

Our Hearts Burned Within Us
Luke 24:13-35
September 11, 2022
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CenterPoint Church

Read Luke 24:13-35

“The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.” (Psalm 12:6)

Introduction

I want to start with a question this morning: What hopes and dreams have you had for your life? Do they have a good chance of coming true or have they already come true, or have they not worked out as you'd hoped? Sometimes our dream and plans work out well: I knew in my teen years that I wanted to become a youth pastor, and I got to live 15 years of that dream; I have some wonderful memories from those years. A young man from my old church grew up fascinated with roller coasters, so he studied mechanical engineering in college and now works for Universal Studios designing roller coasters; it's exactly what he wanted to do. A couple we know are hiking the last legs of the Appalachian Trail this morning, which was what they had decided together to do as soon as they retired. But many of our plans and desires don't work out. Maybe you dreamed of becoming a big-league ball player, but a crucial injury kept that from becoming reality. Maybe you never got the big break that you thought would come your way. Maybe your hope was as basic as hoping that your family would stay one big, happy family, but one of your parents had other ideas and bailed on their spouse and kids. Not everything works out as we imagine in this life.

I've never been part of a political campaign, but I can imagine that the people who work and volunteer to help get a candidate elected that they absolutely believe in must have high hopes. And when they win, it's got to feel wonderful that all your hard work paid off and the issues you care about are going to get addressed and advanced. But when you lose, I can imagine that it's absolutely disheartening and depressing. Not only did the candidate you loved and believed in lost and won't be bringing the needed change and policies, but their ideological opponent won and will be bringing the opposite. That's a tough pill to swallow.

Today we meet two people who came away from a big event feeling like they had lost everything they believed in. The man that they pinned their hopes to lost. They felt empty, confused, and disillusioned that what they thought was the greatest thing that had come into their lives was instead a huge disappointment. But as my friend, Mark, says, "You never know what a day will bring." And they were joined by a stranger who at first seemed to be uninformed about recent events, but then revealed that perhaps He knew exactly what they needed to know to make sense of what had happened and to restore their hope.

Let's join these two travelers on the road who met the risen Jesus, though they didn't know it yet.

I. Unknown in Person (vv. 13-24)

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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?”¹⁹ 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,²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.²¹ 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.²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,²³ 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.²⁴ 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.”

This is Easter Sunday later afternoon/early evening just a few miles outside of Jerusalem. We meet two people who were walking home, and we're told one of their names is Cleopas. So the other is either a friend or perhaps his wife. If this is the same Cleopas that John 19 calls Clopas, then his wife's name was Mary, and she was one of the women standing at the foot of the cross. But I don't think so, I think that Luke would have given her name or at least the fact that she was Cleopas' wife, since Luke mentions women in his Gospel more than any of the other three Gospel writers. Regardless, Cleopas and his companion were talking about everything that had happened over the last few days in Jerusalem, the trial and crucifixion of the teacher and healer, Jesus. The Greek word for discussing in verse 15 is *syzetein*, which suggests intense, strong debate.¹ There might have been some yelling and there might have been some tears.

Now, we refer to most of Jesus' life on earth as having a “veil” over His glory. He walked the earth as a human being, but He was fully God and fully man at the same time; yet His divinity was hidden for the most part. Now, even His human identity was hidden. Some people have speculated that perhaps they couldn't recognize Him because they were walking towards the setting sun and that kept their eyes from really seeing Him. But that doesn't explain why they still didn't recognize Him when they went inside; not until the breaking of bread. Other explanations:

- one is that Jesus actually looked different in His resurrection body,
- another is that people who are overwhelmed with sorrow can't function like normal, so not recognizing someone was a possibility because of their emotional state.

-Add to that the fact that they definitely didn't expect to see Jesus; in their minds, He was dead. But I don't think we need a natural explanation for why they couldn't recognize Him. Verse 16 says their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. The same thing happened to Mary in John 20, she thought He was the gardener at the tomb. It doesn't say why He hid His identity, but I think that the explanations that He gave them would not have connected as strongly had they realized it was Jesus – they would have just been so overwhelmed by His being alive they wouldn't have listened to what He said. And when He revealed Himself later, it was much more powerful.

