

A Storytelling Commentary on Luke 24:13-35

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Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus,
about seven miles from Jerusalem,
and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.
While they were talking and discussing,
Jesus himself came near and went with them,
but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other
while you walk along?"
They stood still, looking sad.

Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him,
"Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things
that have taken place there in these days?"
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,
and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over
to be condemned to death and crucified him.
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.

Moreover, some women of our group astounded us,
when they were at the tomb early this morning and didn't find
his body there,
they came back and told us that they had seen a vision of angels
who said that he was alive.
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."

Then he said to them, "Oh, you fools,
and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!
Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things
and then enter into his glory?"
Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them
the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going,
he walked ahead as if he were going on.
But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us,
because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over."
So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them,

he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them
and their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.
And he vanished from their sight.
They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us
while he was talking to us on the road,
while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem
and found the eleven and their companions gathered together
and saying,
"The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"
Then they told what had happened on the road,
and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

As you can see by comparing this version with the NRSV, some minor changes in punctuation and translation have been made. The purpose of these changes is to enhance the performance of the story. In particular, the first sentence of Cleopas' report to Jesus flows better when punctuated in one sentence (period) as it clearly is in Greek. Likewise the short sentences—"he went in to stay..." and "he vanished..." are more climactic when spoken more slowly as separate sentences. Also the translation "how foolish you are" is a weaker and wordier phrase than a more literal rendering of the Greek words, "Oh you fools." It is probable that this was spoken by the original storytellers with a smile and some loving laughter.

The learning of this story is, on the one hand, relatively easy because we've heard it a lot and it has a lot of verbal threads. On the other hand, the details are difficult, especially in the first three episodes. So, here are some suggestions for structuring the story in memory.

First, notice where the pauses and the climaxes are. The first climax is: "Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him." This period needs to be spoken virtually in a delighted whisper giving the audience "inside" information. It is the set-up for the rest of the story. It communicates the mystery of Jesus' resurrected presence and the delight of knowing that the two of them are talking to Jesus even as they don't recognize him.

The next ending is: "They stood still, looking sad." It is their first response to Jesus' question. It is a short period that is slow and sad. The pause is a time for the listeners to enjoy the moment and to anticipate what will follow.

The third episode is linked together by the motif of "the things."

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?"
He asked them, "What **things**?"
They replied, "**The things** about Jesus of Nazareth. . .

If you focus on the endings of the first two episodes and the "things," the story is easy to remember.

The verbal threads are important links in the story.

1. The major one is "recognizing him." "It first occurs at the beginning of the story: "Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept **from recognizing him.**" It is completed at the table: "When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and their eyes were opened, and **they recognized him.** And he vanished from their sight." Thus, the set-up or hook of the story is they didn't recognize him. The suspense of the story is the internal question: when are they going to recognize him?
2. In the first episode, the two sentences (periods) of the episode are linked together by the verbal thread: "and talking with each other" and "while they were talking and discussing."
3. Another internal verbal thread links the sentences of Jesus' address to the two: "...all that the prophets have declared" and "then beginning with Moses and all the prophets."
4. Finally, an auditory link is "Stay with us" and "So he went in to stay with them."

The energy behind this story is the secret between the storyteller and the audience. You want to tell it in a way that invites the audience in. Whisper some parts like "Jesus himself came near and went with them" so that the audience experiences this as inside information that they are privy to.

The two of them make fools of themselves because of the things that they say about Jesus as they are standing there talking to him. Now, the content of all of the things they say about Jesus is quite positive but it is spoken with a tone of grief after an initial disparaging remark about the stranger's lack of awareness about current events in Jerusalem. The women, on the other hand, are not spoken of very highly and that is then the set-up for Jesus naming the men "you fools." This is in line with the tradition of the ancients where the teacher would rebuke their students for their stupidity. While they have said some inappropriate things, this is a highly sympathetic description of their experience as they talk with the resurrected Jesus. The irony of Cleopas' speech is his grief about Jesus' death and the disappointment of their hopes as well as their dismissal of the women's report. As they express their grief and skepticism, Jesus is standing there talking to them.

