

INTRODUCTION

How's your heart today? I'm not talking about the organ in your chest that pumps blood to your body. I'm talking about the control center of your life. The word "heart" is found 158 times in the New Testament and it's always referring to your emotional and spiritual control center. In fact, next Sunday I'll be back in the Gospel of John and we'll read where Jesus said: "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God believe also in me." I'm going to speak on God's Cure for a Troubled Heart.

But on this Easter morning I want us to go to Luke 24 and read what happened on the first Easter. We'll meet some people outside walking, and others who are on lockdown due to fear. In other words, pretty much like today. Some of the people in our story had broken hearts, confused hearts, and fearful hearts—again just like to today. So if you are going through any of those emotions, this is a message of hope for you. And mainly we're going to see how Jesus filled their hearts with HOPE. And He can do that for you today as well.

I'm dividing the scripture up into three parts so keep your Bible or device handy. We'll start in Luke 24:13:

Now that same day two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. Together they were discussing everything that had taken place. And while they were discussing and arguing, Jesus himself came near and began to walk along with them. But they were prevented from recognizing him. Then he asked them, "What is this dispute that you're having with each other as you are walking?" And they stopped walking and looked discouraged.

The one named Cleopas answered him, "Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked them.

So they said to him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet powerful in action and speech before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him. But we were hoping that he was the one who was about to redeem Israel. Besides all this, it's the third day since these things happened.

Moreover, some women from our group astounded us. They arrived early at the tomb, and when they didn't find his body, they came and reported that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they didn't see him."

So let me ask you three questions about your heart this morning:

1. Has your heart been BROKEN? Jesus will WALK with you.

Cleopas and his companion were so discouraged you can almost hear them dragging their feet as they shuffled along in sadness. Then a stranger slipped up to walk with them—but they didn't recognize he was Jesus. It's easy to detect the despair in their comments. They spoke about Jesus in the past tense: "He was a prophet. He was handed over. He was crucified. We had hoped he would be the one." Their dreams were shattered and their hopes cruelly crushed.

Sometimes your heart is broken because your hopes and dreams didn't work. Have you ever said or thought, "I had HOPED...and you fill in the blank." We all have. I had hoped we would be worshipping together by Easter. Maybe you experienced the death of a spouse one, and had thought, "I had hoped to grow old together." Or maybe you're a student and you've thought, "I had hoped my parents wouldn't split up."

When you suffer from a broken heart and a lack of hope there is someone who wants to walk with you. His name is Jesus. He doesn't offer you a religion—He offers you something much more valuable. Jesus offers you a relationship with Him. He wants to walk with you and talk with you.

Do you know why God created mankind? He wanted to have some people with whom He could relate—somebody He could talk to and walk with. In Genesis we read after God created man and woman, He walked with them in the garden of Eden in the cool of the evening. He wanted to have a fellowship with them. After they disobeyed God's orders, their sin ruined that fellowship.

Jesus came to die on the cross to restore that fellowship with God. One of our old hymns expresses this idea of being able to walk with God. The title of it is "In the Garden." One verse says, "He speaks, and the sound of his name; is so sweet the birds hush their singing. And the melody that he brings to me, within my heart is ringing. And he walks with me and he talks with me; and he tells me I am his own; and the joy we share as we tarry there; none other has ever known." The most exciting truth in the universe is there is a living God who loves you and you can know Him personally—you can walk with Him. It's possible to have a relationship with Him.

So if you're struggling with a broken heart, Jesus wants to walk with you and give you hope.

Now, let's read Luke 24:25: He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Wasn't it necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.

They came near the village where they were going, and he gave the impression that he was going farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, because it's almost evening, and now the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

2. Is your heart CONFUSED? Jesus will teach you His TRUTH.

The two disciples were confused. They had hoped that Jesus would be the redeemer, but instead He had been crucified. They thought the crucifixion meant Jesus was a failure. They assumed the cross was a huge mistake, but Jesus showed them it was God's heavenly mission.

What these two considered to a tragedy Jesus reminded them it was God's triumph. The Messiah had to suffer and die.

Every year at Passover, lambs were sacrificed to commemorate when God delivered the Israelites from slavery. But each Passover lamb had to be spotless, meaning no blemishes. And each year they told the story of how the blood of the Passover lamb applied to their doorways had prevented death from entering their homes.