As Jesus joined them, He asked, “So what is it you're talking about?” And they just stopped, because they were astounded that there was someone in the area that didn't know what was going on. So Cleopas laid out all the facts – who he thought Jesus was (a prophet who had done mighty things), that the Jewish leaders were responsible for His death, and that there were reports that His body has gone missing from the tomb. The implication is that something weighty was happening, there may even be angels involved, we just don't know what it all means. We've got grief, hope, and confusion all mixed together.

This is all a good reminder that we may be in some confusion in life, we may be unsure about our faith, or wondering what is going on with God – and all the time He is close to us, but we are

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 612.

unaware of His presence. I don't know about you, but when life is hard, when I feel pain or defeat, it feels like God is distant. But feelings aren't necessarily reality. Dale Davis said, "there may be times when faith is beaten down and almost smashed, when faith walks in darkness without any light – and Christ has drawn near... Your darkness may be only an inch from the light."² The road to Emmaus shows us that Jesus is near even in our confusion and pain.

Jesus would begin to reveal Himself, but not His identity yet. First, He was

II. Known Through the Scriptures (vv. 25-27)

²⁵ *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!*

²⁶ *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"* ²⁷ *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Were these disciples really "*slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken*"? I'm sure that they would have said, "No, we believe everything that the prophets said." Jesus was pointing out, though, that they were selective readers. And like most Jews of their day, they wanted their Messiah to be triumphant and overthrow Rome, but they had ignored prophecies about the Messiah's sufferings. Verse 26 – "*Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things?*" Luke doesn't say which specific Scriptures Jesus talked about, but the top of the list of speculation has to be Isaiah 53, the description of the Suffering Servant: "*He was despised and rejected by men... he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities*" (vv. 3-5). It's all very clear for those who have the ears to hear. But it's human nature to hear what you want to hear and ignore what you don't want to hear. So, "*He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*" I would love to hear or read that conversation, that must have been an amazing overview. It was the Word of God in the flesh interpreting the Word of God in writing.³

When I preach, one of the things that I aim to do is show what verse 27 says: that all of the Scriptures concern Jesus. The first thing that that means is that it's not primarily about us. Sure, it speaks to us and helps us, and we see ourselves in its pages and find good instructions for how we are to live. But it is first and foremost about God and His redemptive plan that was fulfilled in Jesus. All of the Old Testament points forward to the cross, the Gospels narrate His life, death and resurrection, and then the rest of the New Testament looks back at the cross and the empty tomb as the foundation of the church's faith. We don't read the Bible to primarily get moral instruction; we read it to see how it shows us Jesus, and then our obedience to Him is informed by what He did for us. In John 5:39-40 Jesus said, "*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.*" You can have a PhD in Bible scholarship, but if you don't know Jesus, you don't really get it. He is the key that unlocks the meaning of everything written. He is all over the pages of the Old Testament that were written before He was born because He is the second Adam, the Greater Moses, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah who sits on David's everlasting throne. He is Isaac sacrificed on an altar by His Father; He is the Lamb sacrificed whose blood protects His people in the Passover; He is the High Priest interceding for His people. It's also saying that Jesus' death and resurrection are not completely understood on their own – we must have the Scriptures to interpret them for us, to understand their spiritual meaning. You can recognize historically that a man named Jesus died on a cross @AD 30, but that doesn't mean that you understand that He died for you. You need the Bible and the Holy Spirit to tell you that.

² Dale Ralph Davis, *Luke 14-24: On the Road to Jerusalem* (Scotland: Christian Focus, 2021), p. 227.

³ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), p. 844.

Our final section reveals His true identity, as He was

III. Known in the Breaking of Bread (vv. 28-35)

²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² 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?" ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

The two travelers insisted that Jesus stay for dinner; that's one of the reasons that people lean towards this being Cleopas and his wife, because they would naturally be having dinner together. Notice that Jesus just "*acted as if he were going further*"; it's like He was pausing to give them an opportunity to practice hospitality. One of the practical things we should take from this passage (that is not the focus of the story at all) is that it is a blessing to have people into your home for a meal. Hospitality is a neglected virtue in this day and age where we love our privacy, and we all need to get home to binge our favorite shows and spend hours on social media and YouTube. Sharing our lives with one another has become all virtual – I'll share my life with you on Instagram, but I may or may not ever invite you into my actual life. Inviting people into your home, sharing a meal is a beautiful way to make them feel welcomed into your life in a way that they cannot online. And we have a chance to have deep conversations and perhaps talk of eternal things. So we should look to invite both believers and unbelievers, both friends and strangers. Hebrews 13:2 – "*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*" These two disciples were certainly unknowingly entertaining a spiritual being here.

