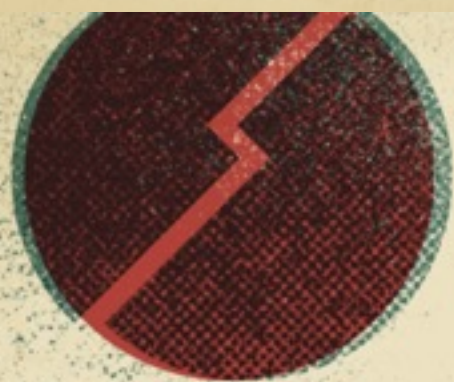


CULTIVATE THE ROMANCE



THEY GAVE OUT OF UNCERTAINTY

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"They gave out of uncertainty"
January 31, 2016
Courage Church, Detroit, MI

So today we are wrapping up our series "Cultivate the Romance" with a message that I believe has the potential to have a profound impact on your life if you can catch this. The principle is actually rather simple, but if you can develop a life style like the one we are discussing today, I believe it will open some incredible doors for you.

The title of today's message is: They gave out of uncertainty.

And it is a message about the principle of the first fruit offering. We have spent several weeks using our dream journals, to a degree creating a bit of a road map for our lives for 2016 and beyond, and then last week I mapped out for all of you where I believe that Courage Church is supposed to go this year, and this week we are going to be planting a seed into the future of our community here at Courage as well as a seed, I believe, into your own lives.

Today is our first fruits offering.

This is an offering. It is not a tithe. We asked you to pray, "God, what would you have me to do, in the first fruit offering?" This is one of the few times all year that we ask you to pray about what you would do beyond your tithe.

that is a one time gift with a specific destination.

We told you last week that we want to start a discipleship based internship program this year... and part of that includes prayerfully considering a property to purchase or rent depending on what the Lord leads us to, for housing the students and future short term mission teams.

we say that in faith.

Total and complete faith. Paul quotes the Psalmist in 2 Corinthians 4 and he says "I believe, therefore I speak." and we believe that God wants to do

something amazing in Detroit through Courage Church in 2016 and beyond, so we are going to speak it boldly and with confidence knowing that God is going to do what he does.

We are trusting God that he holds Courage Church in his hands, that he lights our way, that he goes before us, and that he knows what is best...

And we are trusting that God will do exceedingly abundantly above and beyond whatever he puts on our hearts to do. We believe that it is merely the first step in what God is going to do in our midst, and we are so excited for 2016.

We have taken this series to really lead you somewhere. To get you thinking about your future, to get you to set goals... we shared with you many of our goals, and dreams... last week we shared to you in detail what we are going to begin to do with whatever comes in for the first fruit offering, and today we are going to teach you the principle of what the first fruit actually is. Lets get right into it...

If you would please open your bibles to Luke 24:13-32, or follow along to the bible in our mobile app.

On the Road to Emmaus

That very day (the day of the resurrection) two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 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**. 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?**" 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, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up 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 happened. **Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, 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.** 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.” And he (Jesus) said to them, **“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, 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. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and 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, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

lets pray

We used to live in Brooklyn. We rented the second floor of a brownstone type of row home on an absolutely beautiful street near downtown Brooklyn... we were able to ride our bikes anywhere...

downtown Brooklyn.
downtown Manhattan.

We were four blocks away in either direction of the train that could take us anywhere in New York... the places that you think of when you think of New York, we were close to it.

The image you probably get when you think of Brooklyn, it is probably one of our street.

We loved it. We even loved our apartment. It was filled with classic charm. Old wide plank wood floors... super imperfect old walls... and 5 people crammed into a tiny one and a half bedroom apartment.

5 people... and about 100 mice.

Mice who did not help contribute to the cost of rent.

This may be a somewhat relatable problem here in Detroit... but it was really bad in New York. and I don't usually pride myself on many things in my life or compare my suffering to those of others...

But our mice problem was bigger than yours.

and I would of put our mice problem up against just about anyone's.

our mouse problem was really, really bad.

The wide plank wood floors that we loved proved to be a little too wide providing access to our apartment from the underworld of the mouse empire. The old walls were easily chewed through.

