

Scripture: Luke 24:32-35

Message: Burning Hearts - Go and Tell!

April 1, 2018; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON

Easter

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I love this story. There's such an amazing contrast from the beginning to the end.

This story begins with two dejected, disappointed, discouraged people walking home. They're probably dragging their feet. Hopes were dashed. A promising future shattered into tiny bits, with no possibility of putting it back together.

Maybe they didn't want to leave their friends in Jerusalem, but, hey, life goes on. They had to get back to their day to day life. But the joy and purpose and hope had been sucked out of everything. It's a chore to put one foot in front of the other.

By the end of the story, they are bouncing and chattering and talking over top of each other. In their excitement, they can't get back to their friends fast enough. They can't get their words out quick enough to tell their story. They are bubbling over with joy and laughter.

What happened in between the beginning and the end?

They met the living Lord! They realized the truth and reality of resurrection. They met Jesus, who had died and who was alive again.

It wasn't just at the table, when he broke the bread. That was just the tipping point of their realization.

It started already while they were walking. "Were not our hearts burning within us?" Listening to this stranger on the road, they heard him as someone who knew his Bible, and could teach it and apply it to their despair. It was as he was opening the Scriptures when they were walking together that their hearts began to burn. With breathtaking sweep and precision, this anonymous fellow traveller re-tells God's Grand Story from Moses through the prophets. It is Israel's story, all right, but the stranger tells it in a quite new way. The last time they'd heard anyone talk about God and God's Story in such an invigorating a fashion was...well, never mind.

We may have our own "if only" moments. If only things were different. If only God had answered that prayer. If only God would reveal himself to me somehow. If only I didn't have so many doubts.

We have our times of slogging through life, when it's hard to put one foot in front of the other. It might be clinical depression or painful memories of abuse. It might be physical pain

for which there is no cure. It might be sadness about children or grandchildren. It might be thoughts about bad decisions and their consequences. It might be the delay of Spring and cloudy skies and the forecast of snow flurries on Easter.

We have our times of discouragement, disappointment. We have to keep going, because life goes on. If only Jesus would show himself. 'We thought maybe Jesus would....'

The living Lord Jesus invites us, reminds us, to listen to his voice as he speaks to us from his Word. "Beginning with Moses and the prophets, he explained what was said concerning himself." "Were our hearts not burning...as he opened the Scriptures to us?"

Whenever you open your Bible, pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to you. He is there. He is with us. He reveals himself in his Word. Dare to read the Scriptures and meet Jesus there. Allow the fire of the Holy Spirit to burn with the realization that Jesus is present. He is real. He is alive. His truth is revealed to us in his Word.

As we pray for the Spirit to speak clearly to us, we must also be willing to listen. Sometimes that may mean changing the way we think or do or see things. Cleopas and his friend were convinced that Jesus was dead and gone. But the words of Scripture found open hearts. They came to see the truth and the truth was a living Lord.

That Lord still lives today. Sometimes that's hard to believe. So many things point against that idea. There is so much that is negative around us. There is so much that is going wrong. Where is our living Lord?

Turn to the pages of Scripture and you will find him. Open your hearts to listen and you will hear him speaking. He's there. He's been there all the time, through all time. God's Grand Story points to Jesus all along the way, also today. With eyes of faith opened by the Holy Spirit, you will see him as he walks with you and talks with you along life's narrow way.

Then we read, "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem."

The trip from Jerusalem to Emmaus was about 11 kilometres which, according to Google Maps, is about the distance from this church to my house in Maitland. Also according to Google Maps, that should take about 2 hours to walk.

It's very likely that it took more than 2 hours for Cleopas and his friend to get home. Walking goes slower when you are discouraged. But I'm sure it took much less time for them to get back to Jerusalem.

They were excited! They had some amazing news to share! It couldn't wait. They

couldn't hold it in.

When they get back to Jerusalem, the other disciples and friends were already talking excitedly about another appearance of Jesus; he appeared to Simon. They are eager to hear what the two men from Emmaus have to say. The group is no longer sad and mourning. Now they rejoice. "It is true! The Lord has risen!"

Once we've encountered the living Christ nothing is the same again. If Jesus is alive everything the gospel says is true. If Jesus is alive then death is defeated. If Jesus is alive then heaven is more than wishful thinking. If Jesus is alive then our sins are all forgiven. If Jesus is alive then all his promises are true – if we come to him we have rest and hope and joy and peace. If Jesus is alive then we'll never be all alone again. If Jesus is alive life has a purpose. If Jesus is alive we have a story to tell.

It changed their message. No longer did they moan about his death and wonder 'if only' or 'we had thought.' They proclaimed that he was alive! It was all part of God's Grand Story. It all fit together. It all pointed to Jesus, who died and who lives again!

Consider this simple, yet profound, truth that comes to us on this Easter Sunday morning: In the reading of Scripture and the breaking of bread, Jesus reveals himself. He is here, with us, always. Jesus will continue to be revealed.

May our reaction to the living Lord be one of praise as we enjoy his living presence. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy gave us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3).

He lives! Life is worth the living. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. All things work together for good to them that love God. We too can live in joy today. We know we will live in joy for eternity.

We serve a risen Saviour! We know he's living, no matter what others say. We know he lives, because he lives within our heart.

Go and tell!

Amen.