

## Scripture That Sets the Heart Ablaze

### Luke 24:13-35

#### Introduction

When was the last time your heart was encouraged and set on fire by God's Word? Of course, we might not feel really close to God or that our hearts are on fire with spiritual excitement every single time we read the Bible. I recently read Psalm 69, and verse 19 says this.

Psalm 68:19 "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation.

The Psalmist hopes in God to bear his burdens and save him in the midst of the suffering of battle, in the face of attacks from his enemies. As I reflected on this passage, I felt a knock at the door of my heart, that when I feel burdened and am suffering, Jesus himself is my salvation. Jesus, who bore my suffering in my place and conquered death by death, will help me.

Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Today, we're going to talk about the spiritual renewal that comes when the eyes of our hearts are opened through the combination of the words of Scripture and the saving work of Christ. Today's passage is the story of two disciples who experienced spiritual renewal and the remaking of their lives through an encounter with the risen Jesus.

#### Luke 24:13-35

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." 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.

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."

This passage depicts the spiritual renewal of two disciples who had lost all hope, whose hearts were set on fire by God's Word. How can we experience this, too? First, our way of seeing ourselves and the world must be transformed into God's perspective. Let's reorient the angle from which we view our lives and the world to God's perspective.

Second, please listen, allow yourself to be instructed, accept, and trust the whole of Scripture, which points to Jesus. It is the gospel, the story of atonement through Jesus, that brings about our spiritual renewal. And third, spiritual renewal is the key to continually renewing our outlook on life, for we are constantly being tempted and misinformed about our identity and mission.

### **1. The transformation of the way we see ourselves and the world**

If you compare verses 16 and 31, the difference in the disciples is shocking. Their view of Christ, their understanding of the Bible and God's plan, and the way they saw their lives, the world, and society were changed 180 degrees.

16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

Cleopas and the other unnamed disciple (scholars interpret this to indicate they were a married couple) seem to be completely different people before and after they met the resurrected Jesus and had the Scriptures interpreted to them. After Jesus died they lost all hope, and dejected, they were headed toward Emmaus. In other words, they were skipping town.

Not only were they sad, but they were also perplexed. They didn't know what to think when the women who had gone to Jesus' tomb told them his body wasn't there and that an angel had told them he was alive.

However, when they encountered the risen Jesus, who explained about the Messiah from God's perspective from the whole of Scripture, their hearts burned hot with passion. They found hope again and immediately set off in the direction they should be going. Their lives were truly changed.

What is symbolized here is that the two disciples and Jesus have two very different views on the same event (Jesus' death and resurrection). The disciples were confused about the resurrection, they didn't know how to understand it and thought it was a load of 'nonsense' (v. 11). Their interpretation of the meaning of the events that took place was so different from Jesus' understanding that it didn't sound like the same story.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has waged war and invaded Ukraine, and is slaughtering innocent civilians. However, he is spreading propaganda in Russia that Ukraine is under a Nazi-like tyranny, and the war is a rescue mission to save Russian civilians. It is the same war, but one side interprets it as a war of aggression, while the other side sees it as a military rescue mission.

This is the story of salvation that the two disciples expected and were hoping for:

"Jesus is a powerful prophet like Moses, sent by God to perform miracles and save his people. Just like Moses saved Israel from Egypt, Jesus will deliver us from the pagan Roman Empire and reestablish God's people, Israel. He will reign as a powerful king, and launch a military campaign whose climax is approaching. However, Jesus was crucified and is dead now. I had such high hopes... so disappointing, I'm crushed. What do we do now?"

These ideas were common among Jewish people in that time. They were proud to be God's people, and were faithful to keep his law (especially regarding circumcision, Sabbath, and food regulations), and they were eager to participate in the Messiah's uprising. At the climax, God would reign as king of the whole world, reveal his glory, and bring about true peace and prosperity. This was the salvation story from a human perspective.

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?"

However, Jesus' perspective was completely different. He spoke and acted from God's perspective revealed in the Scriptures. When Jesus said 'Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, rest and learn from me' he meant this. Put aside the burden of pride in being God's people, the burden of keeping God's law (especially circumcision, the Sabbath, and food regulations), and the burden of revolting against the Romans. Instead, believe in me and follow me in light of the story of God's gospel as told through all of the Scriptures.

We also need God's perspective that is revealed by Jesus. We need to see things through God's eyes. Examine yourselves and see how you line up with the gospel story as told through the whole Bible. Adjust your perspective on life and the world in light of God's perspective, plan, and revelation.

Often, we project our own views onto the Bible and conveniently design our own self-affirmation and self-fulfillment. Or, we blend in with society's opinions and values, trying to construct our lives around having a successful career, making a lot of money, or gaining a good reputation. If that's the case, we'll certainly be disappointed. God's perspective, his plan, and his plan for salvation are different from our perspective, plans, and expectations.

## **2. The gospel of Christ as revealed by the whole of Scripture**

So how did Jesus interpret things concerning himself in all the Scriptures? Many things could be said, but let's just focus on one. The two disciples' eyes were obstructed, but then their eyes were opened. Actually, Genesis 3 is being referenced here, another story where two peoples' eyes were opened, although in a bad sense. The author, Luke, is encouraging us to study the story of the road to Emmaus by comparing it with the episode in Genesis 3.

