

**LUKE 24:13-35**  
*HEARTS FOR EASTER*

(Luke 24) The gospel of Luke could be entitled "the amazing words and deeds of Jesus." It is certainly biographical in nature but unlike any biography ever written. I am quite fond of reading biographies except that they always end the same way, right? The hero dies. Now, some biographies will have one final chapter after the death of the subject but that chapter usually consists of reflections by the author and others on the significance of the life. In no case, do we read of anyone, including Elvis, actually accomplishing something or doing something after their death - except for this story of Jesus. For Him there were some doings to be done after His death. In fact, Jesus is still doing things today isn't He? Why just this morning Jesus worked to get you here to church. And that wasn't so easy for some of you was it? You may have thought it was your imploring wife or your conscience still playing tapes of your mother, that brought you here today but I'm convinced it was Jesus and He did it because you need to hear all about Luke 24 and the walk to Emmaus. **Luke 24:13-35**

*And behold, two of them (that is two followers of Jesus) were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him 17 and He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" 19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. 21 "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 "But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also 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 exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." 25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. 28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was*

*explaining the Scriptures to us?" 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.*

Now all of this happened, I remind you, on Easter, on the day of our Lord's resurrection. So, I want to ask you a question about Easter. It is a fill in the blank and there is no wrong answer. Just give me the first word that comes to your mind *Easter* \_\_\_ *blank*. I gave you a space there on your outline to write in your response. What word do you tend to put right after Easter. What are some of your answers?....Now I want to do our little word game again except this time I won't let you give me any old answer. This time you have to fill in the blank with a noun that describes an emotion or disposition. You got that? Here goes *Easter* \_\_ .What did you get? Easter joy, Easter hope, Easter love. When I preached on Easter in Romania years ago, everyone was saying, "pache" which means "peace" – Easter peace. Those are all words that make sense when combined with the Easter story, don't they? But in our story in Luke 24 we read about two Christians who are experiencing Easter dejection. Let's take a look at it. As we find in verse 13, these two who were not part of the 12 but likely part of the larger following of Jesus, were on their way to Emmaus, a small village seven miles from Jerusalem. One we know from verse 18 was named Cleopas; the other we don't know. Some have conjectured that it may be the wife of Cleopas. Some think it may have been Luke Himself who was along on this walk since Luke alone records this story and we are given such detail about what happened. But, as I say, that is conjecture. We do know from the story that, as they walked, they were discussing all that had taken place concerning Jesus in that great week. And while they were talking about it, Jesus joined them along the road, and how did they react? Did they fall down before Him in joyful worship? Did they shout and dance and sing? You know they did none of those things for the simple reason that they did not recognize Jesus. 16 *their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him*. What was the problem here? A week before Jesus had the most familiar face in the world to these disciples but something has changed. Was the change in Jesus or in the disciples? Or both? It seems clear enough that there was a change in the disciples. According to verse 16 it was their eyes that were the problem. The Lord had a purpose in temporarily blinding their eyes to whom He was. When His purpose was fulfilled 31 *Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight*. Apparently His post-resurrection body looked enough like his earthly body that when the blinders were removed they knew it was Jesus. But that is not to say the body of Jesus had not changed. Something was

obviously different. Jesus, in his resurrection body, is able to appear here and vanish from there in abnormal ways that we never encounter before His death. So, yes Jesus had changed, but that does not explain the inability of the disciples to recognize Him. Jesus had some things to impress upon these disciples for which he needed to remain incognito.

