

Luke 24:28-35

Opened Eyes and Burning Hearts

Tampa Covenant Church

11 May 2025 (Mother's Day)

**Proposition:** God is faithful in opening the eyes of the spiritually blind and granting burning hearts to share the good news of his glorious resurrection.

**FCF:** Spiritual blindness that leads to slowness of heart to believe that Jesus is the promised messiah who defeated sin and death.

**RHF:** Jesus Christ; is our risen Savior grants us the eyes of faith to see him through his Word and Sacrament.

### **(#1) Introduction:**

We're continuing our study in Luke 24 this Eastertide season; taking our time to reflect deeply on the post-resurrection appearances of Christ. In today's passage these travelers, now accompanied by Jesus are nearing the end of their journey. A journey they began weighed down by grief and disappointment at the death of Christ. But today we'll see how their eyes are opened to recognize Jesus and their hearts are set ablaze to share the good news with fellow disciples that Jesus is alive.

The text shows us how our Lord continually opens our eyes to the truth of his word and ignites our hearts to share the good news of his resurrection with others. As we walk through the text, we'll reflect on three key moments: The invitation, the breaking of bread and the sharing of the good news. And we pray the Holy Spirit will help us to see how these moments are meant to shape our lives to live out the hope of the resurrection in this world.

### **(#2) The Invitation:** *Stay with us (vv.28-29)*

Lou reminded us last week, at this point in the narrative, Jesus has gone from the "*ignorant outsider*" to the "*insightful teacher*" as he schools Cleopas and his companion in the scriptures. He calls them foolish, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. And asked them, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? As Lou shared, Jesus is correcting their thinking. Scripture wasn't about God redeeming them from suffering at the hands of Rome. It's a grand narrative of how God redeemed his people through the suffering taken up by the Son of God, Jesus himself.

And now that the **(#3) Bible lesson** is complete, we read in vv.28-29, "*they drew near to the village to which they were going, but Jesus, "acted<sup>1</sup> as if he were going a little farther." But they urged him strongly, saying, "stay with us" for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent" So he went in to stay with them.*" Again, Jesus isn't playing resurrection games nor is he "force ripening" the heart of these travelers to believe the truth of his resurrection. However, it's getting late and it seems they're about to part ways. But these travelers don't allow Jesus to walk off into the night; rather they literally prevail<sup>2</sup> upon him and he accompanies them to their home.

**(#4 Blank)** We can read these verses and walk away with the impression these travelers were the ones who took the lead. As if Jesus was some loner begging to be invited into the cool kid's club. Many of us with church backgrounds may remember that sweet song *"Come into my heart Lord Jesus...come in today, come in to stay, come into my heart Lord Jesus."* Now we can quibble over the semantics of "inviting Jesus into our heart," BUT here's the truth. A person will never invite Jesus into their heart nor into their everyday life unless he draws near to them and reveals himself first in exposing their sinful condition and their desperate need of his gracious presence. If we rewind to the beginning of the narrative: It was Jesus who drew near and initiated conversation, he asked the questions that exposed the despair in their hearts, he rebuked them for being slow of heart, and he opened the scriptures in revealing the truth of his person and work. Every step of their journey was guided by the gracious presence of Christ. And at this moment the truth of the resurrection is brewing in their hearts, so they naturally cry out, *"Stay with us."*

And the same is true of us! Every step of our Christian journey is led and sustained by the gracious presence of our risen Savior. And as we grow in our awareness of his gracious presence in our lives, our hearts must echo the very sentiment of these disciples: *"Stay with us."* We read from Psalm 139, where the Psalmist pondered **(#5) the presence** of the LORD in his life, *"<sup>7</sup> Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."*

**(#6 Blank)** Darkness often comes to us in grief, confusion, and suffering that at times threatens to overpower us but Jesus is the light of the world who lives, dwells, lodges and remains with us. And yet we pray: *"Stay with us."* Not out of fear of abandonment but because we know how desperately we need him; especially when we encounter seasons of uncertainty. It's a prayer of dependence. One that recognizes without the presence of our risen savior in our lives; we are left without hope in this world. I'm reminded of that Taizé chorus we'll sing together **(#7) at the close of** this sermon: *"Stay with us, O Lord Jesus Christ, night will soon fall. Then stay with us, O Lord Jesus Christ; light in our darkness."* May this be our prayer this Easter season and always. And may we find comfort in knowing that our whole life is surrounded by the gracious presence of our Savior who promises to never leave us nor forsake us.<sup>3</sup> And he **(#8) reveals himself** in quite ordinary ways. This brings us to our 2<sup>nd</sup> moment...

