

Read Luke 24:13-35.

Fire can be a dangerous thing. It destroyed Jeannette Atkinson's house from Trinity on Easter Sunday. Fire can also be a wonderful thing. It heats many homes with woodburning furnaces. Today we want to look at the positive side of fire. A fire that can burn within you. A burning passion for life. But so often it seems like we are just going through the motions. We lack purpose. We lack passion. We lack burning hearts. We are not alone. Most people have to deal with hearts that are breaking instead of hearts that are burning. Most people have too many hurts in their own lives to seriously invest in others. What we need is God's fire in our lives, giving us purpose and direction. How do we get heartburn – that is, hearts burning with passion and purpose? Our passage today gives us the answer to fuel a fire in our lives, to move us from breaking hearts to burning hearts.

Two disciples are walking back from Jerusalem to their home in Emmaus. As they walk, the Scriptures say that they talk about everything that had happened the past few days. It's not hard to imagine their words. Why did the people turn against him? He could have come down from the cross. Why didn't he? He just let Pilate push him around. What do we do now?..

When Jesus approached the disciples on the way to Emmaus and asked them what they were talking about, today's text says, "They stood still, their faces downcast." They didn't have to say anything. You could tell just by looking at them - with their faces buried at the ground - that something was wrong. It was like the day after a funeral. Before the funeral the days are filled with formal activities and rituals. But when all the official ceremonies are over and you're alone in your home again that's when it really hits you. These disciples were deeply disturbed, and Jesus knew why. They were experiencing heartbreak. The reason he asked them a question, was because He wanted to change their countenance, liven up their lives. As we study this conversation, we'll get to see how Jesus takes us from Heartbreak to Heartburn.

Isn't it true that when life gets tough and we face discouragements, we all have an Emmaus that we like to go to? Where is your Emmaus? Maybe it's the mall where the noise of commerce and the rush of people keep you from thinking about life. Maybe it's a bar where the booze and the beer nuts help numb you to the more bitter truths that swirl outside the windows of that darkened, smoky room. Maybe it's a matinee at the movies where you go to take in what Hollywood proudly touts as "escapist fare." Maybe it's the TV remote that takes you away from it all as you mindlessly channel surf every single evening. We try to escape our troubles, but those troubles end up being like the sky above: they extend over everything and we finally know there *is* no escape. But these strategies of ours, are only temporary diversions, because the discouragements remain, and no solution is in site.

But guess what. When you and I are struggling and trying to make sense out of our lives, Jesus Christ is walking right there beside us. When we wrestle with our disappointments and our frustrated expectations, Jesus Christ is right there with us! Isaiah 57:15 says "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite." Even though God lives way up there in heaven, He is willing to show up down here and walk alongside ordinary people like us.

But the irony of this story is that even though WE realize that Jesus is right there with the disciples, THEY don't realize that Jesus is right there! They think they're talking

with some ordinary Jewish guy! They have no idea what's going on! Verse 16 says that "they were kept from recognizing Him." God was not allowing them to see the risen Christ. Now maybe you're thinking, "Why would God deliberately keep these people in the dark? Doesn't the Bible say in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God wants ALL men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth? Doesn't God want everyone to see who Jesus is for themselves?"

The answer is that Jesus plans on revealing His identity to the disciples through the preaching of the Scriptures and the breaking of the bread. In verses 25-27, Jesus breaks open the WORD of God so that the disciples can see who He is. And in verses 28-32, he breaks open the BREAD of God so that the disciples can see who he is. My friends, God does not want our religion to be based solely on an emotional experience with the Savior. God wants our faith to be rooted in a proper understanding of the word of God.

These men had an improper understanding of the Word of God. They had wanted Jesus to redeem Israel from the clutches of the Roman empire. They had wanted Jesus to conquer the enemy and set up a kingdom of righteousness that would last forever and ever. But their faith died with Christ on the cross. Because they could not see how God could accomplish His purposes through a crucified Messiah. Some of you can relate to how these men were feeling. You had high hopes that God was going to come through in your life. You were expecting God to answer your prayer in the exact way you wanted Him to answer it! You were expecting a miracle!