The first time we saw one I was so mad... yet, filled with a little bit of compassion for the little guy... he must be lost, somehow wandered into Brooklyn from whatever depth of Hell that mice normally live in, and he is probably very scared. So I decided, I was going to rescue this mouse! and with a box and some trader joes sour cream and onion puffs which are amazing by the way... Dawn and I baited and trapped him into the little box, ran him downstairs and released him into the street where he ran as fast as anything I have ever seen, as far away from us as possible.

and the problem was solved... but only a few days later, another showed up, and our super cool box and sour cream and onion puffs trick did not work. We failed to catch him that night.

and so I could not sleep..

Fearing that he was crawling on my kids faces or would start eating my feet while I sleep. So this time we went and got a few traps. we got him! but then another came, and another. We started realizing, this was not a mouse...

this was an army of mice...

and they were living right beneath our floor. we heard them scraping.. we heard them mating... i think we even heard them give birth. We worked with exterminators.. set traps everywhere, put steal wool in every hole we could find... we did everything we could.

But these were mutant mice. They eat the food off of the traps without setting it off. They run over the glue without getting stuck. They are immune to the treatments... and they are very bold.

And for the longest time we worked tirelessly to get rid of them.. but one day, we just got too tired. We had some traps set, but most of the food had been eaten off of them... and I didn't refill the bait on the traps... i didn't do much of anything. We would see them running out in the living room, and we would just be annoyed, but we basically stopped working to solve it. At first, I was not able to sleep at night when I saw one because I was afraid they were crawling on my kids faces or something... but then, I kind of just accepted it.

I didn't really do all that much about it.

I had basically concluded that there was nothing that I could do, and so we silently resolved to share our home with these non rent paying disgusting tenants. While we were watching a movie one night, one crawled out... so I threw the TV remote at it but missed, and then just went back to my movie.

I knew that I had hit rock bottom one night when, I had to use the bathroom in the middle of the night, and while I was *using the bathroom* a mouse ran across my foot! And do you know what I did?

I went back to bed.

But I started to get a little convicted about this..

And was reminded of something that Pastor Kevin taught me years and years ago when I was a part of a mentorship program he did called the Emerging Leaders Academy.. He told me, "Jake, **you deserve what you tolerate.**"

and that resonated with me... you deserve to live with the things you are unwilling to work to make better... you deserve the things that you won't change but know that you can change.

I deserved to have to share my house with an army of mice because I gave up trying to stop them.

Dawn and I's lives have been moving very very fast in the last 18 months. We faced numerous attacks, some very difficult times. We spent the majority of the season living in this place of utter uncertainty. Wondering, "God, what are you doing?"

We had a lot of questions.

And I told you a few weeks ago, a lot of those questions began to be answered last year when we did our 21 day fast, and I really hope that this years fast has been that for you. I hope that you were able to focus, and that you have a bit more clarity in your mind. I hope that you were blessed by it... and of course, we can all rejoice together that it is finally over.

But Dawn and I have realized, God has something really amazing he wants to do in our lives... and we are walking in it now and want to continue to walk in it... but he has MORE for us then what we have... then where we are right now. Remember, he can do exceedingly more than anything that we can dream. He just can. And I hope that that has made you dream bigger for your life this year.

And even though the fast is over today, I just want to encourage you to keep digging. If you haven't got any answers yet keep digging. Even if you have a clear answer, keep digging. Because God is constantly moving. He is constantly at work in our lives... that's why we told you that we don't fast

to move heaven... Heaven is already moving, God is always at work... We fast to disconnect from the world... To quiet ourselves.. And then we couple that with prayer, which is how we connect to God and how he is moving.

and if you are like me, and you have found yourself tolerating a life that you know is not the best that you can do, just know this morning that you are not alone.. and know this morning that God wants to do something AMAZING in your life... but it starts with *you* giving him YOUR BEST. Not just your money, but your whole life.

in Nehemiah 10:35 it says “We *obligate* ourselves to bring the first fruits of our **ground** and the first fruits of **all fruit of every tree**, *year by year*, to the house of the Lord.”

the word “first” can also be translated as best of...

Nehemiah is saying, we are bringing our best. We are starting the year by bringing the best of the ground. The best of every tree. The best of every part of us... every year. And I love the way that the ESV put this... “we obligate ourselves to give God our *best*.” Because he deserves nothing less.

And people always say, “you don’t do big fundraisers or launch campaigns or ask people to give beyond themselves at the beginning of the year. There is not, in any human sense or in any cultural sense in our day, any strategy behind doing that.”