17 *And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad.* I want to build our study of this story today around the hearts of our two disciples. We read that these two had sad hearts, and then that they had slow hearts, and then that they had burning hearts. That's where we are going with it, and first you'll notice that our two friends had sad hearts. When Jesus simply asked them what they were talking about they stopped their walking and looked sad. I guess they looked so sad that they had to stop in order to look that way. And then, Cleopas explained to Jesus what had been going on, that there was this mighty prophet named Jesus, and that the rulers of the Jews had him crucified. 21a *But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.* That is the expression of their misery! These, I'm sure were words spoken with deep feeling! These are things that pained their souls. These are words of deep disappointment. 21a *But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.* Disappointment - that is what they were feeling. And you know what that's like don't you? We experience disappointments every day. Some are big, some are little. What these disciples were experiencing on this first Easter was a disappointment of colossal proportions. They were dealing with the death of all their hopes and dreams and prayers. I once heard a story of how a man was attending a pro baseball game, and was so despondent, not over the game, but over other things, that he walked thru the hallways of the great stadium and decided to just leap off the wall to his death, but as he was approaching the fence he looked out and saw a church off in the distance with its beautiful cross, and as he gazed upon the cross his heart was again filled with hope and he decided that life was worth living after all. But think about that. If you were to suggest to a first century Jew that a cross would become a symbol of hope, he would think we had a very peculiar society. You see, a cross was a symbol of horrible death. Before Christ, it was no more a symbol of hope than a swastika is to us. But now the cross speaks of hope to millions. You see crosses on churches and hospitals and cemeteries. It is for us a sign of hope but to these two disciples at this point the cross was the symbol of despair. The cross of Jesus meant the end of all hope. The cross destroyed their Lord and with him all their dreams. So they had hearts that were sad, very sad. Can

you feel the awful sadness of these men as they said 21a *we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.*

We will talk in a few minutes about how Jesus deals with their sadness of heart. I think you'll find it very interesting but first we need to see something distinctive about the sadness of our two friends. What day was it on which they were sad? You say, well, it was Sunday. Yes, but what particular Sunday was it? It was Easter! These were Christians dejected on Easter! Do you see the incongruity of that? They were not sad because of what had happened on this day; they were sad in spite of what had happened; they were sad because they did not know what had happened. What I'm trying to show you is that their disappointment, as bitter as it was, was grounded in ignorance. And how often that is the case for many of us, and many in our world. If we only knew the realities of the gospel; if we only knew the promises of Scripture we could not possibly remain miserable. But we often are miserable because we are ignorant of these things. Because they don't know the truth many people think that life is meaningless and hopeless; and they look at death with terror. A lot of people who regard themselves as Christians are disappointed with Jesus much like these disciples were, and for much the same reason. They simply do not understand who He is. They think that Jesus is some kind of cosmic Santa Claus who brings us goodies and makes life always sweet and happy. I read again this week of how Ted Turner dropped his faith in Christ because he prayed for a sick sister who died in spite of his prayers. And so Turner concluded that Jesus must not be real. He was disappointed with Jesus because he didn't understand what he was all about. These disciples in our story thought Jesus came to deal with the problem of Rome, Turner thought he was supposed to deal with the problem of sickness, but the real Jesus says He came to deal with the problem of sin. So, the root of disappointment is very often ignorance about the ways and words of God.

Or, for some of you, it is not ignorance so much as forgetfulness. You have been taught the way of God in truth but you forgot it under pressure. You know what that's like don't you? You find yourself all in a tizzy over something until someone simply reminds you that your Shepherd is in control. You knew, but you forgot. These disciples were in that camp too. Jesus had told them He would have to die. He told them several times but when their hearts were in desperate need of that truth they forgot it. At times like that what do we need? We need a friend to come along and remind us don't we? So Jesus came along to do just that. He came to heal their disappointment by teaching them the word of God in truth.