Their attitudes towards the women reflects both ancient and modern views towards the credibility of women's testimony. In ancient Israelite and modern Muslim jurisprudence, it takes the testimony of two and sometimes three women to counter the testimony of one

man. The tradition is that men are tough minded and can't take what women say seriously. Thus, another interesting dimension of this ancient story is that the men of Luke's storytelling tradition are telling a story about how foolish men are in not dismissing the testimony of women. In the context of the stories of antiquity where women are often assumed to be unreliable witnesses, this is a very unusual story that has generated a reversal of this ancient assumption in western law.

The revelation of Jesus' presence is also related to his gestures. So, be sure to do the gestures of taking the bread, blessing it, breaking it, etc. when you tell that part of the story. Likewise the phrase —"Their eyes were opened and they recognized him"— is an inside view that invites us as storytellers to turn our heads in wide-eyed recognition of who the stranger is.

The meeting at the end with the eleven is a meeting of triumph and victory. They were in despair and now they know that Jesus is alive. It is a time to celebrate and to recognize the victory of Jesus that has taken place.

This is a story about storytelling. There are many levels of story that are going on. Cleopas tells Jesus the story about what happened. Jesus is telling them the story of the signs of the Messiah in all of the scriptures. The eleven tell the two travelers the story about the appearance of Jesus to Simon. And the two tell the story of what happened on the road to the eleven. And all of this is told by "Luke" to the audiences of the Gospel story as a whole..

(The following section is a commentary that was written as part of an unpublished book tentatively titled, "The Risen Christ in Digital Culture." I have decided to make it available here without major revisions because there are more extensive discussions of some of the dimensions of the story that some readers may find helpful.)

The Double Focus on the Men's Experience

The experience of the risen Christ in this story begins in the profound ambiguity of discouragement and defeat at the very moment the risen Christ is present as one who is hidden and unrecognized. The richness of the story is created by the classic comedic strategy of enabling the audience to observe an action in which they know something that the characters do not know. In this case, the audience is told at the beginning that Jesus has been raised and is present talking to the two men. But because of the depth of identification with the men's experience of the devastation of hope in Jesus' brutal crucifixion and death, this new perspective is an invitation to neither easy laughter nor cheap joy. It is rather an invitation to enter into the mystery of God's redemption of a deeply perverted human history.

The story is preceded by the account of the announcement at the tomb (24.1-12). Two angels appear to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother, and Joanna and announce the resurrection. In contrast to Matthew and Mark, they are not commissioned to go tell the disciples. Instead, the climax of the angels' address to them is an invitation to remember Jesus' passion/resurrection prophecies: "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." (24.6-7) If the listeners had recently heard the whole of the Gospel account, they can fully identify with the women here since they too can remember the prophecies from earlier in the Gospel account (9.22; 18.31-34; allusions to parts of the prophecy: 17.25; 9.43b-45). That is, the initial confirmation of the resurrection for the listeners is the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy. The place to which the women are directed to go by the angel is their memory. For the women and for Luke's listeners, to go to the place of memory is to discover their place of hope.

This remembering with the women deepens the identification of the listeners with the women that was established in the story of Jesus' death in which Jesus' death and burial is described through their eyes. In contrast to Mark and Matthew, Luke calls the women witnesses of Jesus' death are simply the women who had come with him from Galilee with no personal names (Luke 23.49). The audience's memory is thereby directed to the whole story of Jesus in Galilee rather than to specific stories about these particular women. Furthermore, the greater closeness with the women created by the recital of their names is reserved for the story of the women at the tomb (24.10).

The climax of the audience's relationship with the women is the disciples finding their story to be an "idle tale" and not believing them. In view of the fact that the listeners have already experienced the announcement of Jesus' resurrection with the women, this initially creates distance from the disciples. But, given the gender dynamics of the disbelief ("you know how women are"), it may variously engender a knowing smile or an internal word such as "Typical male response" from the different gender groups in the audience.