But there is biblical sense behind it.

Guys, God wants all of you.

He does.

He wants your beginning. And he wants your end. Hebrews says that he is the author and the finisher of our faith... And he wants to fill all of the pieces in between with his Holy Spirit that walks with you daily and guides you and helps you.

The truth is, if God has all of you, then you will have all of God... and you will be unstoppable.

But it is easy at the beginning of the year to lean so heavily on resolutions that we begin to take the matters of life into our own hands.

“we will be the best us if _____” and then we work toward that for a while... And I think it is great to work toward your goals, but something is missing.

And I believe with all of my heart, that if we give God our first and we give God our best, he WILL bless the rest...

and this may sound hard... but even if the rest of your year seems to fall apart, giving God your best at the beginning is STILL the right thing to do. and still in the long run what is best for your life and ultimately for the kingdom of God.

Here is a story: (we have told you a lot of our story in this series, maybe by now you are getting sick of it... well here is more of it. This is, in a nutshell, our journey from Lansing to LA, and to how God centered us in the middle of everything we ever dreamed about.)

When we first got married, we were living in a little apartment in Lansing, MI. I was interning at //spyn, the youth ministry at mount hope and they gave us an apartment as part of the internship. It was our first home together.

And I remember one day Dawn just came up to me in the living room, about to burst... she just explained, WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE. There is so much MORE FOR US THAN THIS! And I don't really know how to explain how we both felt, besides like this.

There is this moment in Acts 20 when the bible talks about the Apostle Paul in Ephesus, and he is talking to the elders there...

and Paul is content in Ephesus. He is seeing fruit there, but the Holy Spirit prompts him. A lot of translations put this this way “I am compelled by the

spirit"...to Go to Jerusalem. The Greek words Paul uses to describe his feeling is "**Deo Ho Pneuma**" ... it means to be wrapped up or prompted by the holy spirit to action.. So it didn't matter that Paul was doing well where he was... The spirit wrapped him up telling him it is time to go.

But that is the best way to describe how we felt. Compelled.

But we are human...

I told you guys in the very first week of this series....

Fear keeps people from action.

And one of the biggest fears is that they will lose the security that they have worked for. **People love security**... They love provision... especially as we get older and less and less bold and adventurous... But no matter how old you get, you still have dreams.

and God put this one our hearts.

James (4:17) says that it's a SIN to know what you ought to do, and then not do it. We didn't want that to be us.

We knew what God told us to do. We didn't want to sinfully cower in our comfort rather than act on it...

we didn't want to be indifferent, tolerating lives that are less than what we knew we were made for. So we went.

Well Dawn wanted to work on music videos, and for whatever reason, she had a prompting that night that the time to go was now, and the place was Los Angeles... and as I heard her speak that prompting resonated so clearly in my heart.

so we went.

And we had no money whatsoever but we really believed that we needed to go so we stepped out, and trusted God... we owned a little house there

that we were renting out and a few days before we moved, the tenant unknowingly unplugged the water pump... and the whole basement flooded... But the insurance guy came, wrote us a check for the maximum amount to get it fixed, and Dawn's father who fixes houses for a living fixed it for free... God provided everything we needed to get to California.

When we got there, all she wanted to do was music videos... but all God was directing us to the Dream Center, but we never had intended to leave the church world in Michigan just to go work at another church... we wanted music videos. still, the deo ho pneuma... that prompting lead us to Angelus Temple... Where we attended a young adult service on a Saturday night with probably 800 others, and during worship, a man walked up to us, in the middle of the set, stuck his hand out to me and said "Hi, I'm Brad." and he started talking to me over the worship set, until all of the sudden he realized that the last song was ending and he had to get on stage so he ran to the stage to do announcements.

He became our pastor. Literally, I listened to him teach that day, I kept hearing this voice in my head... "serve this man. serve this man."

he later described the first time he approached us the same way, he felt this prompting, "you really need to talk to them."

after the service he ran up to us and introduced us to his wife, Stella. and by many more very strange steps that I don't have time to get into, we talked once a week on Saturday for three weeks, and on the third week he invited us to join him for lunch on Sunday, where he offered us a job as his creative directors.