So, Jesus discovered the disciples having sad hearts; but he also discerned that they had another heart condition that really was causing their problems. In 22-24 the two men told Jesus of the missing body and the report of the women which seemed to only confuse them rather than encourage them. And then our Lord speaks 25-27 *And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.* Boy, Jesus really blew it there didn't He? I mean, this is the very thing I've been warned time and again not to do. When somebody is depressed and downcast you don't go up and start preaching to them. I see here that isn't always so. Not every counseling situation calls for the same tactic; and sometimes it is appropriate and necessary to do what Jesus does. Sometimes what people need is not sympathy but a good swift kick in the rear. Sometimes they need to be jolted out of their stupor. Sometimes they need a friend or even a stranger to preach to them. Jesus even calls them names. He says, *you dimwits. Foolish men.* And what is their second condition of heart? Jesus says they were slow of heart. What does that mean? Years ago our church took out a life insurance policy on me and the insurance company sent this fellow to my office who gave me some medical tests. He tested me for AIDS. It was a rather strange experience. He had this cloth-like card with seven circles in it, and you have to fill up those seven circles with your blood. The way this guy did it was to prick my finger and then milk the blood from my finger into these circles and it took him about 15 minutes of squeezing and pulling on this finger to get the blood out. The guy was apologetic about it but he kept telling me that I was a slow bleeder. He also took my pulse and he did this a couple of times and as he did it he gave me this strange look like something was wrong. And when he was finished he said I had the slowest heart rate he had ever tested. It was something like 56 beats per minute. So, I have this problem too. I am slow of heart. But, of course, that isn't what Jesus has in mind. He's not talking about the old ticker but about the center of our personality. The heart here would really refer to the totality of your thought and disposition. And what it means to be slow of heart is that they were slow to respond to spiritual stimuli. The problem with these men was not that they had not been exposed to the truth. They had studied the Scriptures. They had heard Jesus teach. They had heard the testimony of the women. They should have caught on by now but they were slow of heart. As I listen to Christians share their testimonies of how they came to faith in Christ I'm impressed that so many were under the teaching of the truth for many years before it ever sunk

in. They heard it but they didn't catch on. They weren't hard of heart but they were slow. It is a pervasive spiritual disease that is spread by the devil and picked up in the world and it makes us spiritually dull. It is this slowness or dullness that makes it so hard to read the Bible while it is so easy to read a novel. It makes it so hard to pray while it is so easy to do a puzzle. We just aren't spiritually sharp. We don't respond to spiritual stimulation like a healthy person would. I like the hymn that says: *"I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies, no sudden rending of the veil of clay, no angel visitant, no opening skies, but take the dimness of my soul away."* These two disciples were dull and slow. They had been given every reason to believe in resurrection but they simply couldn't. They, like the other disciples, were grand skeptics were they not? They had heard Jesus predict it would happen exactly as it did but that didn't sink in. They had read the Scriptures which told of the need for a suffering Messiah but that hadn't sunk in. They had listened to the women tell of their encounter with the angel but that didn't affect them either. They were ready to believe anything other than the resurrection. They admitted that things were strange but boy they hadn't figured out what to think of it all. They looked about them for another explanation. Even when Jesus approached them they were trying to figure it all out in some way that they could understand, in some way that didn't involve anything as miraculous as a resurrection. I remember one time watching a magic show on TV that was performed at Ford's Theatre in Washington D.C. This magician asked for gold rings from 3 people in the front row. Then he took those rings stirred them around in a glass and pulled them out all interlocked together. He showed them as proof to the people in the first row. Bill Clinton was sitting right there and he let President Clinton verify for the whole nation, so there would be no doubt that these were the same rings. Then he put the rings back in the glass, stirred again and took them out separated again. My son, who was quite young at the time, looks at me and says, "How did he do that?" "Well, I said..." I tried to think of some way and I couldn't. I wondered, "Should I tell him it was a miracle?" We look for any other explanation. That is what the disciples were doing. So, Jesus rebukes them. He says they were too slow to believe all that the Scriptures said. Oh, they bought into some of what the prophets said about the Messiah. They liked the stuff about the coming king and how he would set Israel free. That they picked up on quickly; but the less attractive truths about a suffering servant who would be rejected by men and killed - those lines of the prophetic word they had ignored. They were not alone in that. The entire Jewish culture it seems had developed a view of the Messiah that left out the part about his suffering. Jesus begins to correct that when He says 26 *Was it not necessary for the Christ to*

*suffer these things and to enter into His glory?* When He says that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer I think He mainly has in mind that it was necessary in the sense that the Scriptures foretold it. It was scripturally necessary, and if this chapter of the Bible makes one thing clear it is that God's word about His Christ had to be fulfilled. Luke 24:44 *Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.* And here again you get the same point, that the Old Testament spoke frequently about Jesus, and it spoke of Him in every part. So too we see in 27 *Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.* What an incredible lesson that must have been! I would gladly trade my three years of seminary just to have a tape of this one sermon in which Jesus taught on Christ in the Old Testament with a special emphasis on the necessity of His suffering. Jesus must have spoken of the sacrificial system and how the Messiah would fulfill that. No doubt they looked at the Psalms and how they gave so much information about the crucifixion events; and they surely learned of Isaiah 53, the plainest of all the Old Testament words on the death of the coming King. Like you and I they should have understood these things already but they were slow of heart and so Jesus kindly repeated these things for the slow.