Given that this story was told by men with a predominantly male audience in mind, this is radically different from "normal" male humor about women. Luke's story is a man telling a story about the foolishness of men in not trusting the integrity and trustworthiness of the testimony of women.¹ And, as we have seen, the impact of this story is based on the audience's identification with the women at the cross and at the tomb.² An unresolved

¹ The only comparable stories of foolishness by a respected male are the stories of Abraham pawning off Sarah as his sister to feared monarchs (Pharaoh in Gen. 15; King Abimelech of Gerar in Gen. 20).

² In view of the fact that the storytellers of the Gospels use endings as points of primary emphasis, it is more likely that the original end of Luke's story was the disciples' disbelief of the women (24.11) than the notice of Peter's going to the tomb (24.12). John's story of Peter's running to the tomb and then going home can easily be identified as the source for this note in Luke. The textual evidence for the omission of v. 12 is, however, weak (only Codex Bezae and 6 Old Latin manuscripts). In its present form, the ending strengthens the identification with a male character who tries to confirm the women's story and cannot.

issue at the end of the resurrection narrative is whether or not the story of the women will be confirmed and the women thereby publicly vindicated.³ But Luke's listeners already know that the women are telling the truth.

The first episode establishes the story's basic humorous irony: the despair of the two men in Jesus' presence. The narrator concentrates on the fact that they were talking about all the things that had happened and even repeats it in order to give the listeners time to think about all of this from the perspective of persons who didn't know that Jesus had been raised to life:

“(they were) talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing...”(24.14-15)

It is interesting that the Greek word for talking here (24.14-15) is *homileo*—from which we get the name “homily” for a discussion of a sacred story. The emotional state of the two is inferred from the tone of the storyteller at this point. Only after Jesus' question does the narrator tell us directly in a short, emphatic sentence: “They stood still, looking sad.” The emotional atmosphere of this first part of the story focuses on the gloom of the two. They are telling each other sad stories as they walk and talk.

Jesus in the Tradition of Tricksters

This sadness is modified by the delight of the storyteller as he reveals Jesus' deception. In the world of storytelling, this is a trickster story. The basic motif in trickster stories is a character who hides his identity.⁴ In the Old Testament, Jacob is a memorable trickster whose classic trick was hiding his identity from his father, Isaac, in order to get the blessing (Gen. 27). David plays like he is a madman to protect himself from King Achish of Gath (I Sam.21.10-15). The longest trickster story in the biblical tradition is the story of Jacob's son, Joseph, who does not reveal himself to his brothers when they come to Egypt seeking grain. In the text of Genesis, this deception goes on for three long chapters (Gen. 42-44) as Joseph variously finds out information about his father, requires them to bring his brother, Benjamin, back to Egypt, and threatens them with imprisonment for a theft he contrived. Only after Judah tells the story of his father's grief at his loss of Joseph and offers to be his slave rather than to allow Benjamin to stay in Egypt does Joseph make himself known to his brothers (Gen. 45.1-3). Like the Emmaus story, a major motif of the Joseph story is setting the struggles and despair of Joseph's brothers in a new light as the events unfold.

³ The motif of the vindication of innocent women occurs elsewhere in literature. In the biblical tradition, the classic story is Susannah. In the Greek novel tradition, Calirrhoe is the wrongly accused young wife in Chariton's great novel from the 1st century, *Xaereas and Calirrhoe*. In Shakespeare's classic comedy, *As You Like It*, the maiden Hero is the victim of an elaborate plot in which her witness is dismissed but in the end vindicated.

⁴ Trickster stories of hidden identity.

