

Were Not Our Hearts Burning?
Luke 24:13-35
April 30, 2017

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Today's text tells the story of two men on a seven-mile walk home from Jerusalem to Emmaus. As these men walked, they discussed the news of the day. And the news of the day wasn't just the run-of-the-mill news. It was news of a most ominous and terrible nature. These men were mulling over the facts and the scenes surrounding the death of Jesus.

I wonder if any of their conversation was directed at the subject of 'what do we do now.' I suppose there might have been some talk in that direction. After all, these men are described as two of Jesus' disciples. They might very well have followed Jesus on some of his preaching and teaching trips. They probably watched as the movement Jesus started turned from a few curious followers to crowds of thousands. We know they were doing some thinking toward the future and what Jesus might mean someday because one of these men tells Jesus: *we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel* (Lk 24:21).

What do we do now? Where do we go from here? Do these questions sound familiar? Are these questions relevant for Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in the year of 2017? Yes, they are most relevant. These questions are on our lips just like they were on the lips of those two men walking on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. These two questions, “What do we do now?” and “Where do we go from here?” are the two questions the church has been asking itself every since our Lord ascended into heaven.

When Jesus walked this earth, he started more than a movement. Jesus established truth; the truth about God, the truth about God’s love for people, the truth about salvation, the truth about the mission and ministry of every Christian and every Christian church.

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus gives us five actions that clearly define the mission and ministry of the church. And remember, the church is not a building. The church is the body of believers. When the church is working to carry out these five directives, the church is doing the will of God; the church is acting on God’s answer to, “What do we do now?” These five directives are not only in today’s Gospel reading, they are also in the words of the hymn *Jesus Calls Us All to Be*. For the first of the five directives, let’s sing the first verse of the sermon hymn.

Jesus calls us all to be
In his Word – disciples.
Gospel truth has set us free;
Read your Holy Bibles!
Justified by faith, we will
Grow in understanding
How by grace Christ paid the bill
Of the Law’s demanding.

The two men in our reading were lost, bewildered, confused. St Luke tells us Jesus said they were: *slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken* (Lk 24:25). What do you suppose was the problem? I’d say these men weren’t very well-versed in Scripture. I’m sure they had read the Scripture. However, it would seem they hadn’t studied it enough to know what was actually there. You see, there’s a difference between having read the Word and being in the Word.

These two didn’t understand the Scriptures until Jesus explained it to them. Verse 27 of the text tells us Jesus explained: *what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself* (Lk 24:27). They had read the Scripture but, apparently, they had never studied Scripture.

Jesus showed himself to these men by way of Scripture. Jesus does the same for us. When we are truly in God’s Word, when we don’t just read the Bible but we study the Bible, we begin to see God’s grace and mercy. We begin to experience the joy of this life because we understand God’s love and care for us. Our hearts begin to burn as we firmly grasp the forgiveness he bought for us at such a great price. **Our first directive is to be in the Word.**

The second verse of today's sermon hymn points out another lesson for the body of Christ to live out.

Jesus calls us all to care.
Pray for foe and brother.
Pains relieve and burdens bear;
Strengthen one another.
Jesus, help us love as you:
Healing, helping, heeding,
Living out the Gospel true,
Following your leading.

Notice how gently Jesus deals with these men. He knew what their conversation was about and he knew the answer to their pain. But Jesus doesn't push himself on them. The Gospel writer says their faces were downcast. In other words, they were depressed. They didn't see any hope for the future.

Jesus could see the emotional state of these two and he deals with them very gently. He allows them to vent their pain and their frustration before he gives them the answer they're looking for. Jesus listened to them, he sympathized with them, and then he comforted them.

Jesus does the same for us. We can take our pain and frustrations to the Lord. We can depend on him to listen to us because he has promised to listen. We can depend on him to sympathize with us because he lived here with us and he understands our pain. And we can depend on him to comfort us because he is our Good Shepherd.

So, where is our directive in this? As Jesus listened, sympathized, and comforted these two, so we are to listen, sympathize, and comfort one another. The example of our Lord should be as natural in our lives as breathing. We are the hands and feet of Jesus. We are the ones he has left behind to care for the lost, the lonely, the hurting, the hungry, the homeless. Jesus warms our hearts with his care so we might burn brightly to warm the hearts of others with **our second directive – care for one another.**

The importance of the third lesson in today's text can never be stressed too much.

Jesus calls us all to tell
Fam'ly, friends, and strangers:
Cross and Easter death dispel,
Conquer all hell's dangers.
Give a Bible, share some tracts,
Testify sincerely;
Powered by God's words and acts,
Tell the Gospel clearly.