In the same way, on this Passover, Jesus was a spotless lamb of God who was slain for us. His character was spotless because the Bible says that He was tempted as we are, yet He was without sin. And His blood was shed to shelter us from God's judgment. Huge spikes were driven into his hands and feet. A wicked crown of thorns was placed on His sacred head. For six hours He was lifted up between heaven and earth to give His life as our substitute for sin. That's why John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and cried, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29)

In the cross we see the very best of God and we see the very worst of mankind. Dr. Ralph Earle wrote: "The cross was the world's darkest hour because human hatred came to its fiercest focus. It was the brightest hour because divine love came to its fullest flower. At the cross, all the sins of the ages were placed on the heart of the sinless Son of God, as He became the substitute for sinful humanity. This is the gospel, the greatest good news the world has ever heard."

The reason I need Jesus to be my substitute is because I'm not a spotless lamb. My life is filled with blemishes and mistakes. But Jesus died as our sinless sacrifice.

As they continued to walk toward Emmaus, Jesus taught them a Bible lesson about the Messiah. He started with Genesis and went all the way through Malachi. He explained to them the hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah that He had fulfilled.

During this pandemic there are many people who are confused and looking for answers. And many of them are going to the Bible for answers. Did you know that Bible sales have skyrocketed over the past six weeks? Alabaster Company is a faith-based start-up in California that markets individual books of the Bible. Instead of a thick black book, each book has tasteful artwork and pleasant colors and fonts. Their target audience are Millennials or what they call the Instagram generation. They reported that Bible sales this past month are up 143% from a year ago.

But even if you have a Bible, if you are new to the Bible it can be confusing and mystifying. Most Bible newbies pick it up and start trying to read it from page 1 and they arrive in the book of Numbers with the endless genealogies—and it reads like a Hebrew telephone directory with hard-to-pronounce names and they give up. The key to understanding all the Bible is to what

Jesus taught those two disciples on the first Easter afternoon. Here's the key: All the Bible points to Jesus.

The Old Testament says, "Someone is coming." The Gospels say, "Someone has Come." And the epistles and Revelation say, "Someone is coming again!" And that Someone is Jesus.

These are confusing times, so I encourage you to go to the Word of God and let Jesus teach you. And if you don't know where to start, let me suggest you start with the Gospel According to Mark. It's the most concise story about Jesus. You can read the entire book in about 90 minutes, less time than it takes to watch a movie. If you open a Bible and open your heart, God will speak to you. Are you listening?

Some people are struggling with broken hearts or confused hearts. Let's look at another heart problem in Luke 24:30-39: It was as he reclined at the table with them that he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight. They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?" That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.

These two were looking for the other disciples. I want to insert one verse from John 20 that lets us know the disciples were afraid. When it was evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. (John 20:19)

Now let's go back to Luke 24. They found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, who said, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then they began to describe what had happened on the road and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

As they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst. He said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. "Why are you troubled?" he asked them. "And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have."

Here's my last question for you.

3. Is your heart FEARFUL? Jesus will give you peace.

Picture the eleven disciples and a few friends huddling in fear. Then there's a knock at the door and the two disciples from Emmaus rush into the room and said, "Jesus is alive! We've seen him." Simon said, "Yes, I saw Him as well." And then as they are telling the story suddenly, with no knock on the door they notice another person has appeared instantly. Just as he disappeared from Emmaus, poof, He appeared in the upper room.

That's when they were really frightened. They thought He was a ghost. I can imagine some of the people in the room were looking for a window to jump out. But Jesus said, "Peace to you." And then He said, "I'm not ghost. Here, touch me, a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones—and look I'm really here." His words reassured them and gave them peace. And today Jesus wants to give you an inner peace as well.

These are days filled with fear. We all know what fear feels like. The dictionary definition of fear is: "A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by perceived presence of imminent danger." The coronavirus isn't the only thing that's highly contagious. Fear is contagious also.

When a person faces fear, it triggers a fight or flee reaction. And most of us find that it's easier to flee than to fight. But there's another option besides fight or flee: There's faith. Not just faith alone, but faith in God.

I once read an Old West story about a tribe of Native Americans with a unique custom for a boy's transition to manhood. In his thirteenth year the boy was taken deep in the forest and told to remain there all night with only a spear. The story was about one particular boy who spent the night in fear. It was a cloudy night, so there's wasn't any moonlight.

Every time a twig snapped; he visualized a wild animal ready to pounce. When he heard a distant howl, he imagined a wolf leaping out of the darkness. He spent a terrifying night on the edge of panic, but he didn't leave. After what seemed like an eternity, the first rays of sunlight began to lighten the eastern sky. Looking around, he could see the trees and the outline of a path. Then, to his utter astonishment, he beheld the figure of a man standing beside a tree just a few yards away, armed with a longbow and arrows. It was the boy's father. He had been there all night long. If the young brave had known his father was there, he could have slept in peace instead of being terrified at every sound.

