

20260405 Burning Hearts and Opened Eyes – Ps Peter Anderson

Luke 24:13-35

European sailors of the 15th century played a crucial role in the so-called Age of Discovery, exploring new trade routes and lands. In 1491 when Christopher Columbus was trying to find a way westwards to Asia, he discovered the Americas. Portuguese sailor Vasco da Gama successfully rounded the southern tip of Africa in 1498 and reached India. Before da Gama's successful voyage, many sailing ships had been shipwrecked in the rough seas off the Cape Peninsula, about 50 kms south of today's Cape Town. This is where the warm current from the Indian Ocean meets the cold current of the Atlantic Ocean. No wonder earlier sailors called it the "Cape of Storms". Following da Gama's successful voyage, however, the name "the Cape of Storms" was changed to "the Cape of Good Hope".

Today is Easter Sunday when we celebrate the fact Jesus rose from the dead. In dying and rising again Jesus defeated Satan, sin and death and opened the way for men and women to be reconciled to God. For the believer, Jesus' death and resurrection turn mankind's "*Cape of Storms*" into mankind's "*Cape of Good Hope*"! He turns our darkness to light, our despair to hope, and our mourning to joy. He brings life out of death.

Yes, Christian hope is based on the fact Jesus rose from the dead. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus are historical facts. And they are fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. As the Apostle Paul wrote: **"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."** (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Indeed, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus lie at the heart of biblical Christianity. As preacher and author Michael Green writes, "*...the heart of the good news by which men and women from Jewish and Gentile backgrounds alike were 'born again', 'ransomed' and 'saved' was the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*"¹

The four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are four different eye-witness accounts of the life, teaching, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Amazingly, the accounts of His last few days and of His death and resurrection make up almost half of the Gospels. This itself underlines the critical importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Today I want us to focus on one of many of the Resurrection appearances of Jesus—one that Luke records in chapter 24 of his Gospel. Luke gives

¹ Green, Michael: *The Empty Cross of Jesus*, IVP, Illinois, 1984, 138.

fascinating detail of what happened when two of Jesus' followers were walking from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus on that very first Easter Sunday.

Let us look firstly at Luke 24:13-24, under the heading:

1. **BROKEN DREAMS AND CONFUSION** (verses 13-24)

“¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles [11 kilometres] from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing Him.”

Earlier in chapter 24, Luke describes how several women, followers of Jesus, had gone early that morning to the tomb of Jesus. They discovered that the stone across the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away and the tomb was empty. Luke also describes how two men in gleaming clothes (angels, no doubt) told the women Jesus was alive. Luke also mentions that the disciples did not believe the women when they told them what they had seen and heard. Luke also mentions the fact Peter ran off to the tomb and saw the undisturbed grave clothes, but Jesus' body was not there.

It was the same day, that first Easter Sunday, and two followers of Jesus were on their way to the village of Emmaus, about 11 kilometres from Jerusalem. They were not two of the inner circle of now just eleven disciples but, like the women just mentioned, were two of a much larger number of disciples. Naturally they were completely absorbed in what had happened, the cruel crucifixion of Jesus and now the strange, unbelievable reports about the empty tomb, about angels, and about Jesus being alive.

It was as these two disciples were discussing these things that a third person came up and walked along with them. In fact, we are told that third person was Jesus Himself, but the two men had no idea it was Jesus. Maybe they were too engrossed in their conversation. Maybe they were so sad and full of despair or so puzzled by the recent reports of Jesus being alive that they simply didn't realise who the Stranger was. Interestingly, Scripture tells us in v.16, **“they were kept from recognizing Him.”** The Lord had a reason for not revealing who He was right away.

So then, in verse 17 we read, **“¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked Him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”**

Obviously, Jesus knew what they had been discussing but, I guess, He wanted to draw it out of them and see their response. Cleopas' question, **“Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”** reflects an interesting fact. Clearly, everyone in Jerusalem, including the thousands of pilgrims and other visitors from far and wide gathered for Passover, all knew about Jesus and what had happened to Him.

Jesus now has another question for the two men. ¹⁹ **“What things?” He asked.** And what a reply they gave to Jesus! **“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. ²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed Him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified Him; ²¹ but we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”**

The two men beautifully summed up what they and many others thought about Jesus. **“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.”** Just think about the teaching of Jesus. Crowds had listened in awe to His powerful yet gracious words. They had been amazed by His many miracles—feeding thousands of people, walking on water, healing of all kinds of diseases and even bringing back to life people who had died. He was no ordinary man. A prophet of God for sure! Surely, all Jesus' followers thought, *‘He must be the long-promised Messiah, the Saviour, the Deliverer of God's people. The one who would drive out the occupying Romans and free the nation of Israel.’*

Yet everything had come to a crashing halt. Jesus of Nazareth had been sentenced to death and had been crucified. As the two men said, **“...we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”** All their hopes and dreams had been smashed. They were completely devastated. Hope had turned to despair and grief.