The risen Jesus is then placed in the tradition of Jacob, Joseph, and David in hiding his identity. This motif occurs in the resurrection stories of Luke and John {Mary Magdalene thinks he is the gardener (John 20:14-16); the disciples fishing in the boat on the Sea of Tiberias (21.4-7; 21) don't recognize Jesus initially and remain a little uncertain (21.12)}. In the resurrection traditions, the mystery of Jesus' presence is related to the difference of his post-resurrection appearance. Thus, in John's stories, the motif is not developed in a long story but is simply treated as part of Jesus' self-revelation to Mary and the disciples. But in the Emmaus story, Jesus maintains the deception for a long time and uses it as a way of playfully revealing their foolishness and lack of understanding.

Cleopas, the spokesman for the two, says several dumb things as he talks with Jesus. He is mildly derisive in his implication that Jesus is either out of touch or just stupid for not knowing what has been going on in Jerusalem. He also makes fun of the women and their story about Jesus being raised. And he despairs of the whole notion that Jesus is the one who would redeem Israel. As a result, there is objective content to Jesus' description of them as fools. The most recent translations water down the force of Jesus' words, in Greek: *o anoatoi*. The NRSV translates: "Oh, how foolish you are;" CEV: "Why can't you understand?" The RSV was closer to the Greek: "O foolish men." In verbal address, it means "You fools!"⁵ My hunch is that the translators have backed away from putting such an apparently derisive term in Jesus' mouth. But it is normal address for teachers in the ancient world to dumb students. Another dimension is that Jesus' words are almost never told with any sense of humor or lightness. But this is a story in which Jesus loves them and finds their put down of the women foolish. It is truly funny that they say all these derisive things to Jesus himself. This both clarifies the spirit of the story and how all of us who identify with Cleopas and his friend in our grief and self-pity appear in the light of the resurrection.

The Puzzle of Jesus' Hermeneutic

Jesus' question and commentary to them is, however, fraught with ambiguity: "Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And then beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." The ambiguity regards what Jesus is referring to in the Scriptures. That is, Jesus' interpretive framework, his hermeneutic, for understanding the Scriptures is not clear. The implication of his statement in light of the preceding story and his prophecies is that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and that the Scriptures testify to this.

But in the most comprehensive recent commentary on Luke, Joseph Fitzmeyer concludes that there is nothing in the Old Testament that refers to a suffering Messiah. As he states, "The notion of a suffering Messiah is not found in the OT or in any texts of pre-Christian

⁵Thus, in the BAGD Lexicon, the clear meaning in Diogenes Laertus 2,117 = you fool!; 4 Macc. 8.17. Paul in Galatians 3.1 uses this term and it is normally translated, "O foolish Galatians."

Judaism.”⁶ Fitzmeyer considers all the possible OT connections. Clearly the suffering servant songs in Isaiah do not refer to the Messiah⁷ nor do any of the texts referring to the Son of Man mention suffering as part of his role. In terms of the literal meaning of the pre-Christian traditions, there is apparently nothing that connects the Messiah and suffering. In the end, Fitzmeyer’s conclusion is that Luke’s reference to the fulfillment of the Old Testament is a global affirmation that the suffering of Jesus as Messiah is “the fulfillment of what Moses and the prophets were writing about.” But it is an affirmation that has no specific content. That is, Fitzmeyer’s conclusion is that Jesus’ statement here makes no sense as a reference to any specific in Moses or the prophets. It may be that the disciples’ hearts burned after hearing Jesus’ interpretation of the Scriptures, but if so, there wasn’t anything that we can identify with specific texts going on in their brains.