He had never seen one ounce of work for us. And at the Dream Center, you start as an intern, until you have interned for like a decade, then maybe you get a job of some sort.

but he said he just felt like he was supposed to skip all that, and offer us a job. It didn't pay much. Not even enough to rent an apartment. But it came with a dorm room in the dream center... and for whatever reason, we felt like we were supposed to take it.

Deo ho pneuma.

That same prompting lead Pastor Brad to start a conversation with us, and it lead to our return to ministry MUCH earlier than we had anticipated. We kept thinking "**This is not why we came here**" but felt like it was what we needed to do. We felt like God was saying "Do this first, and I will take care of your dreams." Right when we got to California, we were offered an incredibly low paying job *back in ministry*... and we took it.

and we gave God our *best* at Angelus Temple. Even though at times the job felt like a "dream deterrent" or even a "dream killer," We treated that job like we were producing the oscars, every single week.

So lets look at the principle behind the first fruit:

Romans 11:16 "If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches."

So, its obvious that whatever we offer as the first fruit is important, because Paul tells us that if our first fruit is Holy... so will everything else be. But what is this verse talking about?

The dough and the root

Now Paul here is using an Old Testament command that God gave Moses, a lot of commentators believe that Paul is writing this as a modern metaphor where the dough represented the Jewish believers who had accepted Christ... and when he talks about the "whole lump" he is referring to the ones who would come to believe...Who are yet to find Jesus, but they will! And the whole point is that Jesus is for everyone. He is saying, I have consecrated this people... and if they are Holy, the whole lump is Holy. Jesus is not just for the Jews, He is not just for the Gentiles.

He is saying that if my people are Holy, everything else can be Holy. I am not an exclusive God exclusive to one type of person or one group of person... I came for all people and will redeem anyone who calls on my name.

Everyone else is entitled to the same grace, love, Holy Spirit and covering of holiness that you have.

Another way to put this is that WE are a first fruit. Or at least should be.

So that is what many believe he is speaking metaphorically about, but he is giving two very distinct references. The root, and the dough.

When Paul talks about *dough*, he is referring to Numbers 15 when it says:

Numbers 15:17-20 “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land which I bring you and when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall present a contribution to the LORD. Of the first dough you shall present as a contribution;

What it was, was it was the first grain that was harvested and ground.

They were told to make a cake out of it and present that cake to the Lord.

Elijah and the widow in Zarephath

There is this fascinating confrontation in 1 Kings 17. between Elijah and a widow woman... there is a drought in the land, and everybody was having a pretty rough time. Elijah was hungry and thirsty like everyone else, and God provided all sorts of really strange provision for him. At one point God told him to go East, and that the Ravens would feed him... So he went east... And they did. Then, God tells Elijah, "arise, and go to Zarephath... There is a widow there that I have commanded to feed you. " Elijah must have found this strange...

Widows were the poorest people in that society... Completely dependent on the generosity of others... He should be feeding her, not the other way around. But God was doing something amazing.

This woman is completely broke and has nothing left..

At first, Elijah asks her to draw him some water and as she is doing so, he asks if she could give him some bread from her hand. ... and then she says this, she is totally transparent:

"as your God lives I have no bread... nothing baked, just a little flour in a bin and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die."

and then Elijah says to her.... yes, go and do that... go take what little flour you have and and eat it with your son...

but first, make me a cake... then make some for yourselves.

Can you imagine how outrageous and how selfish and how heartless as this must have sounded to a woman about to die next to her starving son?

He was SO BOLD!

Almost too bold.

But he knew something that she didn't... something that we don't always see.

He was setting her up, for HER MIRACLE.

and by the grace of God, she *did* what the prophet asked...

and the bible says that the bin of flour was not used up... and the oil didn't run dry until the end of the famine! It truly was a miracle. Her and her whole household ate for days and days and days.

Her family, which was about to die of starvation, had more than enough to live off of in the hardest of times.

It was a recession. And they had plenty through the entire thing.

Why?

She honored God.

by taking care of the man of God FIRST.

The Root

Paul says, “if the root is holy, so are the branches.”

The principle of the first fruit originated with the Hebrew word Bikkurim. When you read in Nehemiah when he says “we obligate ourselves to bring the first fruit...” or anywhere in the old testament when it says “bring the first fruit,” the word is bikkirum.

Bring the bikkirum.

The bikkurim is the part of the harvest that ripened and came forth before the rest of the harvest did.

