

## FBC Service Sunday April 27 2025 Luke 24:13-35 Hearts Ablaze: A Transformation Story

**Intro:** From time to time we sing a worship song here at First Baptist that goes like this:

‘Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus,

To reach out and touch him and say that we love him.

Open our ears Lord, and help us to listen.

Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus’.

This song expresses the longing of our hearts as we read the stories of Jesus’ appearances to his disciples after his resurrection, and **maybe when we read these stories, we say to ourselves, “I wish I’d been there.**

I wish he would appear to me too. Then I’d believe in him, and I’d never doubt again”.

Let me remind you of a detail that we often forget. When the risen Jesus stood before His disciples, they failed to see their Saviour, the one triumphant over death, was unrecognized in their midst.

When Mary Magdalene met the risen Jesus beside the empty tomb, she *‘saw him standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus.’* (John 20:14); *“they have taken away my Lord and I don’t know where they’ve laid him.”* She didn’t recognize him until he spoke her name, **“Mary.”**

Later in John 21, after the disciples had been fishing on the lake all night long, we read *that ‘Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus’* (John 21:4).

We might think it was because the light wasn’t very good, but a little later, when they were sitting and eating breakfast with Jesus, John adds, *‘Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?”’* (21:12) – **a very strange thing to say if it was absolutely clear who he was.**

We get the same thing in our Scripture reading for today, the story of two disciples walking on the road home to Emmaus.

*‘While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him’* (Luke 24:15-16).

It wasn’t until he was sharing a meal with them later that evening, and he *‘took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them’, that ‘their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.*

*They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”’* (24:30-32).

Luke isn’t just telling us about something that happened on the day of Jesus’ resurrection; he’s using the story to instruct us about how we can meet Jesus today.

We need to have the Holy Spirit **‘open our eyes’** so we can recognize his presence in the scriptures.

Let’s turn our hearts and minds to this moving moment in the aftermath of the resurrection.

It's a story that speaks to our own seasons of doubt, disappointment, and the unexpected ways Christ reveals Himself, igniting within us a fervent faith.

**Imagine the scene:** Two disciples, whose names we know partially as Cleopas and his companion, are walking a dusty road to a village called Emmaus, some seven miles from Jerusalem. Their steps are heavy, their faces downcast.

Just days before their world had been shattered. The one they had pinned all their hopes on, the man they believed would redeem Israel, was crucified on a Cross, dead and buried.

The seismic events of the past few days – the arrest, trial, execution, and now the perplexing reports of an empty tomb and angelic visions – had left them confused, perhaps even disillusioned.

As they walked, their conversation is consumed by these events, a sombre rehashing of dashed hopes and unanswered questions.

**The longest walk you'll ever take is the walk away from the grave of someone you deeply love.** For those who have done this, you know how difficult it is.

- To walk away and feel as if the world has come to an end.
- To walk away and think about what used to be and what might have been.
- To walk away and realize, “my life will never be the same again.”
- To play over and over in your mind the good times, the laughter, the memories.
- To reach out and touch a face and find it gone forever.
- To cry until you can't cry anymore.
- To watch them bury your dreams and hopes and all that was good about life.
- To know it's over, done, finished, the end, and there's nothing you can do about it.**

This was the thoughts of the two disciples about Jesus as they walked home to Emmaus.

They were followers of the man called Jesus, the teacher and miracle worker who claimed to have been sent by God. For a long time they had followed him. As much as anyone could, they truly believed.

They walk along the dusty road, leaving Jerusalem far behind, mulling over the terrible events of Friday.

They recalled there was one thing the Romans knew how to do well. **They were good at killing people.** Experts at crucifixion, one of the most horrific ways to kill a man.

How had it come to this? If Jesus was truly the Son of God, how could this have happened?

Although they'd heard rumours that the tomb of Jesus had been found empty early that morning, they could not and would not and did not believe any wild stories about a resurrection.

It's Sunday. Jesus is dead. And they're going home.

As they walked and reminisced, they must have talked about the time the man on the pallet was lowered through the roof to Jesus.

Surely they talked about the time when Jesus took five barley loaves and two fish and fed 5000 men.

They probably wondered how Jesus could raise Lazarus and then be killed himself a week later.

Like anyone who's lost a loved one, they tried to make sense out of the tragedy. Those who have seen a dream crushed, and the death of a great hope, can enter fully into this story.

If you've ever walked away from a funeral so deeply moved that you couldn't speak, you know what it was like for these two disciples.