Robert Tannehill in his study of Luke explores this question from a narrative perspective. His formulation of Fitzmeyer’s conclusion is more explicit. One way of understanding the meaning of Jesus’ words here is that the Scripture is to be interpreted as a series of oracles about the future which are simply to be accepted as such. Whether they disclose a divine purpose that makes sense to humans is irrelevant. Tannehill rightly identifies Luke’s purpose when formulated in this understanding:

He was not concerned with presenting an understanding of the purpose of God that makes sense to humans, nor was the implied author concerned with discovering a deeper theological sense in Jesus’ death. The fact that it is predicted in Scripture makes it necessary, whether it makes sense or not.⁸

Thus, Tannehill identifies the full radicality of the conclusion inherent in this interpretation of Luke’s meaning here. When examined with a methodology that bases meaning on specific empirical evidence and from this draws theological conclusions, this statement of Jesus and therefore, Jesus’ interpretive framework makes no sense historically, and is, therefore, theologically meaningless. But in his typically understated manner that simply requires quotation, Tannehill suggests, “Before we settle for this interpretation, we should consider some indications that there is a sense to God’s way of working in the world, which includes the death and resurrection of the Messiah.”⁹ It is indeed worthy of our consideration, though the conclusion is not as obvious as we might assume.

Tannehill approaches Jesus’ hermeneutic by paying attention to the structure of biblical narrative. Rather than looking only for particular scriptural predictions, he looks for the big picture, the sweep of the stories of God. Thus, Jesus’ reference to Moses and all the prophets may not refer to particular texts but rather to the stories of central figures in

⁶ Joseph Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, (New York: Doubleday,), 1565.

⁷ The Targum Jonathan refers to the servant of Isaiah 52.13 as “the Messiah.” But this is a late text from A.D. 200-500 and could not be, therefore, what Jesus/Luke had in mind.

⁸ Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (Minneapolis: Fortress,), 286.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 286

biblical narrative. Stephen's speech in Acts 7 is an example. As Tannehill states: "Stephen clearly links the stories of Moses and the prophets, who suffer rejection and persecution, to the story of Jesus, who suffers a similar fate (Acts 7.35-39, 52)."¹⁰ The common threads of these stories are the paradigmatic experiences of prophets. They are called by God, speak God's word, are rejected and persecuted by their hearers, are affirmed by God and are ultimately victorious. As Tannehill notes, this pattern is also present in the stories of Jesus' followers in Acts. Stephen, Paul and Peter each experience in different ways this sequence of call, prophetic action and speaking, rejection, and martyrdom. Tannehill calls this "a sacred pattern" which operates according to a narrative rather than a theological logic:

A sacred pattern assures those who accept it that events are not meaningless and chaotic, for they reflect the rhythm of God's work in the world. Events manifest a sacred pattern which hallows and reassures even when it cannot be rationally explained. A sacred pattern can be effective in sustaining faith and guiding life even when it does not lead to theological explanation. The narrator may have been content with this sacred pattern. It translates easily into narrative, while theological abstractions do not. Thus the narrative as a whole seems to suggest that the risen Christ illumines his blind disciples by conveying to them something like this pattern of prophetic destiny as a key to Scripture and his own story."¹¹

Thus, Tannehill proposes that in this story Jesus is interpreting his own story by linking it with the stories of Moses and the prophets. Jesus is then using a narrative rather than a theological hermeneutic. He is thinking in narrative categories rather than the categories of philosophy and theology.

This is a clear instance of the value of narrative ways of understanding the actions and character of God. It is particularly striking because the typical ways in which we have thought about the revelation of God in the Scriptures literally make no sense here. Not only does this section of Luke make no sense in relation to the specifics of prophetic prediction and fulfillment, it also makes no sense as theology that is in any specific way grounded in the text. But as a narrative that calls to mind the broad sweep of the stories of God, specifically of Moses and the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micaiah ben Imlah, Amos, and Hosea, it makes perfect sense. There is a pattern to prophetic life as there is a pattern to the actions of God. For those who know the stories, that pattern, when pointed out, is perfectly clear. Throughout the stories of Moses and the prophets, suffering and sometimes death was an integral part of the prophetic experience that led to glory. The proposition that this was a necessary part of the experience of the Messiah makes sense in the context of this pattern.