The part that ripened and came forth first... God said, that part is mine! and this is an absolutely fascinating fact about Jewish history.

What they would do in those days, is the farmer would notice that a branch would have the bikkurim on it, and he already knew the principle of the first fruit, he already knew “this part is for God” so what would happen is he would take a little scarlet ribbon and he would walk up to the branch that had the fruit on it, and he would tie this scarlet ribbon on the branch as to say “THIS IS FOR THE LORD.”

He was marking it. He was setting it apart. He was saying, “God we give you the first.” He was asking the Lord to bless it. That is why we gave you the little red ribbons this week when you walked in... You can keep it as a token to remember, or you can take it and wrap your offering or offering envelope in it if you are giving a physical offering.

But the bikkirum was the first. It wasn't just any piece of fruit... a good batch or a bad batch. It was was came first.

it had to be the first! It was the part that came *before* the harvest...

The farmer didn't know whether the harvest was going to be large or if much of the fruit would not survive. All he knew for sure was that he the bikkurim. The only certainty was the bikkurim.

He didn't give out of poverty or out of lack, he gave out of not knowing what it would be,

he gave it out of uncertainty.

He gave the only thing that was certain, out of uncertainty.

Unsure what tomorrow will hold.

That seems completely mind blowing and absolutely backwards to everything our society teaches us for survival.

If he would have waited for the harvest, he would be able to know how much he could afford to give for the year, but the bikkurim came first. It was given *before*.

But according to the bible, Two things would have to happen to take the bikkurim and turn it into a "first fruits offering"... it was not enough to just wrap it in a scarlet cord.

First, they would take the fruit and put it in these baskets and then these baskets of fruit had to be placed into the hands of their spiritual authority. This is found in Deuteronomy 26 (1-11)...

So the farmer would have to first present it to the high priest and then second, which is recorded in Leviticus 23:11, is the priest would lift it high before God dedicating it to the Lord.

That's it.

It was their first. It was their best. And they gave it not knowing what the harvest was going to be.

When Dawn and I moved to LA, and we wanted to do one thing...

But we gave God our first.

We trusted him with our dreams even when it looked like our jobs were taking us farther from our dreams. Ministry is a full time gig. It doesn't leave a lot of room to build much of a career in the film industry on the side. But Dawn really had it in her heart to do music videos.

Two years after we started working with at Angelus Temple, a friend of ours gave Dawn the opportunity to work as a Production Assistant on a music video set for a music video for a band he managed.. it was one of those Disney Channel teeny bopper bands... the budget was huge but Dawn's pay was not...

she was the girl that got everyone coffee... she carried the equipment... it didn't matter that she is tiny and the rest of the set was filled with dudes who did this every day... she was the PA.

and on top of that, we had to drive from LA to Napa Valley to be on the set... 8 hours. We spent more in gas and hotel than she got paid, but we did it. And she went and she served the crew and she served them WELL. She gave her best. She got people coffee, she carried heavy equipment, she constantly asked everyone "Do you need anything? Can I get you anything? Can I help you with anything?"

Now catch this, because this is amazing. We got back from that set. back to the Dream Center... the dream center had just started a record label and had signed one of the semi finalists from American Idol that year, and they wanted to make him a music video. And knowing that Dawn had just worked on a music video (probably having no idea what role she played on it) They asked Dawn to direct it, and because the label was separate from the church, there was actually a little budget for the video.

What did Dawn do? She started calling people on the crew from the set that she had just been a PA on.. The people she had just served hand and foot... She hired them. And when they showed up to work that day and met

their boss for the day, they said things like “weren’t you the girl who PA’d in the castle shoot? you are directing?”

And when that shoot was over, and the video was finished, we showed it to our friend managed that Disney teeny bopper band. And he loved it... and in July that year, Dawn *directed* the next music video for that same band. and she hired the same exact crew. It took from January until July for Dawn to have the lowest position, to the highest position... hiring the same crew, and working for the same band.

and none of it would have happened if we would have just thrown her into the industry... if we had not FIRST, said, we are going to help the Dream Center. We are going to do what God is asking us to do.

We had to make a decision... and it was a hard decision both financially and on account of where we thought our dreams were taking us.

the deo ho pneuma prompted us, go to LA. it prompted Pastor Brad to offer us a job without seeing our work.

