

Who Do You Say That I Am?

By Elder Steve Grappone

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It's been a long time since I've preached the gospel. Last time I spoke to a congregation was at the Hilo SDA Church in Hilo Hawaii. Some of you are probably wondering why would we leave paradise. Well there were opportunities here in California and the economy had started to slow down in Hilo due to the closing of the sugar cane plants. I was teaching computer classes at the University of Hawaii at Hilo and also worked for Office of Hawaiian affairs on a construction project to help local Hawaiians build their own home. So they not only received a new home but acquired a carpenter skill set. We built 24 homes in Hilo and 22 in the last original fishing village in Hawaii called Milolii. As a matter of fact Norm and Gail took a trip down to Milolii on their last trip to the Big Island. The homes are still standing, and I'm so proud of the fact that I had a hand in helping the locals build their own home. The economy was so impacted that they cut the funding both at the University and for the Hawaiian Homes project. But we wouldn't have been blessed with being here in Hayward if that set of circumstances hadn't happened.

First I wanted to thank all of you for accepting me and my family to the body of Christ here. You all have opened your arms, your homes, and your hearts to my family; and I thank you so very much. Many accolades have been sent my way but truly God has guided me and has allowed me to use my talents for His Ministry here at the Hayward SDA church.

I want to also thank my wife for her patience with me. Sometimes I'm running from meeting to meeting setting special music, getting ready for the next social event; and she is so patient with me. I want to acknowledge her as a worker for the Lord, and I am so proud of her leadership in this church. Oh and as most of you with email know, she is the email Diva. I think it's great that she communicates with a lot of you through email. So if you want to get on her mailing list, then let her know!

My sermon today is directed at the young people in the church, so you adults can listen in. It's based on Luke chapter 24 starting at verse 13, the road to Emmaus. I started to pronounce it EE-MOSS, and then I thought it was EE-MOUSE. I had to Google it to get the right pronunciation, EE-MAY-IS. If you have speakers the computer will speak the correct pronunciation for you.

Road to Emmaus

Pronunciation of Emmaus:

Although we've heard many creative guesses ranging from '*ee-mouse*' to '*ee-moss*' to '*emmis*', the proper pronunciation is '***ee-may-is***'.

You know Jesus had a lot more followers than the twelve. Two of them are on their way out of Jerusalem. Now they are walking away from the 11 remaining disciples and others, so I wonder if they are on their way back to whatever they did before they met Jesus. This place called EE-May-IS is now

called Imwas (West Bank) and lies halfway between Jerusalem and Jaffa, Israel. So they are on their way back to EE-May-IS because after all, Jesus is dead! The last few days had seen their hopes and dreams dashed to pieces. Has that ever happened to you? You know how it feels, that sunken feeling. You have no energy, no will to do anything. Now let's listen in on the conversation – Luke 24 starting in verses 13 – 16.

Has that ever happened to you? I guarantee it has. You just didn't recognize Him. He was in your friend, your teacher, your parent. Now don't think – oh you mean in their heart, like it's not the same as what happened to these two men. He's as real and as powerful – as wise and as loving in a person yielded to Him as He was on that road. You are just kept from recognizing Him. Just like these guys – you can't see Him, but He's there. The once dead, now alive forever, conqueror of Death and Hell, King of the universe, your Creator has walked and talked with you. But you usually know when the Lord was speaking to you through that friend. You just didn't take it as real as it is. Next time you get that check in the Spirit that the Lord just spoke to you through your friend or the Word as you read it – think about these two men and Jesus right beside them.

