fools!”
 - 2. Oh how I've wanted to start a counseling session like that!
 - a. Never had the chutzpah to do that...
 - 3. Then he says, “You people are slow!”
 - a. “If you'd done your homework you'd have known that what just happened to this Jesus was exactly what the prophets said had to happen”

4. The basic message should have been clear: the Messiah had to suffer before entering into His glory
- D. But wait, what was it that the prophets said, exactly, that they missed?
 1. What passages did this strange fellow-traveler talk about?
- E. Well, there are plenty to choose from – and Jesus referred to a whole bunch of them Himself – and applied them to Himself – through the course of His ministry
 1. There's **Genesis 3.15** in which the seed of the woman crushes the head of the serpent – but not before the seed of the woman has been bitten in the heel
 - a. Jesus referred to this in **John 12.31-32**
 2. **Psalms 118.22** refers to the stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone
 - a. Jesus refers to this text about Himself in all three synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke
 3. Then there is the classic passage in **Isaiah 52.13-53.12**
 - a. Jesus applies that to Himself in **Luke 22.37**
 4. And not only do the scriptures speak about the suffering of the Messiah, there are many other scriptures which speak about Messiah
 - a. And over the course of His ministry, Jesus would have made connections with many of them
 - b. And here, with these guys, he leads them through text after text which refer to Himself
 5. We don't have time to go through all the passages Jesus could have, and probably did, mention to these guys
 - a. But there are passages Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, 2 Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi
 - b. And more than a dozen references in the Psalms
- F. What a Bible study that must have been!
 1. These guys go from, "Who is this guy who doesn't even know what has happened the last few days in Jerusalem..."
 - a. To, "Oh my. We had no idea what was really going on in Jerusalem these last few days!"

IX. **The Reveal**

- A. So, they eventually get to Emmaus, where these guys are from
- B. **Luke 24:28-29** (ESV) —
 1. 28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther,
 2. 29 but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.
- C. This is ancient near-east hospitality at its finest
 1. They invite the stranger in, and share a meal together
 2. It's late in the day; it makes sense to call it a day, so the stranger consents to stay

- D. Now the guys have grown to admire this strange interloper
 - 1. His knowledge of the Bible; His understanding of the scripture's applications; His ability to make sense of the events of the past weekend
 - 2. He's grown on them
 - 3. So when the meal is prepared, they ask Him to take the role of the host
- E. **Luke 24:30** (ESV) —
 - 1. 30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.
- F. That's what the host does
 - 1. And then comes the big reveal
 - a. Just like the Undercover Boss – the time comes when disguise comes off, and the true identity of the stranger is revealed
- G. **Luke 24:31** (ESV) —
 - 1. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.
- H. Later, the guys would testify that they recognized Him “in the breaking of the bread” (**Luke 24.35**)
 - 1. What was it that brought the sudden illumination?
 - 2. Maybe it brought to mind Jesus blessing of the bread in the feeding of the 5,000
 - a. Were they there?
 - b. Did He say the same words?
 - c. Did they make that connection?
 - 3. Maybe, when Jesus reached and took the loaf and broke it in front of them, they saw the nail-prints on His hands?
 - 4. Or maybe it was a supernatural thing
 - a. Just as “their eyes were kept from recognizing him”
 - b. Now, “their eyes were opened”
 - 5. We can't see Jesus unless God does something, can we?
- I. Whatever it was – they were stunned
 - 1. Especially when He simply disappeared; vanished
- J. The Undercover Savior was no longer undercover
 - 1. They now knew this was Jesus
 - a. And that He was risen!
- X. **The Response**
 - A. Now what did they do?
 - B. **Luke 24:32** (ESV) —
 - 1. 32 They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”
 - C. They first looked back
 - 1. And they recognized that something was happening to them as this man expounded the scriptures
 - 2. Something that went beyond mere mental recognition or cognitive understanding

3. This teaching about Jesus by Jesus enflamed their hearts!
- D. Is that what happens to you when you hear the word of God concerning Jesus is proclaimed to you?
 1. If not – is that because of weakness in the preacher?
 - a. That certainly may be
 - b. I can teach a Bible study – but not like Jesus
 2. Or is it because of a deficiency in the scriptures?
 - a. **Hebrews 4:12** (ESV) — 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
 - b. **Psalm 19:7** (ESV) — 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul...
 - c. **2 Timothy 3:16–17** (ESV) — 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
 - d. If your hearts are not enflamed, it's probably not because of the scriptures themselves
 3. Or, if our hearts are not enflamed by the word of God, isn't it more likely a deficiency in you and me?
 - a. That's probably more like it, isn't it?
- E. So they look back on their experience with Jesus; and then they look ahead

XI. **The Return**

- A. **Luke 24:33** (ESV) —
 1. 33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. ...
- B. They'd just spent several hours walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus
 1. It's late in the day
 - a. That's why they urged their new companion to stay the night with them
 2. But this was too much to sit on
 - a. Too much not to share it with someone
 3. So, in spite of the distance and the darkness, off they go back to Jerusalem
- C. **Luke 24:33–35** (ESV) —
 1. 33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.
 2. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together,
 3. 34 saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"
 4. 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.
- D. They go back to the place where the disciples had been hiding, expecting to tell the disciples the news
 1. Only to find out, they already knew!

2. The disciples are testifying that He is risen!
 - a. That Peter has had an encounter with Jesus!
3. So these Emmaus travelers simply add their testimony to the others
4. And they said, “You know when we really knew it was Jesus? When He took the bread and broke it!”
 - a. That’s when the Undercover Boss revealed Himself
5. And that’s when we knew we had to go and tell someone!

XII. Conclusion

- A. Is Jesus still undercover for you?
 1. Or has He revealed Himself to you?
- B. And if He has revealed Himself to you, does your heart burn within you when you study the scriptures?
 1. Has He opened your eyes and your heart to the word about Jesus?
- C. When you receive the Lord’s Supper, do you recognize His presence?
- D. And if you now know this Jesus, how much in a hurry are you to share the good news?
- E. There’s a sense in which Jesus has been undercover ever since He took upon Himself our humanity and became incarnate
 1. His deity was cloaked in our humanity
 2. Oh, His deity would come out from time to time
 - a. Finitum non capax infinitum – the finite cannot contain the infinite
 3. But by and large, as Isaiah said...
 4. **Isaiah 53:2** (ESV) —
 - a. 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground;
 - b. he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
 - c. and no beauty that we should desire him.
 5. His appearance, by all accounts, was nothing to write home about
- F. But the resurrection has ended the Undercover Savior
 1. There is no more hiding Christ
 2. He is risen!
 3. Only the ones whose hearts cannot stand the thought of submitting to the Undercover Lord resist the truth of who He is!
- G. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most well-established fact of history
 1. The empty tomb proves it
 2. The inability of the enemies of Jesus to produce the body destroys the arguments against Him
 3. The willingness of the witnesses of His resurrection to go to their deaths for proclaiming the risen Christ would make no sense unless it was true
- H. He is risen!
 1. And there is no more Undercover Savior
- I. So what will you do with the risen Christ?