God was orchestrating something but it was NOT something that we were asking for.. it was NOT why we wanted to move to LA.

we had to make a decision to give God our best right now and trust him with our dreams because working as creative directors for another church was the farthest thing from our dreams at that time.

God was at work the whole time... Just not the way that we thought he was, or for whatever reason at the time "wanted him to be" but he brought the whole thing together, gave us our dreams all the while EQUIPPED US for the work that he now has us doing.

But it was not what we had in mind.

When Jesus came and built his ministry and disciplined the twelve... he had something very different in mind than his followers did.

Do you think that when Peter started following him he thought that it was going to end that way? No! It didn't even matter that Jesus told him over and over and over again... he didn't believe it!

The disciples thought they were following a King.

and not just any King but the King that Nathan prophesied to David about saying "This King will reign forever."

Death was not written into that equation. and that is who they thought they were following.

and they were.

But something had to happen before he became King... he had to first be the first fruit.

1 Corinthians 15:20-21

"But in Fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." For as by a man came death, by a man comes also the resurrection of the dead."

And I for a long time struggled with this question... Why does the resurrection matter? I always understood, Jesus died for our sins, I get the atonement thing, but why was this so important? Because people have always said, "if there is no resurrection, none of it matters." And I never used to understand that, until I began studying first fruits.

But it matters because everything about the hope of the gospel is built around a resurrection. It is built around a resurrection of the dead... of you and I and all of our ancestors who died in Christ as we one day meet him again.

And the reason Jesus' resurrection is so important is because he had to be the first fruit of what will one day happen. He resurrected as the first fruit of our eternity spent with him. That is how every principle throughout the whole old testament worked... there had to be a first fruit.

But when Jesus died, all that his disciples could see was defeat. Was disappointment. Was end.

“The story is over. We thought we were following a King...”

because they never listened to what he said.

Its so obvious by what we read at the beginning. The story of two of Jesus’s followers who were walking on **the road to Emmaus**... Jesus comes up to them they didn’t even recognize him so in their minds a stranger comes up to them..

Because in their minds Jesus is dead and gone and it is over... ITS OVER...

and he asks them what they are talking about, the bible says that at that, they just stood still, there looking sad.. they STOOD THERE.

They are supposed to be on a road, they are supposed to be moving forward, and instead they were standing.

SAD... defeated... consumed by their pain... BLINDED by their pain to the point of not even seeing Jesus...

One of them says “are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

And I love what Jesus does... he pulls it out of them.. he says “What things?”

and they respond, saying "concerning Jesus"..

But notice this, this time they don't speak of him as Lord.. They don't speak of him as the king they once thought that he was, they say “Concerning Jesus, a prophet. mighty in word and deed. and they crucified him....”

They killed him.. He was flesh and blood after all.

and then they said this, and it reveals so much about their hearts at the time... about their faith in what Jesus had promised before he died... they said:

“BUT WE HAD HOPED THAT HE WAS THE ONE TO REDEEM ISRAEL”

they HAD HOPED.

“But we don’t have hope anymore.”

they have now lost hope. They had none left. because they saw something that they did not think was going to change, and they accepted it.

and they had already heard the testimony from the women at the tomb that Jesus has resurrected, and yet they are saying this?

And this stranger who is actually Jesus, he kind of rebukes them here, and basically says, "you guys don't know how to read the scriptures... Don't you understand that all of the words of Moses and of the prophets, they all were leading you to that moment... the moment that you are wallowing in as if you have been defeated..."

He rebukes them, but he rebukes them in a way that only Jesus can do because after he rebukes them, they invite him to dinner.

I need to learn that type of rebuke.

I always knew I needed to love like Jesus, but that guy knew how to rebuke his way to the dinner table.

They invited the stranger that they didn’t know was Jesus to dinner with them... and the bible says that Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. And as soon as he did this, it says their eyes were opened, and for the first time, they recognized him....

and then he vanished.

And they said this, they said "did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road? When he opened the scriptures..."

Because it was right there in front of them! But they missed it! **Jesus was right there in front of them! And they missed him!**

Can you imagine with me what it would have been like to have been in that room? Thinking to yourself "We were just walking with Jesus and we missed it."

And when he walked with us, he told we were missing it.

We missed it when Moses said it.

We missed it when the prophets said it.