Have you ever felt downcast or discouraged? Have your dreams or your plans come to nothing? Have you lost hope? If this is the case, don't let your circumstances or your emotions and feelings blind you to the fact Jesus wants to come alongside and walk with you. He is not dead but is risen. He is with you and wants to redeem you and give you hope. He is the Messiah, our Deliverer, our Saviour, our Lord and King.

For the two disciples walking to Emmaus that first Easter Sunday the events of the past few days had not only left them devastated and downcast. They had also left them deeply puzzled, even confused. So, they continue in v.21,

“And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. ²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning ²³ but didn't find His body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said He was alive. ²⁴ Then some of

our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

The incredible reports they had heard that very morning left the two men puzzled and confused. How could it possibly be true that Jesus was alive? Jesus had been brutally killed, crucified on a Roman cross. He had been wrapped in burial clothes and laid in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. The tomb had been sealed and was guarded by soldiers. There was no way these devastated frightened followers of Jesus could believe the reports that He had risen from the grave and was alive.

You might wonder, why didn't Jesus now just say to the two sad confused disciples, *“Hey guys, it's Me! I am alive! Everything the women said is true.”* Jesus could have told them, *“Don't you remember I told you repeatedly that ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again?’”* (v.7) So then, why do you think Jesus took so long to reveal Himself to these two disciples? Maybe we can find an answer as we look at my second heading:

2. **TEACHING AND EXPLAINING** (vrs 25-27)

Back in around 2008, Bill Crowder of *Our Daily Bread Ministries* preached at MBCC. In one of his books *“Windows on Easter”*, Bill mentions that he was impressed not only by Jesus' desire to help these two disciples understand but also by *“...the patience with which He moved them forward in their faith—slowly, patiently, deliberately—the same way He works with us.”*²

What Bill Crowder says is true of course, but Jesus is also blunt and not exactly complementary. Beginning in verse 25 we read, **“²⁵ He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?’”** I am sure Jesus spoke in a loving tone, but He was still very straight. *“How come you are so slow to believe? Did you not know...?”*

And then beginning in v. 27 Jesus goes on to answer their questions and doubts. **“²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself.”**

Surely it must have been the most amazing small group Bible study ever! As the as-yet-unrecognized Jesus walked along with the two disciples, He explained the Scriptures to them. He began in the first five books of the Bible—the so-called Books of Moses. Then He went on through the prophets, and as we see later in this chapter in Luke 24:45, He also referred to the Psalms. In other words, Jesus taught them from all three parts of the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament. He showed how

² Crowder, Bill: *Windows on Easter*, ODB Publishing, Grand Rapids, 2010, 111.

the Scriptures (the Law, the Prophets and the Writings) all point to the Messiah who had come to die for sinners and who would rise again victorious over death itself.

Yes, the big overarching theme of the Bible is God's Great Plan of Salvation. So much in the Old Testament points forward to the coming of Christ and of course the New Testament is all about Him too, about His Church, His Kingdom, and His Return.

We don't know the details of what Jesus told the two disciples, but I imagine He may well have gone right back to Genesis 3:15 where God told Satan, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”** I imagine Jesus mentioned God's call to Abram in Genesis 12:2 & 3 where He tells him, **“I will make you into a great nation...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”**

I imagine Jesus shared with the two men about how many events and types in the Old Testament pointed to the Christ—the ram caught in the bush which Abraham then offered as a sacrifice in place of his son Isaac, the deliverance of God's people from slavery in Egypt, the Passover Festival, and the sacrificial system in ancient Israel. I guess Jesus referred to Psalm 22 which Jesus Himself quoted on the cross, words like **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”** (Psalm 22:1) And Jesus must have spoken of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, **“He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities...and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”** (vrs 5 & 6) The whole of Isaiah 53 points unmistakably to the suffering and the triumph of the Messiah. Look at Isaiah 53:11, **“After He has suffered, He will see the light of life and be satisfied; by His knowledge my righteous servant will justify many.”** Here we see the resurrection, don't we! There is another amazing example in Job 19:25 which says, **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth.”**

Zechariah has many prophecies that point to the suffering and the triumph of Jesus, In 12:10 for example we read, **“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child...”**

There are many other Scriptures Jesus possibly also expounded to the two disciples as they walked together along the road.

Jesus must have helped those two disciples begin to see that there was a theme running all through the Old Testament Scriptures. The theme binding the Scriptures together was the promise of the Messiah, the Saviour, the Redeemer through whom all nations would be blessed. It is no wonder that, as we mentioned earlier, the Apostle Paul wrote: **“For what I received I passed on to you as of**

first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

The death and resurrection of Jesus go together. His death was not a tragic mistake. No, it was all part of God's great plan of salvation. On the cross He carried the sins of the whole world, dying in our place, the righteous for the unrighteous. In His resurrection He was totally vindicated, having defeated Satan and evil and death itself.

