

Burning for Him

Luke 24: 13-35

April 22/23, 2023

Goal: That the listeners may believe that Jesus opens our eyes to see Him clearly, by means of His Word, the Sacrament of Communion, and calling us by name in baptism.

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ Amen.

Welcome brothers and sisters in Christ to the continuing epic of the accounting of our Lord's resurrection. Welcome to yet another day where we have yet another eyewitness account of Jesus Risen from the dead.

Welcome brothers and sister to the communion and fellowship of God who not only came to Cleopas and opened his eyes but also comes to us and opens our eyes again and again.

Well, it happened again, I was out and about in my daily affairs as your pastor and it has become painfully obvious to me that I can no longer enter any quadrant of this town and honestly expect to be in a place where I am not recognized.

I don't mean this in a bragging way, I just mean, lots of people know who I am, and generally I will see at least one of them, every day.

In other words, there is no anonymity where my life is concerned. I may be shopping at Bealls, I could be driving down 441, I may even be walking downtown, and even down at Disney.

Somehow the Lord has made it obvious to me that you can go no-where without someone recognizing and calling out, hey pastor. This is no big deal and doesn't bother me. I generally am not doing anything stupid or embarrassing even though just being myself can be embarrassing enough.

I am just continually reminded then when I am out, I need to conduct myself in a way that is consistent with my calling.

The latest example of this, although there are many, is when I was working out at Planet Fitness after just week of starting out there. I am doing my thing and a very nice young lady smiled and waved at me.

My initial reaction was, "Hmm, was she waving at me or someone behind me? She does look familiar, but I just can't place her." I politely smiled back and then eventually I put two and two together and remembered she was a parent of one of our students that doesn't go to

church here or drops her child off in car line. I know most all of those parents really well, and the students Grandparents always handle that duty.

But as soon as I figured it all out, I enthusiastically returned her smile and waved energetically acknowledging a member of our deep and wide Faith Family whenever I see her now.

Initially, I thought I was subtle and unnoticeable at the gym but it turned into yet another reminder that you are always where you might be known, but may not recognize those who know you right away.

Today, we have yet another account where Cleopas does not recognize Jesus even though he is joined with him on a long walking journey. Even though Jesus is talking face to face with him for some time. In fact, he doesn't recognize Jesus at all until Jesus breaks bread before him at supper.

Now don't get me wrong, Cleopas obviously had other things on his mind along with the other disciple.

After all they had been trying to understand the meaning of Jesus death for them. As they talked to Jesus on the road, they simply regarded Jesus as a great prophet, able to do amazing things, eloquent in his speech and exhortations.

They even knew that his Body was missing from the Tomb by the accounts of the women and men who had witnessed this very fact. But they never dreamed that Jesus was raised from the dead.

How foolish the minds often are when believing the inconceivable is required, and only faith can get us that far. Jesus frustrated by their lack of faith painstakingly pointed out all that the prophets had said and showed them how Jesus was the fulfillment of all those things.

I must tell you: That few hours with Jesus would have been every pastor's dream. To have the Lord himself give a Bible Study on the meaning of prophecies concerning him. How incredible that time must have been, what words of wisdom and clarity that Cleopas and the other disciple must have beheld, what a joy to be there at that moment, and yet they still did not even see who was in their midst.

Then comes one of the most mysterious and powerful moments of the resurrection that still vibrates in the church today. Jesus stayed with them on into the evening and as he broke bread their eyes were opened and they saw for the first time that it was Jesus before them, risen from the dead, and then even more so he disappears.

What a peculiar way to express the essence of who he was, Jesus in their actual presence with the breaking of the bread, while this is not a full sacrament per say, it is Christ coming to His disciples in the very breaking of the bread, the most intimate of meals, he is present in encouragement and revealed by His power through faith.

The disciples are left non-plussed, “were our hearts not burning in his presence?”, as if they should have discerned this loved one among them.

No, they shouldn’t and couldn’t have discerned, this only comes by that intimate calling of Jesus himself.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. Should it be burning in us? I say it should. God has revealed himself to us in His Son.

For those of you that were baptized He did call you by name into his marvelous light. For those of you that commune this day feasting on the very foretaste of the feast to come, holding our Lord who first broke that bread with Cleopas our hearts are burning. Burning off the passion of sinful desire that ravages our hearts. Consuming our selfish fixation with making sure we are taken care of before we bring our offerings to the Lord. White-hot ambers being held close to our heart by Satan who seeks to lead us away from the knowledge that Jesus is the only way, the only truth, and the only life for salvation of the world.

Come to this altar today and your sins will be burned away. They cannot survive in the flames of Christ’s presence, they will be consumed and eradicated forever.

Brothers and sisters, He is the fulfillment of all the prophecies that came to us in the days of old. He comes to call you home. He is the Savior from sin and the world. He is the great I am that will one day take us all home.

You are now on fire for Christ, you have now become the light of the world that will show His light to all that have not had their sins burned away with fire.

Be people of the light that cannot save themselves but rather are saved by Him who rose from the dead and continues to dwell with us till the day that see him again in the flesh. Are Our hearts are burning? Yes, burning for Him.

Amen.

*Rev. Marc A. Kappel, M.Div.
Senior Pastor
Faith Lutheran Church
Eustis FL*