We missed it when Jesus taught it to us over and over and over that this is how it had to happen...

We missed it.

What else did we miss?

Can you imagine at that moment a scene playing in their minds at that dinner table... perspectives bouncing around from follower to follower... and their minds are just going CRAZY.

Kind of like when you are sitting in the movie theater and watching "the sixth sense," when you see that big reveal at the end, and then they start taking you back to all of these moments that YOU HAVE ALREADY SEEN... that were right in front of you but nobody caught the first time.

but in reality, it was so obvious. It was right in front of us.

and everyone starts looking at each other and asking "how did we miss this?"

and I can almost see in my mind, those followers questioning themselves and asking each other that very question. How did miss this?

And then I see their minds flashing back... and seeing a visual image of Jesus telling them in John's gospel (12:32) "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself"

"When I am the first fruit... I will go ahead, and then I will draw everyone else."

and I imagine them hearing those words echo through their minds

"when I am lifted up from the earth"

"When I am lifted up from the earth..."

"When I am lifted up from the earth..."

echoing over a picture in their minds of what they read about in the scriptures... of that high priest, taking that basket with the bikkurim in it, and lifting it up, dedicating it to the Lord...

then as they see this scene with the priest and the farmer rewind just a few frames, I imagine that they get chills down their spine as they see the farmer as he takes that basket of fruit and places into the hands of the priest, as they blink their eyes in that moment and go back to what is recorded in Lukes gospel (23:46) when Jesus is on the cross and he cries out with a loud voice, "FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT" (see also Psalm 31:5) right as he breaths his last breath.

and then I see them at that table.. by now with their jaws dropped to the floor... seeing in their minds eye.. As both stories rewind just a little bit further and they a visual of that old farmer in first moment on his farm, as the first fruit has ripened and come forth, they see the farmer walking up with the scarlet ribbon and tying it on the branch that bore the first fruit and saying "God, THIS IS YOURS, as he thanks God for the harvest that is coming and he is so willing to let go of the bikkurim in the midst of total uncertainty... with faith that it is only a fraction of what God wanted to do for him.....

and they see a confident smile on his face as he wraps the fruit in red...

and then I see them at that table as the image fades of the farmer at the tree, as they blink their eyes one last time and are taken back to that moment recorded in Matthew 27... when Pilate washes his hands of Jesus, and the crowd so naively says "his blood will be on us and our children" as they deliver him to the soldiers, who take him to the governors headquarters, where Matthew says that they stripped off all of Jesus clothes, and they wrap him in a scarlet robe. (Matthew 27:28)

Because Jesus is God's Best.

John 3:16 says that for God so loved the world that he GAVE his only son... he gave the only thing in the universe that He was actually able to lose... so we can share eternity with him... so that Jesus could be the first fruit of our eternity.

And that is why we give our best... because God gave his best... his son...

Jesus gave his best... his life.

So our best is the least we can do.

In light of that, I literally can not even imagine giving God anything less than my very best in every area of my life.

And I understand these are uncertain times. Yesterday Dawn and I got hit with some information that through us into a whirlwind of uncertainty. We thought it a situation was going to be one way, and then it turned out to be a different way. These are uncertain times.

But as hard as it may be to understand, uncertainty is the point.

We are not certain of tomorrow, or even our next breath. and whatever is in my wallet, or however much is in your bank account... that doesn't matter... its all fleeting... it's here today, gone tomorrow.

But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8)
And He wants to do something amazing in your life! He wants to do something amazing in Detroit... He wants to do something amazing in Courage Church. But it starts by giving God your best... In every area of your life!

It starts by acting faithfully in light of uncertainty.

It starts here... In our hearts.

It starts not not tolerating to live a life of indifference anymore... It starts with not hoarding things that are all Gods anyway.

Those followers missed out on Jesus when he was right in front of them because they were blinded by a lie.

Lets not miss out on what is right in front of us now!

Because we are blinded by the lie of "stuff." Let's not let "things" or the lie of security or climbing some sort of ladder block our view of Jesus, and what he is trying to do in our lives.

Lets all look at our life, and ask "What is the deo ho pneuma saying to me?"
What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do this morning?

Let's give our best, in every area of our lives, from our jobs to our finances to our relationships.. Let's put it all together, and lets work together to give Detroit our best this year... and more importantly to give God our best this year.

because God gave his best.