When Jesus took the bread in verse 30, He was taking the reins, so to speak, becoming the host. He was asserting Himself where He normally would have acted more like a guest and received the bread broken by the man of the house. But this was when they recognized Him, after He broke bread and gave it to them. I'm not sure if we're supposed to connect this to Jesus breaking the bread at the Lord's Supper or when He broke the loaves and gave them to the people in the feeding of the 5,000 – the wording is very similar in each place where Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to His disciples. Do you know how you can identify people from a ways off by the way they walk? Or I can watch sports where I haven't identified the players yet, but I'll know it's Steph Curry by the way he shoots or Rafael Nadal by the way he hits the tennis ball. Here they knew it was Jesus because they'd seen Him do this very thing before.

And then He immediately vanished, apparently He had done what He came to do. What was their response? "What a crazy day, I'm exhausted, good night!" No, they said, "that was incredible," and they ran back to Jerusalem to tell the apostles what happened. There's not a whole lot of reasons that I would run seven miles after dinner, but I suppose that seeing someone who has been raised from the dead and being taught the greatest Bible Study ever would be motivating. They went back to Jerusalem completely differently than they had come – excited rather than rejected because their hope and faith had been ignited by Jesus. If they thought the apostles would be skeptical, they must have been relieved to be told, "Yeah, yeah, we know, He's risen, Simon has seen Him." He appeared to over 500 people, according to 1 Corinthians 15, before He ascended to heaven, which is next week's passage.

Conclusion

Verses 32 – *“Did not our hearts burn within us when He talked to us?”* You may read this passage and think, “Well, yeah, their hearts were burning within them because they got to be with Jesus in person. I don’t feel that much excitement about spiritual things, I rarely feel my heart burning with passion for God and church. Maybe if I could spend some time with Jesus in person, then I would have that deep excitement and joy. But that’s not going to happen.” And that’s true, you would be more spiritually fired up if you were in Jesus’ presence. But notice what Cleopas and his friend said: *“our hearts burned within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures.”* Their hearts burned because they were shown Bible truth. The events they had witnessed were connected and explained, and that lit a fire inside of them. They didn’t even know that it was Jesus yet. So I would say to you that we don’t have to have Jesus in the flesh to feel spiritually thrilled. We have to dive deep into His word, understand it better, apply it to our lives, and know that we can be with Jesus every time we pray and read His word. He promised in the last words of Matthew’s gospel that, *“behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* If you are united to Jesus by faith, He is with you; He is as close as a prayer or an open Bible.

Let’s go back to verse 21 – *“But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”* Cleopas lamented that because Jesus had been put to death, that apparently He wasn’t going to be able to redeem Israel like they had hoped. As I alluded to earlier, we read into this statement that Cleopas, like so many others in Israel at the time, had thought that Jesus was going to be a political Messiah. And when political Messiahs die, their cause dies with them. But we know, of course, that His death was what actually enabled Him to redeem Israel. Because we understand the concept of redeeming/redemption in a greater spiritual way:

Ephesians 1:7 – *“In Him (Jesus) we have **redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”*

Colossians 1:13-14 – *“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in Whom we have **redemption**, the forgiveness of sins.”*

Romans 3:24-26 – We are *“justified by His grace as a gift, through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith.”*

These two travelers found out that Jesus did indeed redeem Israel. And He redeemed the greater Israel, the church that became the true covenant community filled with those who have been forgiven because He paid the penalty of their sins on the cross.

Finally, I hope that we can see this passage, this story of two people struggling in their confusion and sadness, as a picture of how we can come alongside people and do what Jesus did for them. As we encounter people who have an incomplete picture of who Jesus is – maybe they’ve heard some things, they’ve assumed some other things, but they haven’t been able to put together all of the pieces. Perhaps as we walk with them in life, we can fill in the gaps of their understanding. We can explain the Scriptures and how they center on His death and resurrection. And perhaps, as we speak, as we bear witness to the truth, the Holy Spirit can come alongside our efforts and make their hearts burn within them so that they, too, will embrace the truth and their eyes will be open to the reality of their risen Savior. What a joy it will be to dine with them in the presence of Jesus someday. Amen.

Benediction - 1 John 5:20-21 – *“And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.”*