Let's look at verse 17-20, "But we hoped..." They hoped Jesus would redeem Israel in a physical way, but He did something a million times greater than that, He redeemed all who would come to Him by faith throughout time. He conquered the up until then undefeated enemy of man throughout time – death. He ripped the prison bars of Hell right out of the wall and rapped that ol' Serpent the Devil upside the head with 'em, and said, "These prisoners are free, bought and paid for with my

blood. You can only have the ones that won't accept the gift of my atoning blood – That's ALL you get PERIOD! Understand? And the defeated foe the Devil, angry as sin, but shaking in his socks – said "yes Lord of lords and King of kings."... "And we hoped He would redeem Israel" Now do you see how funny these two downcast brothers are? It's like saying, I was hoping to win a free day pass to Great America - when in reality you got a month long round trip world cruise, all expenses paid! You know what? We are just like these guys. We're so busy with our lives that we don't pause for a moment and LISTEN to what He is saying.

How many times have you been disappointed and later realized the Lord spared you from something that could have been horrible and gave you something much better later? Sometimes we don't see it, or don't pay attention but if you do – you'll see it all the time. I see it driving down the freeway. You know, that car that's swerving into your lane or you pause a moment before hitting the gas to cross an intersection only to have a car run the red light. You know that He loves you so much He isn't going to give you what you are hoping for. He is going to give you something a million times better. These two disciples were hoping for physical freedom from the taxes of the Roman Empire and a restored king of the line of David. Instead Jesus gives them a seat with Him at the helm of the universe. Eph 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. Don't be disappointed when you don't get the physical things you were expecting. Look at the spiritual reality of what is really happening and that God has something much greater in mind for you. If He withholds your request, it is because He loves you and has something much better. Don't doubt his love because of some physical thing,

whether illness or lack of material blessing, or even lack of apparent need. Sometimes through the darkest times – like Cleopas and friend were having – something wonderful is happening in the unseen realms.

You don't think that is as real as the physical!? It is forever and this stuff you can see is passing away. Your house will be old in 30 years, your car in five, your computer in one, your Nintendo DS, your Xbox 360, and that boyfriend or girlfriend maybe the old one next week won't last. And sorry to say for all you musicians out there even your instruments won't last forever.. Don't get all wrapped up in the material world. A person's life isn't made up of what he has in the physical – but Who he knows in the spiritual. Lay up your treasures in heaven. So I ask you...How big is your heavenly treasure chest? Don't you know that he has laid up more awesome things for you. You think the Xbox 360 is cool. Wait until you can fly inches from the water of a lake at high speed like a hawk. Debbie, Mom and Dad, and I were out at a place called Quarry lakes. A lot of you have gone on walks out there with us. Anyway, I had my pole in the water and as I was writing out my sermon there at the waters edge I saw this beautiful Hawk swooping low to the water. It was beautiful... as he soared inches from the water looking, I guess, for dinner I started to visualize what it will be like to soar like that when we get to Heaven. Talk about cool graphics. You think the Playstation 3 is cool. Wait until you run with the animals. And see the animation of the real world. You think the iPod is cool...wait until you see the music YOU will play AND sing! You think the Wii is cool...wait it is cool ok.... you know what I mean.

I have always been kind of a geek and I like gadgets. No

question about it. Some gadgets I have are tools but others...there just gadgets. I like pressing buttons and spinning dials. I guess that's why I enjoy the AV department. And I wondered... wow what am I going to do in Heaven. There is no electricity, no computers, no iPhone; there's nothing for me to break and fix. I thought to myself, man, it's going to be pretty boring in Heaven. What is a poor lowly geek going to do in Heaven? I mean, I sometimes used to think I had silicon running through my veins. For those who don't know, silicon is what all computer chips are made of. Then I started to think about creation, Wow, how neat that will be to have Jesus sit with us and tell us ...the... don't know what He will call it. But I guess we'll understand it as the science of how plants, animals, and even humans were created. How was the creation of the world done? How did he come up with our minds and what about that thing called electricity? Lord, how did you make atoms, what is gravity? There will be millions and millions of beautiful things that we will learn about. Our earthly puny minds can't conceive of what it will be like. I no longer think that going to heaven will be boring, but I believe it will be the greatest adventure of ALL time.