So, we have seen these men as the sad of heart and the slow of heart but our passage describes them in one more way - they became men who had a burning heart. After Jesus had quickly allowed them to see who He was 32 *They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"* "Were not our hearts burning?" they said. Do you know what that is like? All of us know what it is like to have a sad heart. To some extent we also are all slow of heart, but do you know what it is to have a burning heart? The results of such a heart are clear enough. For one, their burning hearts led them to want more teaching. Rather than dismiss the stranger when they arrived at their destination they urged Him to stay with them. They were not bored by His instruction; they wanted more. And that is a sign of a heart that is set on fire by God. There is the desire for more instruction in the things of Christ. Where there is revival among a people it is always accompanied by a strange attraction to the teaching of God's word. Men and women who before had sat bored stiff find themselves unable to get enough preaching. You aren't often like that, are you? Our normal condition is to be clock watchers, eagerly awaiting the end of the lecture - but when your heart is ablaze you invite the teacher home for more. That's what the Emmaus disciples did. They longed for more teaching; they

were excited about what they were hearing. And once they had seen the fulfillment of the prophecy in the person of Jesus they returned to Jerusalem eager, and bubbling over to share what they had learned. Burning hearts produce open lips. They had just walked seven miles, but we read how they turned back around right away and returned to Jerusalem, and I'll bet you they made the return trip in half the time. They went back not with a weary heart and winded lungs but with an internal fire that gave wings to their feet. And how did this wonderful condition of a burning heart come to be? What produced this within them? Believe it or not, the burning heart was the result of a sermon. Really. It was a walking sermon. It was a warm sermon to go. As they traveled they listened. And Jesus met their disappointment with Biblical teaching about Himself and their hearts began to burn as they listened to this empowered, anointed, Spirit-blessed, Bible-based instruction. How I pray that this would happen here. How I pray that hearts would burn in this assembly as the word is opened. But that doesn't always happen when you hear a sermon does it? I know of no laws that explain how it happens. The Spirit of God who turns slow hearts into burning hearts, blows wherever He wishes. You can't and I can't control it, but I pray this is part of your experience. Some of you have come to this church, and you didn't really expect anything when you came, but as you sat here your heart was strangely warmed and you don't really know why. Here we are talking about the Bible and you don't know much about that. But there is something about the teaching that has struck a cord deep within you. I believe you may be experiencing the same thing these men were. God is touching your heart. You can't explain what happens inside a person by appealing to a well-crafted sermon. Oh no. John Wesley had heard plenty of great sermons before. But on the evening of May 24, 1738 Wesley went very unwillingly to a little religious meeting in Aldersgate Street in London where he found a man reading, not preaching, but reading Martin Luther's preface to his commentary on Romans. Wesley was at this point a man despairing over the condition of his own soul. He had been a missionary to America but had come home disappointed. But on this night, in that little chapel, Wesley says that "at about a quarter to nine I felt my heart strangely warmed" And like our friends in Emmaus he was never the same. I have a biography of Wesley accurately entitled "The Burning Heart." He was a man aflame with love for God but was it Luther's preface that set his heart to burning? Oh no. And that's not a sermon that is touching you either, that is Jesus. That is Jesus. And the greatest mistake you can make is to tune Him out. Don't send Him away. Do what these men did - invite Him home. Urge Him to stay with you and to teach you more and to open your eyes. When you do that He will give you more than you ever dreamed

He would. These two travelers had hoped to learn more about the Scriptures from this intriguing stranger, but what they got was greater still. They got a look at the risen Jesus. Their eyes were opened and their hearts were thrilled. Their slowness of heart was overcome, their sadness of heart was cast away and their hope was restored and confirmed. Don't think it can't happen for you. There is hope for sad hearts because Jesus Christ is alive and on the loose. Don't you miss Him!