This analysis clarifies the meaning of this story for Luke's listeners. Luke assumes that his listeners know the broad sweep of biblical narrative and are able to make these

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 286-7

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 288.

inferences. In identifying with Cleopas and his companion, Luke's audience forms a common mind with the characters of the story. It is as if they are able to think the same thoughts.

Furthermore, this story is an insight into the mind of the risen Christ. Jesus thinks and interprets in story. Jesus clearly thinks in story earlier in Luke's narrative both in the parables and in his actions that are modeled on the actions of Moses (feeding the people in the wilderness; teaching on the plain/desert) and Elijah (raising a widow's only son to life, eating and feeding from a miraculous multiplication of food). The mind of Jesus is a narrative mind that first perceives and then communicates about God in the categories of narrative thought.

Luke-Acts and this particular story are also conceived in the categories of narrative thought. The Gospel of Luke is directly linked with the story of the early church in the Acts of the Apostles. These two books, which together comprise almost a third of the New Testament, are both structurally linked to each other and to the narratives and prophecies of the Old Testament by a complex series of narrative connections.

The most important dimension of this insight into Jesus' mind is that it helps to clarify the central mystery of why Jesus so resolutely chose to suffer. Luke shows this by a similar dual perspective in the story of Jesus' death as is present in the Emmaus story. Once again, Bob Tannehill: "Jesus' death is seen from two perspectives at the same time: it is the rejection of Jesus and of God's purpose in him; it is also the means by which God's purpose is achieved."¹² That is, from one point of view, the story of Jesus' passion is the working out of the plot of Jesus' enemies, the failure of his disciples, and the rejection of Jesus by the people. But from another point of view, Jesus' passion and death is the fulfillment of God's purpose and the accomplishment of God's will. As Tannehill says:

This achievement surprises.¹³ God overrules human purposes and expectations in an ironic reversal of results. The place of Jesus' death in the hidden, divine purpose is expressed by saying that "it is necessary" that Jesus suffer. This necessity derives from the fact that God's purpose must be realized in a blind and recalcitrant world. By not annihilating this world or robbing it of its power of decision and action, God lays upon God's servants the harsh destiny of suffering. For the world will not yield easily to God's purposes. From this situation the pattern of prophetic suffering arises, a pattern to which Jesus and his followers must submit. But God retains the power of irony, for this suffering does not lead to the defeat which humans expect. Acceptance of Jesus' teaching that suffering was for him the necessary path to glory involves a struggle with evil and meaninglessness on the part of people who are tempted again and again to believe that good has been defeated.

¹² *Ibid.*, 288

¹³ *Ibid.*, 288-9

The dual perspective in the passion narrative is also present in the Emmaus story. From the perspective of the two disciples, Jesus' death was the end of hope. They are defeated and mournfully telling all of this to a stranger. But seen from the point of view of Luke and of God, the risen Christ is talking with them and opening their eyes to the meaning of his death.

The climax of the story is another transformation. Jesus continues to pretend that he is just another traveler on the road who is going on further. For the listener who knows, this continuation of Jesus' deception increases the anticipation of what will follow. The only scene that compares with the intensity of this anticipation is the final scene of Joseph's hiding from his brothers. In Joseph's story, the anticipation of the climax of self-revelation is preceded by Joseph placing a silver cup in Benjamin's bag so that he can test his brothers once more to see if they will allow Benjamin to be taken into slavery in Egypt and go back home without him. (Gen. 44.1-17) Judah speaks for the brothers, tells the story of his father's love for Benjamin and his vow to bring him back, and offers to be a slave to Joseph in place of his brother. At this, Joseph withdraws to weep and then reveals himself to his brothers. Joseph's revealing of himself to them is, first of all, an act of forgiveness. He forgives his brothers and invites them to see the hand of God in their action: "And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life." (Gen. 45.5) Thus, Joseph interprets their action in the context of God's plan of salvation: "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God." (45.7-8a) Joseph's hiding was then a way of enabling his brothers to show their repentance from their former attitudes. For the listener, the dual and apparently mutually exclusive yearnings for reconciliation and for justice that have been evoked by the earlier story are both satisfied.