The amazing small group Bible study led by Jesus on the road to Emmaus must have been mind-blowing for Cleopas and his fellow disciple. The eyes of their spiritual understanding would have been opened as never before. Let us see what happened next!

3. **JOY AND ASSURANCE** (vrs 28-35)

We read, “²⁸ **As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if He were going farther.** ²⁹ **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.**”

I am sure the amazing small group Bible study must have continued after they invited Jesus to stay over with them. We were told earlier of course that they had been kept from recognizing Him. I think one of the reasons Jesus did not reveal Himself to them right away was that He wanted them to base their faith on the truth and authority of the Bible. Yes, they were about to experience the excitement of recognizing the risen Jesus, but their faith must not be based solely on that experience (however wonderful it was). Their faith needed to be grounded in God's Word.

It is in God's Word, the Scriptures, that we encounter Christ. It is the Written Word of God that opens our eyes to see the Living Word, Jesus.

I love what Nicky Gumbel, famous for the Alpha Course, says *“It was as if I was blind. I must have heard many times that Jesus died for our sins. But I simply did not see it. I was spiritually blind. But when I understood the cross, my eyes were opened.”*

I think, in a way, this is what happened to the two disciples as Jesus spoke with them on the way to Emmaus and opened the Scriptures to them. The Scriptures point us to Jesus who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life—the only way to heaven.

May I therefore encourage you to take Bible study seriously. May I encourage you to make reading the Bible a priority—far more important and worthwhile than scrolling through your smart phone. How about spending even just 10 or 15 minutes a day reading your Bible and praying! Ask God to speak to you through His Word. Through His Word we get to know our wonderful Lord and Saviour better. Through His Word He convicts us, corrects us, guides us, comforts us, encourages us.

As the two disciples sat down to the meal with the Stranger with whom they had been engrossed in conversation, all was about to change.

“³⁰ When He was at the table with them, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him, and He disappeared from their sight.”

There must have been something quite different and special about the resurrected body of Jesus. He could talk and eat with them, but He could also suddenly appear and disappear. As we see in the next few verses, He could come through locked doors. His was a glorified risen body but it was still unmistakably Him.

Don't you love the reaction of the two disciples when they finally realised the Stranger had in fact been Jesus?

“³² 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?”

What about you and me? What if we realised Jesus was walking with us on our way to work or to school? What if we realised He was right there with us at home? Surely, we too would experience “burning hearts”, and especially when we sensed the Holy Spirit speaking to us through God's holy Word. Yes, when we read our Bibles and when we come to church, let us ask God to speak to us. On many occasions I have known God was speaking to me through His Word. I have sensed the heart-warming presence of the Lord. Precious moments indeed. In fact, even when we don't feel His presence, He is right there with us.

For those two disciples their broken-heartedness and confusion had turned to joy and excitement. There was no way that they could just sit there in Emmaus. They had to get back to Jerusalem and share with others what they had learned and experienced. So, we read in v.33, **“³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem.”** I am sure they covered the 11 kilometres back to Jerusalem a lot quicker than when they had walked it in the opposite direction!

I can imagine them planning what to say to the Eleven and the other followers of Jesus. They were bursting to tell their story. *“The others will be blown away don't you think! Just like we were! I can't wait to see their faces when we tell them!”* They arrived and **“they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together…”** But before they had a chance to open their mouths to say anything, those gathered in the room blurted out, **“It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.”** How exciting! Well, even though they didn't get to speak first, they did get their chance. Verse 35 continues, **“Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by**

them when He broke the bread.” I can imagine the women saying to everyone, *“Didn’t we tell you? How come you didn’t believe us?”*

It was right at that moment that something else happened that must have left everyone in the room totally speechless. **“³⁶While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”** Jesus appeared yet again—this time to the whole group of disciples—and He simply came through the locked doors.

In the verses that follow—verses 44-49—we see Jesus, as He had done with the two on the road to Emmaus, helping His followers understand the Scriptures. They were to be sent to preach **“repentance for the forgiveness of sins”** to all nations and the Father would send the promised Holy Spirit to empower them as Jesus’ witnesses.

Today April 5th. 2026 is Easter Sunday. This year the Chinese Qing Ming Festival (or Tomb-Sweeping Day) also happens to fall on April 5th. Qing Ming is when Chinese families traditionally clean the graves of their departed loved ones. Some burn incense and make offerings. Chinese Christians of course remember their ancestors, but they do not worship or make offerings to them. We only worship our risen Lord and Saviour.

When some of the early followers of Jesus went to His tomb, they took spices hoping to place them around His dead body, but the tomb was empty for He had risen! The prophets and founders of every other religion died and were buried. Only Jesus died, was buried and rose again conquering Satan, sin and death.

And Jesus is alive today. As He opens our hearts and minds to understand the Scriptures, He turns our darkness to light, our despair to hope, and our mourning to joy. Yes, Jesus knows about our Broken Dreams and our Confusion and, as we read, understand and believe His Word, He fills us with Joy and Assurance. He turns our *Cape of Storms* into a *Cape of Good Hope*.