### **The Breaking of the Bread: Opened Eyes and Burning Hearts**

So, Jesus goes to stay with these travelers. **(#9) And Luke** tells us in v.30, *"When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them."* Scholars note that Jesus is following the Jewish custom for sharing a meal: Offering a prayer of thanksgiving, breaking the bread, and distributing it to those at the table.<sup>4</sup> Remember, Jesus is the invited guest but now he assumes the role of the host. And this moment should cause the hairs on the back of our necks to stand up because we've witnessed **(#10) it before in** scripture. At the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were satisfied because he's the source of all provision. In the upper room, on the night when he was betrayed, he took the bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. And hours later he would do just that; offer his body on a cross for the forgiveness of mankind's sin and rebellion against God.<sup>5</sup>

And now when he blesses and breaks the bread at table with Cleopas and his companion, something extraordinary takes place. (#11) Luke tells us in verse 31, “*their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.*” How did they recognize Jesus? We can speculate all we want but ultimately, it was nothing short of a miracle according to God’s divine plan and purpose for their lives. Earlier in the story, Jesus drew near to them on the road and their eyes were kept from recognizing (knowing) him. But here, during the intimacy of table fellowship and in the breaking of the bread, God takes the initiative to lift the veil of spiritual blindness in allowing them to recognize the Savior of the world. Anglican bishop N.T. Wright offers a profound reflection on this moment. He contrasts it with what happened in the garden of Eden. Where Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and their eyes were opened in recognizing their nakedness and the fact that everything had gone (#12) terribly wrong. Wright says, *it’s as though Luke is saying; here is this other pair of people and they are meeting Jesus. And in this very different meal of the broken bread rather than the forbidden fruit, the eyes of them both are opened. And this marks a moment of cosmic healing. When the great story has been turned on its hinge and is now moving off in another direction.*<sup>6</sup>

And just as soon as their eyes were opened; Jesus vanished. But he didn’t leave them empty nor did they scurry around looking for him. He left them with (#13) opened eyes and burning hearts, “*Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened the Scriptures?*” That burning wasn’t indigestion from the meal; it was spiritual awakening to the glory of the (#14 Blank) resurrection. We know our hearts are not only the source of physical life but also the core of the inner life: our perception, will and understanding.<sup>7</sup> It’s where the Word of God takes root, where faith is stirred and proven in our obedience. And where the peace of Christ reigns.<sup>8</sup> The *slowness of heart* that plagued these travelers is no more; they’ve been transformed. Their eyes have been opened and hearts set ablaze as they recall how Jesus spoke with them, and interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

As Lou shared last week, if we think of the Bible as a collection of practical moral lessons designed to help us become better people; we’ll miss the gospel. Thus, our eyes will remain closed to the truth of God’s word and our hearts will not burn within us. Because we’ll be so focused extracting self-help nuggets that we’ll fail to see Christ. Thus, the cure for this spiritual blindness and dullness of heart is found in engaging all of scripture with the gospel story in view. The story of God who created this world (perfect) - what went wrong with it (sin) - what he’s done to fix it (redemption through Christ’s person and work), and how things will turn out in the end (New Creation). Christian writer and apologist, Greg Koukl, says to think of it as a puzzle: In order to understand the gospel story and see how it corresponds to reality, we must have all the right pieces and discover how they fit together. Only then will we see the big picture. But if we’re working with the wrong pieces or don’t have all the pieces, we’ll never see the big picture, leading to no real hope for the future.<sup>9</sup> With the help of God; Cleopas and his companion are now seeing the big picture. (#15) And this brings us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> moment of the text; sharing the good news.