Jesus' deception is similar in its impact. Their invitation to come and stay with them is a sign that they are neither locked into depression nor maintaining their initial disdain for this stranger. They want to be with him and to enjoy his presence. The word that is translated "stay" (μένειν) is the same word that John uses frequently in Jesus' last address to the disciples (John 13-17) that is normally translated "abide:" e.g., "Abide in me and I in you (John 15.4); "Abide in my love." (15.9b). Luke's use of the word has the same connotations here. They want to be close to him, to stay with him. This desire of their heart is then a desire that the listeners can fully share without any of the earlier detachment. The listeners' yearning that the two recognize who is there so that they can experience the full joy of the resurrection is fulfilled.

Jesus reveals himself by performing the ritual gestures of his meals with his students: "taking the bread, he blessed it and having broken it he gave it to them." Luke uses the same words and Jesus uses the same gestures in the story of the feeding of the five thousand and in the story of the last supper: "taking the five loaves and two fish and having looked up to heaven, he blessed them and broke them and gave them to the

disciples..."(9.16); "and taking the bread and having given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them..." (22.19). The only difference in these phrases is that in the supper Jesus uses "to give thanks" (*eucharisteo*) rather than "to bless" (*eulogeo*). This verbal thread leads the listener's memory back to these earlier stories just as the angel's injunction to remember called to mind Jesus' passion prophecies. In this memory of Jesus' gestures, the two disciples recognize him. And in remembering these earlier stories, Luke's listener recognizes the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of resurrection as a promise of perpetual presence.

As soon as they recognize him, he vanishes. Literally, the sentence in Greek means "he became invisible to them." This dialectic of presence and absence is the essential logic of recognition. For the listeners, the implication is unmistakable that Jesus is equally present, though invisible, in the breaking of the bread at the eucharistic celebrations and love feasts of the community. Jesus is present with them in the interpretation of the Word and in the Eucharist. The reality of the resurrected Jesus' presence is located in the memory of the listeners and in their recognition of the connections between Jesus' liturgical gestures and the liturgical actions of the Eucharist. In these visible images, the invisible One is seen.

But it is also the action of a trickster. When he was present, he disguised himself. Now, once recognized, he disappears.¹⁴ As in all magic, the first response is surprise and delight. And that is where Luke's story directs his listeners. The story does not lead the listeners to the next question of magic: "how did he do that?" The problem for the Church has been its desire to explain in detail how Christ is present. All of the arguments about real presence and transubstantiation are efforts to explain the mystery and to answer the question: "how did he do that?" But Luke's story explicitly directs attention away from the question of "how" to the "what" of the experience of Christ. The two of them immediately make the connection between this experience and the burning hearts they had felt while he spoke to them on the road and interpreted the Scriptures for them. They connect their experience of recognizing him in the Eucharist with their experience of warm hearts on the road. The listeners are directed by the story to their experience of the risen Christ, to the feelings of delight, joy, surprise, and warmth.

The conclusion of the story is all about storytelling. The most natural response to such an experience is to tell others. This is a recurring motif in the resurrection traditions. The mutual storytelling between the eleven and these two is a climax of the fulfillment of their hopes. The storyteller's attitude in telling this story was almost certainly one of celebration, wonder, and laughter. The natural inference is that they told the same story to the eleven that the narrator has just told.

Thus, there are several levels of storytelling happening in this brief episode. The two of them first share with each other and find out that they each had the same feelings. They

¹⁴ The instances of disappearance when recognized in the trickster stories.

then return to Jerusalem to share their experience with the other disciples. They find the eleven telling the story of the Lord's appearance to Peter. And the two conclude this storytelling festival with their story. This joyful storytelling is an eruption from the depths of despair. For the listeners to Luke's narrative, therefore, the experience of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the experience of listening to the transformation of despair into hope and joy.