

Burning Hearts “Emmaus Sunday

Sermon for Easter 3

Acts 2:14a, 36-41, Psalm 116, 1 Peter 1:17-25, Luke 24:13-36

Grace, Peace, and Mercy from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

The two disciples walking to Emmaus that first Easter afternoon present a picture of lost hope. I can almost hear it as they relate to the stranger who joined them on the road to Emmaus. *We had hoped.* Broken dreams. Expectations not met. *That He was the mighty in word and deed before God and the people, 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.* We had hoped he would restore Israel’s glory. The only conclusion: It is over! An arrest, a trial, a crucifixion, and a burial. The cross ruined it all. Roman is still in charge. We are still in bondage. Two disciples grieve as those with no hope.

You have walked that road, just the two disappointed disciples that first Easter. You may be there today. Lots of questions without answers. Sadness, struggle, grief, doubt, despair...a hope that at one time burn bright as the sun has now been snuffed out. It is a hard road to walk.

You planned, dreamt of a future, mapped it out, house, home, career, travel in retirement. It never worked because of the changes and chances of life. Death of spouse, sickness, So, you walk burdened and heavily laden.

Spiritually, the fire that once burned has faded. At one time you were eager for every sermon and every Bible study, but that fire too has gone out. What Changed? Crisis in life and the church failed to respond. Doubts have crept into your life since you have heard the Gospel message. You discover the Church too is full of sinful people just like anyone in lives in this world? So, you walk away from the community of faith, from the community of disciples, just like Cleopas and the other disciples. You may insert your name as the disciple walking with Cleopas.

Jesus comes to these two disciples, as He comes to us. He keeps these two disciples from seeing Him as He is, the crucified and risen Jesus, who is victorious over sin, death, and devil. They are kept from recognizing Him. Jesus has work to do. He needs to teach them. He needs to light the fire of hope that once burned within them. That His cross was the good and gracious plan, the work of God from the very beginning. Jesus relates to them the hope that the Scriptures point to in the

fulfillment of God's good and gracious plan. I cannot imagine Jesus sharing the accounts without pointing out the promises made, and promises fulfilled all through the Scriptures. God's record in promise keeping is perfect! All these promises pointing to and bringing to fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus opens the scripture beginning with Moses, and then to the prophets. I wonder what Jesus taught these two.

+ Remember how God put Adam in a deep sleep and open His side to pull out a rib to create for Him a bride? What a scar that must have left/ Recognize anything?

+ Remember how Isaac carried the wood that he himself would sacrifice by his own Father? Sound familiar?

+ Remember how Joseph was sold into slavery to Egypt by His own brothers and then forgave them, saying 'what you meant for evil God worked it for good so that an entire family would be saved? Does that ring any bells?

+ Remember Israel sacrificed the Passover Lamb, the Lamb without blemish and its blood placed on the door frame caused death to Passover them? See any connections?

+ Remember how David prayed in his distress, "My God, My God Why has thou forsaken me, a company of evil doers encircles me, they have pierced my hands and feet, they have divided my garments, and for my clothing they cast lots? How is your heart feeling now?

+ Remember what Isaiah prophesied, "***Surely, he has borne our grief and carried our sorrows; yet we accounted Him stricken, smitten by God. But He was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and by his stripes we are healed?***"
Are your hearts really burning now?

As you can see it is all about Jesus. The entire Scripture points to Jesus. See, this was the plan. The cross and the resurrection were good things. God used this evil to work His good and gracious will.

They listened, their hearts burned, not quite get it just yet. Because when you are on the road in the middle of struggle, you might hear the words, but belief is hard to come. THINGS LOOK AND FEEL SO BAD. THE WORD OF GOD SOUNDS

SO CONTRARY TO WHAT MAKES LOGICAL SENSE AND TO THE PRESENT REALITY.

Here is what Easter teaches us. Even when all looks contrary God is just getting started. Through death God is bringing new life. It is God's go to pitch. It is the proclamation of Jesus death and resurrection in the middle of struggle, death, and sin. It helps us to rely on God's Word, and not on ourselves. We will never be able to raise ourselves for the dead. Only God can. Even in this time God is working all this out for Good.

Crosses can be good. Maybe it was not what you had expected or planned or even hoped. But they can be a part of Good's good and gracious plan. That this not only happened to bring difficulty to life, but that it might show the power of God at work in your life.

Their hearts were burning; hot enough to invite Jesus to stay with them at the house in Emmaus. They did and Jesus accepted. Then something interesting happens, Jesus the guest becomes the host. When they were at table Jesus took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. Then they recognized Him then Jesus vanished.

Was it the Lord's Supper? Probably not. But the way Luke writes it sure makes us think that way. For us who are on this Emmaus road with doubts, struggles, and disappointments we are not alone. Our Lord is with us. Even if we cannot see Him with our eyes, he comes right along with us on our side in his Word. Though we do not have the table this morning Jesus is still with us in this Word. He is with us for our good. He is with us to raise our lives from the death of doubts, fears, sorrows, and disappointments. He is with us so that we can have the new life full of hope and have the assurance that when we die here on earth life continues with God in heaven forever.

Peter writes our epistle for today; ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS....dying. Right now, spring is trying to make its way into NW Iowa. The grass is turning green, The trees are beginning to bud. Farmers are planting. Spring is here with all of its possibilities and hope. But the summer will come, with its heat, and who knows. Then there are those weeds. Does this mean that God loves us only in the spring? Heavens no. God loves us all the time. Through good times and bad. Stay with us, And He does. Even when the grass withers and the flower falls. We have The Promise. The Word of the Lord remains forever. Not only the Words we hear or read in scripture but the Word Made Flesh, Jesus our Lord, and Savior. Who

conquered death and sin and the devil. And in His resurrection, you have the hope that you will have life in heaven. This is the Word that goes with us on our journey.

And when they saw Jesus, they saw these things in a new way. Were not our hearts burning as opened to us the scriptures while we were on the road? They were so excited, filled with joy and new life and with hope that they returned to the community they had walked away from the share this Good News the others back in Jerusalem to be an encouragement to the others. Perhaps you know some on the road away from community of faith, disappointed, discouraged and in despair. May you be the one who walks alongside to bring hope and encouragement as Jesus goes with you. Perhaps they may say to you "Stay with us. And you do and Jesus too through your ministry. That they receive hope and life.

That is Jesus' specialty giving new life. He is with us to raise our lives from the death of doubts, fears, sorrows, and disappointments. He is with us so that we can have the new life full of hope and have the assurance that when we die here on earth life continues with God in heaven forever. This is the Easter hope all grounded in God's promises fulfilled in Jesus, His beloved Son.