



April 16, 2020

Hi Everyone!

Trusting you all had a wonderful Resurrection weekend 😊

Before I give an update on the ministry, I want to share a word to encourage you:

WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

I am sure most, if not all of you have read the 24th chapter of Luke. Specifically, the sections with the headings “The Road to Emmaus,” and “The Disciples’ Eyes Opened.” I urge you to reread it for yourself – the reference is Luke 24:13-35.

It is the morning of the resurrection, and two disciples are travelling to Emmaus which is seven miles from Jerusalem. Sounds innocent right? But think about it. You are a disciple of Jesus, and Jesus has just been arrested, condemned, crucified, and buried. It has been three days since Jesus died and some of the women have testified that He has risen and is alive in Jerusalem, and you’ve decided to leave town.

It seems to me they did not buy into the reports of Jesus’ resurrection and have left town probably disillusioned, discouraged, confused, and hopeless.

So, they are walking and talking, trying to make sense out of what has happened and Jesus himself draws near and begins to walk with them. However, they do not or cannot recognize Him. And Jesus asks, “What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?”

The one called Cleopas is shocked at the question thinking Jesus is the only person in the world not to know what has happened over the last few days. Jesus again presses them to tell Him directly “what things” have occurred.

We need to realize that Jesus already knew what Cleopas would say. I am guessing that maybe Jesus wanted Cleopas to hear his own words. Years ago, I learned that if I listened to my prayers, they often told me more about myself and my situation; and that after hearing myself I did not need an answer, in fact, I often changed my prayer. 😊

When you read the verses, you will see that Cleopas’ perspective was a little off to say the least. He refers to Jesus as a “prophet,” and that they were “hoping” he was the one to redeem Israel, among other thoughts.

What Jesus did next was to mildly rebuke them and He taught them from all the scripture the things concerning Himself – even though they could not recognize Him for some reason.

Later in the story, they reach their destination and convinced Jesus to stay and have a meal. Jesus blessed and broke the bread, and in that moment, the verse tells us that their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

Verse 32, in Luke 24, reads: *And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”*

I share this to encourage you! There is a lot of uncertainty in the world right now. Maybe in the past you were following Jesus thinking you knew where He was headed, what He was doing or what He would do in your life – and then things did not go as you expected.

Maybe you found yourself doubting at times, or confused, disappointed, discouraged, and even feeling like Jesus let you down and did not come through. You hear others talking about seeing Jesus or hearing Jesus – and without really thinking you start walking the other way. You are walking and trying to sort everything out – make sense of it all – feeling like God has left you alone – not realizing you are walking away from Him and yet there He is right by your side.

Years ago, I bought my first pickup truck. It was a Jeep Comanche. One of the first things I did was put a little sticker on the dashboard – it read “God is as close as a whispered prayer.”

I have not had that truck for decades and yet that phrase has never been forgotten – I have spoken it to myself on so many occasions it is now permanently engraved on my heart. In recent years I have spoken it through tears and lots of emotions – it is appropriate for every situation – because it is true. God is as close as a whispered prayer – God is there with you regardless how you feel.

Luke 24:33 reads: *So, they rose that very hour and returned to Jerusalem...*

Jesus in His love and kindness, mercy, and grace, found two disciples headed in the wrong direction with wrong perspectives. The story tells us Jesus drew near!

He then got them to voice what they honestly were thinking, exposing their “earthly” or “self-centered” or “anxious” or “fearful,” fill in the blank _____ view on things.

He then opened the Scriptures to them. And then they saw Him for who He was: The God who was always there and who is exactly as the Scriptures describe Him! And from that time, they no longer had a need to see Him physically because from a Spiritual/Biblical view – they could always see Him 😊

Whatever your circumstances during this uncertain time in the world – God sees and hears you and is with you. Pick up your Bible and read, be honest in your prayers and do your best to head towards God. He is as close as a whispered prayer!

MINISTRY UPDATE

As you can imagine my trip to Botswana was postponed. The decision was made for me when the country closed its borders to visitors. Instead, I put my efforts in helping Celebration Community Church with their online services, continuing my Bible School studies, taking care of the family and following Federal and State mandates related to COVID-19. I want to thank all those who gave financially towards the ministry over the last several months – we have sent several thousands of dollars to Botswana, and in addition have sent support to Latvia and orphans in the Ukraine.

Right now, in Botswana, a permit is needed to leave home or go grocery shopping. The country has very few confirmed COVID-19 cases but took aggressive measures to prevent an outbreak. Their borders might even stay closed for an additional six months. Pastor Kiti shared with me that this past weekend soldiers and police showed up at his neighbor's home because the family was singing worship songs for Easter. Someone reported they were having a service.

In the Ukraine, orphans were turned out into the streets and/or put in foster care homes without proper vetting of the households. As a result, many of the children/youth found themselves in very bad situations whether in homes or on the streets. Smethurst ministries is funding food and support for those children at risk.

COVID-19 has affected countries all over the globe – let us remember we are called to shine as lights in the darkness! While I continue to help share worship and the Good News online, Lifted Hands is committed to continue to do its part to raise financial support for our friends, churches, and ministries overseas along with those in the US.

WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE:

Lifted Hands purposely seeks to help smaller churches and organizations with genuine needs in any way we can – whether teaching the Word, ministry, through works of service or financially.

We appreciate your support immensely! We also appreciate any time you “like” and “share” our posts on social media. Please feel free to share our newsletters and material.

1. Financial gifts can be made ONLINE at www.Lifted-Hands.org – you do not need a PayPal account and can make donations by credit card or direct payment from your bank. Or
2. You can write a check to Lifted Hands and mail it to Celebration Community Church, PO Box 140, Columbus NJ, 08022.

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