Down the Emmaus road they walked, deep in their sorrow and despair. Suddenly a stranger joins them and walks with them. **When he leaves them, they're changed forever.**

What's happened? Something had changed inside them. They now have burning hearts. When you hear the question, '**How do believers get burning hearts,**' then you have to look at this incident?" It's the recipe for making cold hearts warm.

First, their hearts are burdened.

Then their hearts are burning.

Then their hearts are bursting.

What a transformation!

**Such is the power of the risen Christ!** Here's a message of hope for all who are confused and uncertain.

It's also a message for those who feel abandoned by the Lord. Because he rose from the dead, we now have the certainty Jesus is with us always, everywhere, at all times, in every situation.

Verse 16 says that *"their eyes were kept from recognizing him."*

**Why didn't they know it was Jesus?** After all, they were his disciples. Some say they didn't expect him, so they didn't recognize him.

Others say that it happened at sunset, so they were confused by the fading light. But our text gives us a different answer. **It was a supernatural veiling of their eyesight**, so they saw a man but didn't know it was Jesus.

There's even a touch of humour in that Jesus is with them and they think he's dead.

As they walked with the stranger, they said, "He used to do this," and "You should have been there," and "He could walk on water," and "He was so kind," and "We never met anyone like him," and, finally, "I can't believe he's gone."

On and on they walk, the two men talking, the stranger listening intently. Finally, he breaks in and asks, **“What are you talking about?”**

The question perplexes them, because to their knowledge, everyone in Jerusalem knew about the crucifixion of Jesus.

**“Are you the only one who hasn’t heard they ask?”** So they tell the story to this inquisitive stranger, their words a combination of love and grief, pride and sorrow, belief and doubt.

“He was such a good man.”

“He healed the sick.”

“He raised the dead.”

“We know he was a prophet.”

“He ran into trouble with the chief priests.”

“We heard he was betrayed.”

“They beat him until he couldn’t stand.”

“They put a crown of thorns on his head.”

“Then they laughed at him.”

**Everything they said was in the past tense, which is how we normally speak of the dead.**

They clung to every cherished memory, but they couldn’t square the events of the past 48 hours with their faith that he was the Son of God.

They were disappointed disciples who felt their faith slipping away with every step on the road to Emmaus. They’d heard the rumours of an empty tomb, but what did that mean? No one had seen Jesus yet, or so they assumed.

**There comes a time in life when you have to face the facts and deal with reality.** These men had believed in Jesus, and yet he was gone. Jesus was nowhere to be found.

**This is what Good Friday looks like without Easter Sunday.**

Without the resurrection, the cross is nothing but a tragedy, a drama that ends before the final act.

**As the two disciples pour out their confusion and despair, Jesus listens patiently.**

When they’re finished telling of their broken dreams and dashed hopes, he begins to speak. He calls them foolish, which simply means they were slow to apply the truth they already knew.

And he says they are *“slow of heart”* to believe what the prophets had said. He rebukes them for one thing and only one thing—**for failing to understand and apply the Scriptures.**

He doesn't upbraid them for leaving Jerusalem and walking back home. He doesn't criticize their doubt nor condemn their confusion.

All of that was perfectly understandable given the circumstances, and the fragmentary information they had received. **But he tells them they should've known and believed what God had said.**

**That leads to what we might call the ultimate Bible conference.**

**Imagine that moment!** Walking with the resurrected Lord, hearing Him unlock the mysteries of the Scriptures, revealing how the entire Old Testament pointed to His suffering and His glory.

He didn't offer easy answers or dismiss their pain. **He went to the root of their misunderstanding** – a failure to grasp God's redemptive plan as revealed in His Word.

As He expounded the Scriptures, something began to stir within them.

He tells them plainly that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and die on the cross.

What seemed like the ultimate miscarriage of justice turns out to be the Father's plan to glorify His Son. Christ was no victim being led against his will to the cross.

No one took his life.

He laid it down.

**The cross was not an accident.**

And as the afternoon of the first Easter Sunday wore on, the two disciples listened with rapt attention as the third man, the stranger they didn't recognize, explained how the Scriptures all pointed to Christ.

We mustn't make the same mistake these two disciples made, or else we too will be foolish and slow of heart to believe. **The Old Testament is full of Christ.**

**He's the true theme of the Old Testament - by type, teaching, sacrifice and prophecy.**

He's the prophet greater than Moses.

He's the priest greater than Aaron.

He's the king greater than David.

