

HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME!

TEXT: Lk.24:13-35

THESIS: To show that the Lord's presence is a reality even when things are dark.

INTRO.: A. I received a note this week which said: "It's very difficult to see God's will in this mess." All of us have been there...in the dark place, the foreboding place, the place of disappointment & tears. It is lonely there & it is hard to see the Lord in that dark place & we may cry out "**Where are you, Lord?**"

B. There are 3 precious passages which speak specifically to this question. It is significant that all 3 took place after the resurrection. The problem was a lack of trust in His promise! He said: "**I will NEVER leave you nor forsake you...**" He said: "**Lo I am with you always...**" In spite of the fact that the people in these post-resurrection events were unaware of His presence "**HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME!**"

I. ALONG THE ROAD OF SORROW – JESUS WALKS! (text)

A. It Is the Lord In Disguise!

Mk. 16:12 *After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country.*

1. These two people (2 men or a man & his wife? v.18 w/Jn.19:25 "Mary the wife of Cleophas") were despondent over Jesus' recent death.
2. She had actually witnessed the crucifixion & her hopes & that of the other disciples had been dashed that day; all looked dark & gloomy (but that was because they were still living back at the cross, this was the Lord's Day!)

ILLUS.: There's something about human nature that holds us in a condition of despair over past events, even though things have moved on. We dwell on the negative instead of looking for the positive. We see the circumstances, instead of seeing the Savior in the circumstances.

3. While they were talking gloom & doom (v.14,15), v.16 says that "**Jesus Himself drew near & went with them.**"
 - a. Jesus then asks them a question (being God He obviously knew the answer!). v.17
 - b. They even rehearse the details of the tragedy (as if He didn't know!). v.18-24
 - c. He begins w/a mild rebuke of their lack of faith (even after they had reports of the empty tomb!). v.25,26
 - d. Next He gives them a comprehensive Bible study. v.27
 - e. They beg Him to stay & fellowship w/them (v.28,29) & finally they realize that "**it is the Lord!**" & that "**HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME!**" v.30,31
 - f. Suddenly they understand what they should have never doubted & take the good news to the other disciples. v.32-35

ILLUS.: Perhaps the Lord is "disguised" in some circumstance in your life right now. Maybe you are not aware of His presence in your situation, but **He is present!** You need to see w/eyes of faith & not despair. When you dwell on the future instead of the past you will be able to accept what He is doing now. He has never abandoned you. You need to see that "**It is the Lord!**" & not become discouraged.

II. IN THE PLACE OF DISAPPOINTMENT – JESUS CALLS! Jn.21:3-14

A. It Is the Lord Unrecognized!

1. The setting is *after* the resurrection.
2. Peter the denier, Thomas the doubter, Nathanael the skeptic & the two "**sons of Zebedee**" (James & John) the ambitious, decide to go back to their old ways: ("**I go a fishing...**" says Peter & they said: "**We also go with thee.**") v.1-3
3. They had apparently seen the risen Lord but because He hadn't stayed w/them recently (days, a week?), they are disappointed & backslide & though they are experienced fishermen, they catch nothing w/out His help.

4. Then Jesus appears on the shore while they are in their boat & asks (another) question: **"Children, have ye any meat?"** (Did you catch anything?)
5. After they acknowledge their failure (v.5), He sends the blessing. v.6
6. Then John realizes & announces: **"It is the Lord!" – "HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME!"**

ILLUS.: Perhaps you are fruitless & unproductive & disappointed because you are working in the energy of the flesh instead of trusting Him. *"Ye have not because ye ask not"* - you are going to do it your way, instead of asking Him what you should do. Jesus is standing on the shore waiting for you to acknowledge Him & then He will take care of your needs as He did theirs! v.9-13 Jesus is saying to you as He said to these faithless followers, **"Come & dine!"** i.e., fellowship w/Me & I will provide your needs.

III. WHEN YOU HAVE BURIED YOUR HOPES – JESUS STANDS! Jn.20:11-18

A. It Is The Lord Not Discerned!

TRANS.: This is probably one of the most poignant stories in the Bible. Here is the forgiven sinner, out of whom Jesus had cast 7 devils, & who anointed Jesus w/precious ointment, who loves her Savior, standing in His presence, being the first person Jesus reveals Himself to after His resurrection & she fails to discern Who He is. In His grace & kindness He reveals Himself to her & finally she recognizes that **"HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME!"**

1. All Mary Magdalene could see was a tomb.
2. Instead of claiming the promise of His resurrection when she saw the empty tomb, she believed her doubts & assumed someone had stolen the body of the Savior, so instead of rejoicing she ends up weeping. v.11
3. She is so blinded by her lack of faith that she doesn't even recognize the angels in the empty tomb. v.12
4. Mary manifests a mixture of faith & doubt, of affection & fear – owning Jesus as "Lord" & yet imagining that someone had taken Him away! v.13
5. When she turns away from the tomb (!) Jesus suddenly appears. v.14

ILLUS.: The reason we don't see Jesus in our circumstances is that we are focused on the problem instead of focusing on the Savior - & even when we do turn to Him we don't see Him! Our unbelief blinds us. Our hope & faith disappears. We still love the Lord – like Mary – but we no longer trust Him, so we can't see Him. Instead of

6. Jesus asks Mary a question as her Creator (He seems always to be questioning His disciples – not because He didn't know the answers but because He wants them to know the answers!). v.15a
7. Love made her linger at the tomb & devotion gave her unreasonable expectations as she says: "...tell me where thou hast laid Him & I will take Him away." v.15b (Here is love offering to do the impossible.)

ILLUS.: Like Hagar in the wilderness in her darkest hour, who didn't see the well next to her, Mary cannot discern the Savior next to her.

8. Finally Jesus speaks to her as her Savior & calls His own sheep by name: **"Mary" v.16 ("My sheep hear my voice & I know them & they follow Me.")**
9. Suddenly she realizes Who it is and says "Master" – yes **"It is the Lord!" "HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME!"**

ILLUS.: When your hopes, dreams & expectations are buried, believe in the resurrection! God can raise the dead! God can bring life from death. When your job has died, your resources have died, your loved one has died or life as you knew it has died, believe that He can restore new life to you! Tap into the new life He offers. If He is your "Master" He wants you to see Him clearly in the dark circumstances of your life. He will instantly brighten your darkness when you focus on Him. Listen to His voice amidst the din & in the dark hour & He will transform you from being a weeper to a worshipper, as He did Mary w/that one simple word: **"Mary"!** Perhaps today He is calling your name, trying to get your attention away from your circumstances & on Him! "John...Barbara...Wayne...Ken...Steve...Joel...Kim...Jerry...Paul..."

CONCL.: In your darkest hour, your most trying circumstance, the time of sorrow the place of disappointment – when you buried your hopes – **"HE WAS THERE ALL THE TIME!"** If you didn't see Him it was because of your tears, your hurt or your unbelief. Open your eyes & you will see **"It is the Lord!"**