According to Genesis, the two humans created by God were entrusted with making the world (the garden) full of God's love and glory, using their abilities and living out their identity as God's image. However, the wife and her husband sinned by eating from the tree forbidden by God, and Genesis says, "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." Plagued by sin and shame, they blamed each other causing conflict and strife, and in the end, they were exiled from the wonderful garden where they had dwelled together with God.

Through the drama of the story on the road to Emmaus, Luke is showing us how the story of Adam and Eve has been reversed, healed, and renewed by Jesus' death and resurrection. The two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Cleopas and his wife, see John 19:25) were in a state of hopelessness and discouragement, lost in sorrow and sin, just like the previous couple who had been banished from the garden.

However, as they heard the Scriptures interpreted by Jesus, they learned anew how God's story of salvation had been fulfilled in Jerusalem over the course of history. And when they arrived at their destination and shared a meal with Jesus, "Their eyes were opened" and they knew it was Jesus. Through suffering and death, there is forgiveness, life, and salvation!

So what does this mean? It is the end of our exile, which has been our condition since Adam and Eve! Our guilt and sadness, the thorns and thistles, our slavery to sin is over. Sin and death were nailed to the cross, and in Jesus' resurrection we receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. We have been freed from exile, brought into the fellowship of God, and been remade to have joy in our identity as children of God and to praise him.

Do you ever think how nice it would be if Jesus appeared and spoke to you like he did to these two disciples? Look closely at today's passage. In the eyes of the two disciples, the person who walked along the road to Emmaus and interpreted the Scriptures to them was no more than a stranger. We as readers know that the man is the resurrected Jesus, but they did not.

Do you see? That is precisely how it is today, Jesus is communicating the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures, he is teaching us the story of salvation from God's perspective. He sets our hearts ablaze and leads us into spiritual renewal. Much like a stranger to two disciples on the road, Jesus may speak to you through a pastor, an elder, a friend, literally someone you don't know, a member of your community group, a brother or sister you pray or read the Bible with, or maybe even through an enemy.

Just as Jesus once quietly drew near to the two disciples, so he still walks with you through the journey of life. And he will fulfill the story of redemption promised in the Bible in your life, too.

He is walking with you, at your workplace, in your office, in the midst of your business. When you're at school or having fun with your friends, at home or in the kitchen, Jesus is there with you, working in your life from God's perspective.

"Christ is the head of the house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation."

So I recommend again, discuss the Bible together, learn about Jesus as he is portrayed in the whole of Scripture. Join a weekly community group. A community that studies the Bible is the secret to walking with the risen Jesus. The resurrected Jesus, speaking through the words of Scripture, will open the eyes of your heart to the truth.

### **3. A new identity and mission**

One Bible scholar notes that it was at the meal scene that the eyes of the two disciples were opened and they came to believe in the resurrected Jesus.

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.

This scene of the meal on the road to Emmaus is the eighth meal in the Gospel of Luke. The preceding seventh meal, the Last Supper, symbolized Jesus' death and resurrection. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus finished God's plan for salvation.

Of course, a week is seven days long. In Genesis, the creation of the world took place in six days, and on the seventh day, God blessed his finished creation. What we can see from this is that, in the resurrection of Jesus, the first 'week' of creation has ended, and new creation has begun! Easter, which is what the eighth meal points to, is the beginning of new creation, the new humanity, the new Kingdom of God.

However, it's easy for us to forget this truth. We tend to continue on living in the old order, in our lostness and captivity to sin. This is because we are surrounded and influenced by the old creation's values and way of life. Just as we see in the gospels, the disciples and many others were taught by Jesus and saw his wonderful work, but they didn't understand it. And we are the same way.

Similarly, the climax of Jesus' life, his death and resurrection, was the fulfillment of God's plan, and yet not a single person realized that it meant deliverance from slavery to sin, eternal blessing, and the start of new creation. Therefore, we need to hear over and over again explanations of the gospel, the things that all of the Scriptures teach us concerning Jesus. We must come to the table with Jesus. In order to live in the new creation.

Jesus has prepared an eighth meal for us as well, the interpretation of Scripture and the Lord's Supper that take place in our worship service. The two disciples did not understand when Jesus interpreted the Scriptures to them along the way, but they clearly understood when Jesus broke bread and gave it to them as they shared a meal. When they returned to Jerusalem and heard that Peter had encountered the risen Jesus, they excitedly told him that they had recognized Jesus at the moment he broke bread.

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.

Therefore, because of the salvation that Jesus accomplished for us, in order to resist the values of this world and live out the new mission of God's Kingdom, our church service (God's Word and the sacraments) is essential. You can see why the Christian church emphasizes this gathering as a top priority.

We re-examine our perspective on ourselves and the world in light of God's Word. We experience the reality of salvation and the power of the gospel working in us through the breaking of bread. We repent of how wrong we have been in our thinking, of how selfish and self-centered we have been. We change our trajectory by focusing the eyes of our heart on the story of God's redemption.

Let us re-examine our lives from God's perspective. Let's listen to the gospel story spoken of in the whole Scripture. What we really need is not wisdom or advice, but it is the message of the cross and the resurrection that saves us. Turn to God during this service

this morning. With thankfulness and joy for the salvation that has already been accomplished for us, let's share this good news.