He's the captain greater than Joshua. **There's much much more!**

He's the seed of the woman, the fulfillment of the brass serpent in Numbers 21, the goal of all the sacrifices, and the true meaning of the tabernacle. He's the Kinsman Redeemer, the Scapegoat in Leviticus 16, and the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.

He's the great high priest who lives forever to intercede for us. He's the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

**If you want to find Jesus, just open your Bible because the whole book is about him.** The whole purpose of the Bible is to point us to him. **He's the theme from Genesis to Revelation.**

I find great encouragement from this story. He's with us even when we're slow to believe.

Verses 28-32 paint a touching picture of Jesus eating supper with Cleopas and the other disciple. **Remember, they still don't know who he is.** They think they've stumbled upon a stranger who knows everything there is to know about the Bible. They have no idea it's Jesus.

There's one little phrase in verse 28 we shouldn't overlook. Jesus *"acted as if he were going farther."*

Was Jesus planning on leaving them alone on the road of doubt? **No**, but he makes them think he's going to leave them behind, so that they will invite him to stay.

Then, at the table, the moment of revelation arrived. *"When he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them."*

In this familiar action, the action that mirrored His last meal with His disciples, their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. **And as suddenly as He appeared, He vanished from their sight.**

The immediate aftermath of this recognition is profound. 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?"*

**"Burning hearts." What a powerful image!** It speaks of a deep, internal warmth, a stirring of the spirit, a rekindling of hope and faith. It wasn't a physical fire, but an emotional and spiritual blaze ignited by the presence of Christ and the illumination of His Word.

**Their burning hearts were a testament to the transformative power of encountering the risen Lord.**

May our hearts also burn with the truth of His resurrection and His love for us, as we walk with Him, listen to His Word, and recognize Him in our midst.

**Our Lord sometimes seems to leave us so that we'll ask him to stay.** He seems to leave us behind so we'll seek him all the more.

Those days when we feel alone and confused are part of God's plan to wean us away from the things of the world, and bring us to a place where we say, **"O Lord, it's you and you alone that I seek."**

Jesus comes in when he's invited.

He eats with them.

He disappears, but not until his disciples recognize him.

Just because you don't see Jesus doesn't mean he isn't there.

Just because you can't feel him doesn't mean he's left you.

Just because you think you're alone doesn't mean he's no longer by your side.

Once you know that Jesus is alive, you've certainty in your heart and it will start to burn.

He's with us even though he seems to leave us. **This is the profound insight of our text.**

**Because Jesus is alive, he's with us even when we don't know it.** He's with us when we think we're walking alone through the dark valleys of life. And even when we've given up all hope, we discover that he was with us when we needed him most.

When you come to the conviction that Jesus is alive, everything changes!

That's why the two disciples couldn't wait to get back to Jerusalem. Even though it was late in the evening, they had to go back and tell the others what they had seen and heard. **Once you encounter Christ, nothing will ever be the same again.**

If Jesus is alive, there's no time to waste.

If Jesus is alive, everything we believe is true.

If Jesus is alive, then death has been defeated.

If Jesus is alive, then heaven is more than a dream.

If Jesus is alive, then our sins are really forgiven.

If Jesus is alive, then all his promises are true.

If Jesus is alive, then we can never truly be alone again.

**There are two men alone in their despair. Jesus comes and gives them hope.**

Then he leaves but the men are changed forever.

He's with us always ...

Even though we don't recognize him.

Even though we can't find him.

Even though we're slow to believe.

Even though he seems to leave us.

**All of this is true because Christ is risen from the dead!**

**He's gone from our sight that he may be seen by our faith.**

We're on the long Emmaus Road journey together. There are times when we feel alone and overwhelmed and doubts creep in, and our heart gives way and we feel like we can't go on.

Then Jesus comes to us and says, "You're not alone."

You never were alone. Even when you thought you were alone, I was with you every step of the way.”

May we be the people of burning hearts this morning, filled with fervour and enthusiasm and hope?

**A bright light shines from the garden tomb. The tomb is empty.**

**And glory to God - He's alive!**

In our own lives, we may find ourselves on an "Emmaus road" – a path of uncertainty, disappointment, or questioning. We may struggle to reconcile our experiences with our faith. We may feel like our hopes have been crucified. **But the story of the Emmaus disciples offers us hope.**

Christ is still walking with us, even when we don't recognize Him. He is present in His Word, ready to open our understanding and set our hearts ablaze.

Let us, like the disciples, be open to the presence of Christ in the unexpected places of our lives. Let us immerse ourselves in the Scriptures, allowing them to reveal Christ to us and ignite our hearts.