But God didn't do what you expected Him to do. Now you're walking down the path of life feeling disappointed and discouraged. You're wondering if God loves you. You're questioning whether or not God cares about you. Sometimes you get so frustrated, you wonder if there IS a God!" But even though God doesn't always do what you want, that doesn't mean that He has stopped caring. It just means that His plan for your life might be different than what you thought it was going to be. For example, even if you didn't get the job you were hoping to get, it doesn't mean that God doesn't love you. It probably means that God has something way better for you than what YOU were thinking! God is preventing you from getting what you want so that He can give you what you need!

These disciples were all upset because Jesus wasn't the warrior Messiah they were hoping for. Instead, they were getting a BETTER Messiah than what they were hoping for! Instead of getting a Messiah that would redeem them from their slavery to the Romans, they were getting a Messiah that would redeem them from their slavery to sin! They were getting a Messiah who would be with them always, even to the end of the age.

And in verses 25-27, Jesus is saying that 'if you guys really paid attention to the Old Testament, you wouldn't have lost faith in Me to begin with!' He says "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" And beginning with Moses and the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning Himself." I'm thinking that Jesus took them through the book of Leviticus. And he explained how the Old Testament sacrifices pointed ahead to the day when the Ultimate Sacrifice would appear on the scene and give His life on the cross as a ransom for many.

And I'm guessing that Jesus took them to the ancient prophecy of Psalm 22:16, where it says 'a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my

feet.” And I believe that Jesus also took them to Isaiah 53:5, which says that the servant of the Lord would be wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds, we are healed.” And I am convinced that Jesus would have taken them to the great prophecy of the resurrection in Psalm 16:10 which says “You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”

The point is that if you want to have a close encounter with Jesus Christ, you have to have a close encounter with the WORD of Christ. This is where we experience the power of God! This is where we encounter the grace of God! And this is where we first learn about the love of God. For the last few hours, The Emmaus disciples have been listening to one of the greatest explanations of Holy Scripture that has ever been given. They’re so excited by what they’ve been learning that when it’s time for Jesus to leave, they say, “No! Don’t leave! We want more! You’ve been feeding us the word of God for the last few hours. Now let us have the privilege of feeding you. Come over to our place.”

Their heartbreak had been turned into heartburn! So Jesus goes with them. When they sit down at the table, Jesus took bread. He gave thanks, he broke the bread, and he gave it to the disciples. And that’s when the lights go on! And they say “Ohhhhhhh!!!!”

And then He disappears. You know why? Because Luke is trying to tell us that it is more important to see Christ in the scripture and in the sacrament than it is to see Him in the flesh. It is more important to see Christ with the eyes of your faith than it is to see Him with the eyes of your head. And then the disciples say, “Wow! No wonder our hearts were burning within us. We were having Bible study with Jesus!”

The cure for heartbreak is the story of God. He started with Moses and finished with himself. Why? I think I know why.

We need to hear that God is still in control of this universe. We need to hear that it’s not over until he says so. We need to hear that life’s mishaps and tragedies are not a reason to bail out. They are simply a reason to sit tight. A man named Corrie ten Boom used to say, “When the train goes through a tunnel and the world gets dark, do you jump out? Of course not. You sit tight and trust the engineer to get you through. Why did Jesus tell the story? So we’d know the engineer still controls the train.

The way to deal with discouragement. Go back to the story. Read it again and again. Read the story and remember, their story is yours. The challenge of life too great? Read the story. That’s you crossing the Red Sea with Moses. Too many worries? Read the story. That’s you receiving heavenly food with the Israelites. Your wounds too deep? Read the story. That’s you Joseph, forgiving your brothers for betraying you. Your enemies too mighty? Read the story. That’s you with the 300 marching with Gideon against the Midianites into a battle already won. Your disappointments too heavy? Read the story of the Emmaus bound disciples. The Savior they thought was dead now walked beside them. He entered into their home and sat at their table. They remarked that “it felt like a fire burning within us when Jesus talked to us.

Next time you’re disappointed, don’t panic. Don’t jump out. Don’t give up. Just be patient and let God remind you he’s still in control. Jesus is alive and well. With Him by our side, we travel from heartache to heartburn. Amen...