God is playing the greatest SIMS Game ever. But of course it's not a game is it? It's a fight for eternal life. The Devil is out to get you. You think he's a scary beast. No my friend. He is a very beautiful creature and very smart. Watch what you hear, see, and listen to. Don't give up on Jesus because the Devil will snatch you so fast you won't know what happened. Eph 6:12 is a familiar verse "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this age."

But you sayI don't want Jesus to come yet. My life is just

beginning. YES, IT IS beginning, but isn't it better to have the comfort of knowing that you are protected, an insurance policy, some one who ALWAYS has your back? Well let me tell you....Jesus will always have your back. There is no one else that can make that promise. I guarantee it. Work for the Lord. Do what's right not what's cool. Do the Lord's work, not the work of the Devil. You want to be leader? Love Him first, He will lead you to the most fantastic challenges. You want sing? Sing for the Lord. Love Jesus... he can make it happen. Do you want to feel good about your self? Love Jesus...go and volunteer your time in helping the poor, the less fortunate. You want to see God do incredible things? Love Him, go and build a church someplace. Love Jesus because the only friend you have is Jesus, and HE WON'T FAIL YOU. Your friends will fail you, but Jesus will never fail you.

Let's go back to Cleopas and his friend in verses 22-24. Now wait a minute. Jesus already told them after He rose from the dead to meet him in Galilee. The women told them the angel said to meet Him in Galilee. These guys are going the wrong direction. How many clues do you guys need? Sometimes the Lord gives a bunch. We read it in the Bible, and we head for Emmaus. But that has never been any of you, right? Where are you going right now? I sure hope it is to Galilee and not to Emmaus.

It's October 1995: Conversation between an U.S Navel ship and Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland.

CA: Please divert your course to the south to avoid collision.

US: You divert your course 15 degrees to the north to avoid collision.

CA: Negative, you divert you course 15 to the south to avoid collision.

US: This is the captain of the U.S. Navy ship, I say again divert your course.

CA: No, I say again, you divert your course.

US: This is the aircraft carrier USS Lincoln, the second largest ship in the Atlantic fleet. We are accompanied with three destroyers, three cruisers, and numerous support vessels. I demand that you change your course 15 degrees north. I say again that's one five degrees north or countermeasures will be taken to ensure the safety of this ship.

CA: This is a lighthouse. Your call!

You see Jesus is saying the same thing. Your call, I'm giving you the right direction. He gives direction in Luke 11:9 which says, "And I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be open to you."

Back to Luke verses 25-27 OW! Rebuke time. Jesus says, Come on guys, aren't you in the Word. How come it takes so much for you to believe? Look at that word "all" in verse 27. Did you know your whole Old Testament is about Jesus? He shows up in prophecy, He shows up physically, and He shows up in types and shadows. He is everywhere in the Old Testament. How come we are so slow to see that everything is about Jesus, because it is Jesus that pleases the heart of the Father.

Verses 28- 31: Don't you want to be with someone who knows the Word? When they show you in Scripture what is going on, it's so exciting and you just want to hang out with them and glean bits of insight. These guys were hungering and thirsting

for the Word; and they didn't want Jesus to leave, even though they did not know who He was, they knew He knew the Word. So they say, Don't go....., have dinner with us, anything to keep Him around. Is that how you feel? Is that how you are toward learning the gospel? If you've studied the gospel there is something in the text that gets you excited. If not, then you need to ask the

Holy Spirit's help with your studies, because He is the One who illuminates the Word. He can show you Jesus in ALL the Scriptures. Are you hanging with Him?

