

Luke 24:28-29

New Year's Eve 2016

"I just want to be happy." Ever felt like that? Sometimes people who are miserable seem willing to do almost anything to become happier. In some ways, isn't that what New Year's Eve is all about – happiness? The Bible doesn't guarantee that we will be happy all the time. With that being said, *"Are you happy?"* Therefore, sometimes on New Year's Eve, people will look back or look forward and ask themselves the question: *"Are you happy?"* Let's see the answer that the Bible gives to each of us tonight.

The words spoken in our text tonight were spoken by two men who were on their way to a town called Emmaus. They were not happy. Jesus had been crucified just three days before these verses. As Jesus comes upon these two disciples, he hides his identity from them. As the three of them were walking and talking, one of them said to Jesus: **"We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."** All hope was now gone. What are we going to do next?

Ever felt like them? Ever felt that way this past year? Sometimes, we try to make Jesus what he isn't. Sometimes, we try to make Jesus who he isn't. When we do that, we will not be happy. These two men had their idea of the kind of Savior they wanted Jesus to be. When it didn't happen, they were disappointed. When we are disappointed, there is a deep dark spot in all of our hearts that asks the question: *"What if all of this is a waste? What if I am only here to breathe and then after 70, 80, 90 years, it's over."* For these two men, the most certain thing in their life was gone. He had always been there for them. He always had the perfect answer to their questions. Jesus was ALWAYS there. Now he isn't there.

It wasn't that these two disciples didn't know the Bible. They knew the promises found there. They had heard Jesus speak about them. They were just missing the point in the pages of the Bible. They were looking for Jesus to fix all their problems in their lives. That just didn't seem to be happening. How about us? Do we ever feel that way? We have this feeling that if God really loves me, then he would give me some of the things that I want for some of the time. What happens when we begin to expect Jesus to be something he isn't? What happens when we feel like our lives are a mess or depressing?

We go to the Bible. After all, all the answers are in there. If I'm in church regularly, if I'm in Bible Study, if I'm reading the Bible every day, then everything will be okay. Right? No. The Bible is no guarantee that everything will be "okay." You can read the Bible backwards and forwards, and you can miss the point of the Bible. The point of the Bible is not about us. It's not about the stories that we find there. It's not about just happiness. It's about Jesus. From the first stroke written by Moses and the last stroke written by John, it is ALL about Jesus.

I'm sure that most of you have seen the children books called: *"Where's Waldo?"* They are usually a two page picture with all kinds of things going on. Somewhere in those pages, is the picture of Waldo. It's so easy to do the same thing with the Bible. The stories, the teachings, the details in the Bible are all important. All of it is God's Word. But the Bible isn't about how we can have a perfect, successful, happy and wealthy life. It's about how we can have a perfect eternal life. It's all about Jesus.

That was the point that Jesus was trying to make to these two disciples. They would invite Jesus to join them: **"Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over."** Then Jesus would open their eyes to see who was standing in front of them. He wanted them to know that He would always abide with them. As we close another year and begin a new one, Jesus wants to stay with us.

In a few minutes, we are going to sing a hymn that many of us are familiar with: **"Abide with Me."** It was written by a man named Henry Lyte. He was an Anglican priest who had faithfully served 23 years as a parish pastor in a small fishing village in England. He eventually was forced into an early retirement because of his health. He had contracted tuberculosis. As much as he wanted, he could no longer carry out his duties. On September 4, 1847, he preached his last sermon. He took a nap in the afternoon and went for a short walk along the beach. He then retired to his study. About an hour later, he emerged with a poem that was based on these words in our text. Henry knew that the day of his life was drawing to a close. As he faced the darkness of death, he asked God to abide with him. He was confident that Jesus would. A couple of months after he wrote these words, the Lord called him home to heaven.

In Jesus, you and I can have that same confidence. God doesn't promise us that we will always be happy in our lives here on this earth. Because of sin, we will often find the opposite is true. But he does promise us that he will always abide with us. As we close 2016 and begin a new year, may we join in singing those words:

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!
Amen