And that's why you can replace your fear with faith. Because God has promised to be with you. You can sleep peacefully because He who watches over Israel neither slumbers or sleeps.

Maybe you tuned in today wanted to hear a word from God just for you. Pay close attention because here's God's word for you: In Isaiah 41:8 God says, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand."

So how's your heart? Is it broken? Jesus will walk with you. Is it confused? Jesus will teach you. Is it fearful? Jesus will give you peace.

There's another heart condition that I want to mention. I call this the Take away truth: Jesus can give you a heart BURNING with excitement! He can give you a heart that is brimming over with hope. Do you remember what the two disciples said in verse 32? They said to each other, "Weren't our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?" That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem.

There is a physical discomfort we call heartburn, and you can take Tums or Rolaids for that. But there is a spiritual heart burn that is a wonderful experience. The two disciples were so fired up they got up and returned to Jerusalem—seven miles. It's uphill in that direction, but I can imagine they literally ran. What had been a road of despair was now a road of rejoicing. When they found the eleven disciples, they couldn't keep silent. "It's true! We've seen the Lord! He is ALIVE!" And there was celebration on the first Easter evening—and we've been celebrating ever since! Their hearts were on fire. The spark from one heart ignited the hearts of others. For the past 2,000 years, the good news has been spreading like wildfire all across this planet. Is your heart burning with excitement about the risen Lord? Would say, "Lord, set my heart on fire for you?" That's a prayer God would love to answer.

Notice that when they arrived at their house with Jesus, they invited Him in for dinner. He didn't force His way into their home, or demand He be fed—Jesus is a gentleman. Jesus entered the home as the guest, but then we see He is the one breaking the bread; that was the task of the host. He wants you to invite Him into your life and home as well. But He wants to be more than just an occasional guest in your life. He wants to be your Lord.

As Jesus was breaking the bread, the two disciples' eyes were opened and they suddenly recognized Jesus. In 1601 the great Italian master, Caravaggio, painted the Supper of Emmaus. He has captured the moment in which the two disciples recognize Jesus. As a servant looks on

the man to the right has his hands outstretched in surprise. The other man is leaning forward as if he's about to jump to his feet.

Their eyes could have been supernaturally opened, or they might have seen the nail prints in Jesus' hands. In his work, Caravaggio hides the nail prints in the shadow, but many other artists who painted the same scene clearly display the wounds in Jesus' hands.



Supper at Emmaus
Caravaggio
Oil on Canvas, c. 1601

It's possible for you to spend much of your life without really seeing Jesus, and then in an instant of divine revelation, you see Him! I don't mean with these eyes—you see Him with your eyes of faith. How do you know if you've seen Him? Like these two, your heart will be burning to tell people that Jesus is alive.

CONCLUSION

How's your heart? Jesus wants to give you a burning heart full of hope. And it is the reality of the resurrection that gives us hope. Because of Easter we celebrate Christmas. Had there been no Easter resurrection, we would never celebrate Christmas. But when Jesus walked out that tomb He set our hearts on fire with hope.

As I've said many times my acrostic for hope is Having Only Positive Expectations. Hope is not blind optimism and it's not bland pessimism. An optimist sees the glass half full and the pessimist sees the glass half empty, but a person full of hope sees the glass held in the hand of God. You don't have to worry about what your future holds as long as you know the One who holds your future.

Of course the best thing that Jesus ever said about our hearts is that God wants to make your heart His home. In John 14 Jesus told the disciples that He was going back to Heaven, but He would be sending the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "I have been WITH you; but He will be IN you." And one of the greatest mysteries that God has revealed to us according to Colossians 1:27 it is "Christ IN you the HOPE of glory."

On this most unusual historic Easter Sunday, church buildings are empty, but that's okay because our hearts are full. And I'll leave you with this personal testimony: I serve a risen Savior! He's in the world today! I know He is living, whatever men may say. I see His hand of mercy; I hear His voice of cheer; and just the time I need Him, He's always near. He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today! He walks with me; He talks with me; along life's narrow way! He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart. You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart! And He can live in your heart, too!

OUTLINE

1. Has your heart been broken? Jesus will walk with you.
2. Is your heart confused? Jesus will teach you His truth.
3. Is your heart fearful? Jesus will give you peace.

FEAR: A feeling of agitation and anxiety caused by perceived presence of imminent danger

“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.” *Isaiah 41:10 CSB*

TAKE AWAY TRUTH

Jesus can give you a heart BURNING with excitement!

They said to each other, “Weren’t our hearts burning within us while he was talking with us on the road and explaining the Scriptures to us?” That very hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem. *Luke 24:32-33 CSB*

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For the Joy...
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