

“Let them burn!” Luke 24:13-35

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

And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

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

Grace, mercy and peace to God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

What does the Lord reveal to us with this well-known account from Luke? Let me suggest that He reveals something unpleasantly **sobering**, something helpfully **clarifying** and something truly **heart-warming**. Something **sobering** about us. Something **clarifying** about the Scriptures, and something **heart-warming** about Jesus.

Let’s see, first, **something sobering about us**. Of course, our fallen and foolish nature is on display again. Those men on the road of Emmaus, they just illustrate how we operate. What do I mean? We want to make sense of things on our own. Yes, we do! When we understand something, we feel like we are in control; we have mastered it.

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We want to be in control, and we may get agitated, upset and even angry if we can't make sense of something. That's what was going on. The two were walking and discussing what had happened in those days. They were shocked when Jesus joined them and wasn't fully informed about the mystery unfolding among them. **"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"**

"What things? What are you talking about?" So, they laid it out. Things about Jesus from Nazareth. Mighty in word and deed. Thousands witnessed His miracles and healings and manifestations of such extraordinary power which caused them fear and tremble in His presence. "Who is this?!"

Many hoped that this Jesus would bring Israel freedom. That He was the long-awaited Savior, the Messiah. But then He got arrested. And then He was crucified. Dead and buried. So many eyewitnesses saw it. But then... His body disappeared from the tomb.

From a heavily guarded tomb. No one could find it. No one could explain where it had gone. Then some women claimed to have seen visions of angels who declared that Jesus was alive. Some even claimed they had seen Jesus alive. What is going on?!

It is not easy to make sense of such events. This event could be properly called the number One mystery in the history of humanity. It is not easy, or rather we should say that it is impossible to make sense of God's activities among us on our own. We still have the same problem today. The mystery of Easter morning hasn't gone away.

Still today every next generation learns about what happened and often tries to make sense on their own, to figure it out, to explain it away, to grasp it with our "mightily enlightened reason" so that we could feel in control. But it isn't working. We can't resolve that Easter mystery on our own. Facts, testimonies, evidence of what happened don't coexist well with our reason. We are faced with a mystery we can't solve.

Do you recognize yourself in those agitated disciples? Even we Christians too often look at the mysteries of God and want to grasp them with our feeble minds. "How can this be? How can that be?" And we may get upset realizing that we are not in control. This is a sobering illustration of our fallen human state. So limited, on the one hand, and so unwilling to listen to the Triune God, on the other. But our Lord Jesus is so kind.

He joins the conversation: **"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.**

As Jesus enters the conversation, He brings clarity. Clarity and understanding. It was true back then, on the road to Emmaus, and it is true now. **"O foolish ones!"** That's us, on our own, when it comes to trying to comprehend God's mysteries.

"And slow of heart to believe...". That's also us, so slow to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures, the only voice that would bring us not only clarity, but also so much wisdom, comfort, joy and hope and more.

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“What all the prophets have spoken.” Hear this again! **“All the prophets!”** This almost feels like a rebuke, as an accusation. All the prophets have spoken about this, and you still don't get it! And we still don't get it?!

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Genesis 3, the offspring of a woman will crush the serpent. I told you! Genesis 12, 15, 17, 22, 25, 28, 35, 49. In Abraham's offspring all the families and nations of the earth will be blessed. I told you!

Leviticus 16, the forgiveness of all sins. Deuteronomy 18, a prophet like Moses. 2 Samuel 7, David's Son who will reign forever. I told you! Isaiah 53, Suffering Servant who takes our place. Daniel 7, someone like a Son of Man receiving kingdom, power and glory forever. I told you! Micah 5, born in Bethlehem. Zachariah, riding on a donkey and crucified. Psalms, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and more. I told you! I told you! I told you!

Not that numbers would matter in this case, but there are more than 300 references in the Old Testament pointing to Jesus. All the Scriptures testify about Him. But... that is also important to understand how they testify about Jesus, we struggle with that as well. We want the Scripture to tell us what our reason finds more acceptable.

But Jesus steps in and He brings laser sharp clarity about how to read and understand all those many prophecies and testimonies about Him: **“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”**

The entire Scripture bears witness about Jesus. About a certain kind of God. God who is the Creator of everything. God who before the foundation of the world knew that the human race will be tempted and will fall away from Him.

God who Himself before the foundation of the world became that Lamb who takes away our sins, so that in Him we can be found holy and blameless. It was necessary for Christ to suffer. So serious is the sinful corruption of humanity and this creation.

It was necessary for God's own Son to do that, for we were dead in our sins, unaware of our condition and utterly incapable to do anything about it. This was God's plan from eternity. It was necessary to fulfil all of that so that He could save us and show us the depth of His incomprehensible love by sacrificing Himself so that we, all who trust in Him and want to be with Him, could live with Him forever. It was necessary.

This is the message of the Scriptures. God crucified. For us. For you. It is so contra-intuitive. We can't get it unless Jesus Himself with the assistance of the Holy Spirit helps us to connect the dots. And as He speaks to us, as He opens the Scripture for us, the scales from our eyes that prevented us from seeing clearly are taken away.

Once Jesus helps us to realize that since the beginning God has spoken to us, revealing His gracious and loving heart, our hearts begin to burn too. From the pages of Scriptures, which otherwise may seem so strange and distant, emerges this beautiful picture of loving and gracious God, who came in our flesh as He had promised.

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What all the prophets were telling us in one voice, this one Person helps to make sense of everything. Jesus from Nazareth. Your God, who is always calling you, caring for you, looking for ways to bless you. Let His words make your heart burn too.

But then, **there is also something heart-warming**, something almost magical in this account. The Book of Exodus, chapter 29 speaks about how God Yahweh gives instructions about daily worship to His chosen people. After He had freed them.

He says something intriguing: ***“I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. They shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.”***

God freed His people from slavery so that He could dwell among them as their God and so that they could know Him as their God. Isn't this surprising? Wouldn't God's people know Him as their God because He brought them out of Egypt with mighty signs and miracles? Wasn't that how they would know Him? Obviously not. Instead...

They would know, they would truly know Him as their God in their worship, in their holy meals, as He comes to dwell with them as gracious God, sharing His holiness, revealing to them His Fatherly heart as God of grace and forgiveness. Not mighty signs and miracles, but holy meals in God's presence. That's how they would know Him.

Now, back to Emmaus, remember what happened? ***“When [Jesus] was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.”***

This is our wonderful heart-warming Christian reality. We truly know our Triune God in the breaking of the bread, or as we call it, in the Lord's Supper. This is where we truly know Him as He is. As God gracious and merciful and slow to anger.

As God who always comes looking for us. As God who wants to dwell among us and wants you to know Him as your God. As your God who gave up His life to rescue you from death and evil forces, and to grant you life and freedom under His wings.

This is where we know our Lord Jesus Christ, in the bread and wine, in His body and in His holy and precious blood that He shed for the forgiveness of our sins. In His Supper, where He now gives us true life, eternal life. This is where He reveals who He truly is. Your God. Invisible, but present. God mysterious and so close to us.

The One whose actions we cannot understand on our own, yet who kindly comes and helps us to connect all the dots. Hidden in the pages of Scriptures yet revealed in Jesus from Nazareth. Not accessible by human efforts, yet fully present and known in His Meal.

Your God! May His words that He speaks to you today make your hearts burn with the same passion as it was for those two disciples. May His words purify you from all doubt and disbelief and bring wonderful clarity, may in the breaking of the bread you know truly what kind of God you have, and may you be able to recognize without a shade of doubt that He is your God. For He is. Jesus from Nazareth.

To Him be all glory! Amen.

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