See what happened when He broke the bread? As He passed the bread they saw the nail holes. Suddenly their eyes are open. You know, sometimes we have to see the nail holes before we recognize Him. See those love scars made for you? Then you can recognize Him. We recognize Him in communion. When He passes the bread, our eyes are opened. The bread is his body that He gave for the life of the World. Christ in our brothers and sisters causes them to do the same and walk around as living sacrifices, giving up their own way, dying to their own desires so the resurrected Lord can use their body as broken bread to minister to a needy world. Are your eyes open yet? See their sacrifice? Now are your eyes opened?

On to Verses 32 –34: Let Him open the Scriptures to you. When you sit down to feed on the Word, pray for Him to open your understanding. As He does you will feel what these men felt. It's for today, not just back then! It happens everyday all over the world. People sit down before the Word and as He opens the Scriptures, their hearts burn within them. Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things out of your Law.

Have you ever felt the holy spirit? I feel it almost every time I pray. I can feel Him touching me on the shoulder or standing next to me. When I was ordained an Elder I remember kneeling and feeling the presence of the Lord for maybe the first time as the Elders laid hands on me. I'll never forget it. If you empty yourself of thought you can feel the holy spirit.

Now, they are going the right way. Once you meet Him and He shows you the Word, you decide to obey what He already told you. They are headed back toward Galilee, back to serve the Master. It is true! He has risen! What does that mean to you? To me it means I don't have to fear death. I don't have to worry about my loved ones that have died that knew Jesus as Savior and Lord. It means He can walk and talk with me. It means He can tell me what to share with you, and then the living Lord Jesus can help me share it. He's alive! Will you let Him live through you today? Will you get His direction for your life, let Him open the Scripture to you, and go where He is leading you to go? Or are your sights set on something else. We hoped that He would redeem Israel. He has a whole lot more in mind for you than that? He wants to really live in you!

Bob was a logger in the mountains of the northwestern United States. As he was logging one day, his boss, who was not religious at all, drove up to him and said, " Bob, I read this text someplace in the Bible where Jesus is talking to one of His disciples, Peter.

Jesus says He's going to build His church on the rock. What does that mean? Is He going to build a church on what Peter said, or on Peter himself? I want to know."

Bob replied, "I don't know, but I'll find my Bible and tell you tomorrow."

So Bob drove down the mountainside and began to reflect on how his life was changing a bit. He later remarked that strange things had been going on in his life and noticed that his heart had changed, feeling more tender and kind. When he got to his house in the village below the mountain where he was cutting the trees, he found in an old trunk the Bible that his mother had given him 20 years before. He hadn't touched it since she had given it to him. He dusted it off and read in the Scriptures the text in the book of Mark where Jesus made the statement to Peter.

The next morning when the boss came by again, Bob said, "I think is very obvious, as you read the Scripture, Jesus is going to build His church on the confession of Peter that Jesus was the Christ, The Son of God." That satisfied Bob's boss, so Bob put on his earmuffs, started his big chainsaw, and began cutting the big trees. As he was cutting the trees, he heard a voice. The voice repeated the words of Jesus to Peter found in Mathew 16:13-18, "Who do you say that I am?" Bob looked around, no one was there.

Again, Bob returned to cutting the trees and heard the voice the second time. He looked around, and again, there was no one. He heard the voice all day, and he said later that he thought he would lose his mind that day. The voice kept saying, "Who do you say that I am? Who do you say that I am?" That night he could not sleep. He kept thinking about the voice.

The next day he went back to the mountains and began to cut trees again. Though he wore his big ear muffs, and the chainsaw was roaring as it cut through the trees, he heard the voice again ask, "Who do you say that I am?" He quickly looked around, and once more, no one was there. He turned off the saw; and in the little clearing there in the woods, he fell on his knees and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." There on his knees, Bob surrendered his life to Jesus.

Who do you say that ...HE is? Is he just someone that you think you know because you come to church? You've read a couple of verses and think you know. Perhaps you turned away from him. Maybe HE has been walking by your side and in the midst of all the noise in your life you can't hear him. Stop....listen and you will hear him. You will here him say "Who do you say I am?" I hope your response is:

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.