If you ever watched much of the TV series *Star Trek*, you had to hear the term prime directive. The prime directive of the *Enterprise* was to never interfere with the natural development of another civilization. This method of operation was called the prime directive because it was to govern every action of the ship and its crew.

The most important thing Jesus did for these men was to tell them the Good News. Nothing brought more comfort to them than the realization that Jesus was no longer dead. Jesus asks the men: *Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?* (Lk 24:26). The announcement that the grave is not the end is just the message these men needed to hear.

Martin Luther once said: *You cannot comfort a Christian with money or anything else short of Christ's resurrection victory, in where we, too, win.* And, while this news is a great comfort to Christians, it also is just the news the unbelieving world needs to hear. Jesus gives us our prime directive in the 28th chapter of Matthew: *Go and make disciples of all nations* (Mt 28:19). Our prime directive is to share what we know with the world just like Jesus shared what he knew with those two men. Our hearts should burn to carry out **our third directive which is tell the Good News.**

The fourth example for us to follow is what keeps the church on the proper course.

Jesus calls us to remain
Faithful to his teaching;
Speak in love – the truth retain,
Error keep impeaching.
Loyal to his doctrine pure,
All Christ taught we're preaching;
Lifting high his hope secure,
Lovingly out-reaching.

Bad theology never helps the church. The two men on their way to Emmaus had either forgotten or misunderstood that the Christ had to die, then rise. As I said earlier, they were in the Word but not deep enough in the Word to understand that Good Friday must precede Easter.

Jesus intervened and brought the proper theology to light. How did he do this? Jesus used Scripture to explain Scripture. The Holy Spirit didn't write the Bible so complex that no one can understand it. However, you need to have a good working relationship with God's Word for it to be effective. When the Bible stays on the top of your personal best seller list, heresy, false doctrine, and errors in theology come to light.

It's the church's job, and by church I mean every believer, to stay faithful to what Jesus taught so the people's faithfulness will be rewarded with a faithful church body. As loyal followers of our Savior, we must firmly reject all attempts to put human direction or interpretations on the Bible's teachings. We must stand firm with the battle cry of faith alone, grace alone, Scripture alone.

When the church guards and treasures its faithfulness to God's Word, the church can do for the world what Jesus did for these men. Jesus saved the faith and eternal destinies of these men with the truth of Scripture. The church acts as God's agents to change the destinies of unbelievers when it holds out the truth of the Gospel. The Christian heart burns to say "amen" to **the fourth directive – remain faithful.**

The last lesson from today's reading comes in the last verse of our hymn.

Jesus calls us all to live
Peacefully – in union;
Overflowing love to give,
Oh, the blest communion!
Move us, Lord, to turn away
From retaliation;
Reconciling every day,
Living in compassion.

When our two travelers returned to Jerusalem, the only thing on their minds was sharing with their fellow believers what they had seen and heard. Do you suppose they would have just stayed home if they had an argument with Peter just before they left Jerusalem? I don't think so. I think that once they knew the truth everything else, no matter what it was, took a back seat. Their only goal was to share with their brothers and sisters the joy and peace they had found.

How about us? Do we let trifles, sins, and offenses cloud our vision of the peace which Jesus brought? Do we forgive as we have been forgiven, or do we forgive just as soon as the other person apologizes.

Jesus told us that he gives a special peace – a peace different from what the world calls peace – a peace that passes all understanding. Jesus died to give us a peace which is able to shut out the threatening noises of the world. The peace that Jesus intends for us is a peace that supersedes all petty squabbling and quarrels. The peace that Jesus wants for us is a peace that allows believers to disagree without being disagreeable.

When the world sees the church living out the peace of Christ, the world will want what the church has. A powerful message is sent out when Christians love each other as we have been loved by our Savior. The love of Jesus makes our hearts burn to live in the peace of our Lord and share the peace of our Lord.

Our world is filled with people who live in confusion and chaos because they have no direction in their lives. They might think they know where they're going but they never actually get there. We see this in the fevered pursuit of so many to gain more and more of the things that rust and decay. We see it as we watch people jump from one activity to another trying to find the one thing that holds the elusive joy of life that keeps evading them. People try to fill the emptiness in their lives with things when that emptiness can only be filled by Jesus.

Our Lord Jesus has taken that confusion and chaos out of our lives. He has given us not only a reason to live but a reason to live joyfully. The Kingdom of Heaven is our inheritance because we have been made brothers and sisters of Christ – children of the King.

Jesus has also given us a roadmap for life which guides our lives and gives them meaning. Jesus tells us to fill our time on earth by being in the Word, by caring for others, by spreading the Gospel message, by remaining faithful to his teaching and only his teaching, and by living at peace with each other and the world.

So, where do we go from here? We follow Jesus. What do we do now? We do the things that Jesus did. And we let our hearts burn with his love for us and with our love for one another.