**The Sharing of Good News:** *The Lord has risen indeed (vv.33-35)*

(#16) After Jesus vanishes, Cleopas and his companion get up that very hour and return to Jerusalem quite differently than they left. They’re no longer dejected; they now have the truth of the resurrection burning in their hearts. They find the eleven disciples gathered together. And before they could open their mouths to share the good news, the remaining disciples declared, “*The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon.*”<sup>10</sup> Luke doesn’t tell us when this happened but when Cleopas and his companion

finally get the chance to share their story, they recalled what happened on the road, and how Jesus was known to them in the breaking of bread. As Christ followers, we should be able to identify with these two travelers. Our story is also one of how the risen Christ drew near to us, opened our eyes to the truth of his word and set our hearts ablaze to share the good news of his resurrection.

**(#17 Blank) After serving** in this church all these years, the penny finally dropped for me this Eastertide season. The last few weeks spent in this text caused me to slip on sandals and travel the dusty road to Emmaus in recognizing the beauty of our risen Savior once again. I needed to see him as he's offered in the gospel. I needed to witness the breaking of the bread that opened the eyes of these first disciples and ignited their hearts. With the help of the Spirit, I needed to slow down and allow the reality of Christ's resurrection to linger in my heart. And renew my hope that God is indeed making all things new as the grand story of redemption continues to unfold in this world. And I pray the same is happening throughout our covenant community this Easter season. That as we gather around the gospel story; our eyes are being opened to see Christ and our hearts are burning anew to share the good news of his resurrection.

This is what's taking place in the final moment of today's text. All of these Christ followers have gathered together and the pennies are dropping all over the house as they now share what they know in their hearts to be true; *the Lord has risen indeed!* On Easter Sunday, Pastor Lou stood up and declared, "*He is Risen*" and we responded; "*He's risen indeed.*" What followed was a wonderful celebration of our Savior's resurrection from the dead. However, the following Sunday, we experienced a drop off. Some may say, *Mark, that's pretty much the norm.* But it shouldn't be the case because the resurrection isn't just an event we celebrate once a year then move on. Rather, it's the very foundation on which our faith stands. It confirms the truth of Christianity and vindicates the claims of Christ. Christ's victory over sin and death secured our victory over the enslaving power of sin and points our faith to a glorious inheritance awaiting us in a new heaven and a new earth.

**(#18) The Apostle** Paul reminds us, *we were buried therefore with a baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united to him in a death like his; we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.* Church, because we are united to Christ, we already share in this newness of life. And at his return, this newness of life will be fully realized in a glorious resurrection just like his. Until then, every Sunday is resurrection Sunday. And may our heavenly Father find us faithful in gathering to celebrate this living hope that is now ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **(#19) Conclusion:**

We've reflected on three key moments in this text and I pray this Easter season, we'll discover how each one serves to shape our lives as Christ followers: First, recognize our Savior is always with us; yet we entreat him to "*stay with us*" and trust in him every step of the way. Second, allow his Word and Sacrament to open our eyes to see him and set our hearts ablaze to the truth of his person and work. Third, remain faithful in gathering each Lord's Day to share in the joy of the resurrection and proclaim with one heart and mind that our Savior is no longer in the grave. He's alive and lives forevermore. May these moments shape us to live as resurrection people all to the glory of God and to his glory alone. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> προσποιέομαι (*prospoieomai*) to engage in an action or gesture that gives the appearance of conveying specific intent, *make/act as though, pretend*.

<sup>2</sup> παραβιάζομαι (*parabiazomai*): urge strongly, persuade (Lk 24:29; Ac 16:15+)

<sup>3</sup> Mark D. Futato, "The Book of Psalms," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 7: The Book of Psalms, The Book of Proverbs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 415.

<sup>4</sup> Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 358–359.

<sup>5</sup> See Luke 9:22 and 22:19.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxqjbjbnN-s&t=22s> (accessed 07 May 2025).

<sup>7</sup> Jonathon Lookadoo, "Body," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 625–626.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory Koukl, *The Story of Reality*, (Zondervan, 2017), 45.

<sup>10</sup> Luke doesn't record this instance in his gospel but Paul corroborates Christ's appearance to Peter in 1 Corinthians 15:5.