

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

(March 27, 2016)

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Sermon manuscript

### **Sermon Series: Good News!**

## **EASTER SUNDAY!**

## **HE IS RISEN!**

### **Hearts on Fire**

(Luke 24)

Study #5

#### **Introduction: Fire...**

I think I've mentioned that our daughter, Erin, recently got married. ☺

She was married on Sunday, March 6, and it was a great celebration. I would mention, though (and not to complain, of course), that by the end of the evening, I was tired.

I hadn't done as much in preparation for the wedding as Kathy had, but I had still done what I considered to be my fair share. Toward the end of the reception I was beginning to get somewhat tired.

But it was funny. Whenever I looked over at Erin or Kody before, during, or after the wedding, they both looked thoroughly refreshed.

They had been way busier than I had been prior to the wedding. They were busy throughout the whole day of the wedding. And then, even as they were leaving the reception, they didn't look at all tired. Weird...

And that's pretty consistent with my experience with weddings through the years.

Despite an over-full schedule leading up to a wedding and an activity level that is tailor-made to ensure exhaustion, brides and grooms are rarely out of gas on that day. I have never had to wake up a bride or a groom to tell them it's time to walk down the aisle.

There is a dynamic at work in the heart of a man and woman about to be married that trumps what would be understandable exhaustion.

They are energized with the passion of hearts on fire.

Now fire doesn't just happen. Literal fire ignites with just the right combination of heat, fuel and oxygen.

And the hearts of a bride and groom are ignited at the junction of love for each other, a launch into an unknown future, and the defining moment of a wedding.

This morning, we are going to watch a fire ignite in the hearts of two of Jesus' first disciples. I think you'll find their "flaming hearts" to be pretty contagious.

First, to review what has happened so far this weekend.

*Backtracking -*

- Jesus died on Friday (Luke 23:44-49)

Friday was the day of Jesus' crucifixion. He was nailed to a cross in the morning and He hung there until the middle of the afternoon. Around 3pm, a spear pierced His side and the rush of blood and water from the wound confirmed that He was dead.

- Jesus was buried in the borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:45-53)

Then, a disciple of Jesus, stepped forward to take care of Jesus' burial. This is Joseph of Arimathea, who had been up until this moment a "secret" disciple for fear of the Jews. (See John 20)

But here, this secret disciple acted boldly. He asked the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate for Jesus' body. Pilate gave him Jesus' body and Joseph laid the body in his own tomb, which was a cave hewn out of the rock.<sup>1</sup>

- The women prepared to embalm Jesus' body (Luke 23:54-56)

Finally, a small group of faithful women from Galilee who had followed and supported Jesus, watched carefully to see where He was buried so that they could go back there after the Sabbath to embalm Jesus' body.

By law, the work of embalming could not take place on a Sabbath - especially when the Sabbath was also the Day of Passover, as it was that year - so it had to be put off until the first day of the week, which was Sunday.

The Bible doesn't give us much of a window into the emotions of Joseph, these women, or the other disciples. But if you've ever lost a loved one, you know.

There would have been sorrow and grief. They probably felt numb from their loss of Jesus, their Friend and Lord.

Friday was awful. On Friday evening, they were inconsolable. Saturday would have been interminable, the longest day of their lives.

The only thing keeping the women going was this one final thing they were going to do for Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph was a member of the Jewish Supreme Court (the Sanhedrin) that had convicted Jesus of blasphemy and which led to Him being taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who condemned Him to be crucified.

They will go to the tomb first thing Sunday morning and they will anoint His dead body. The anointing will put a period to the story of Jesus...and these women were about to discover that the death of Jesus was followed, not by a period, but by a comma.

It was Sunday morning, probably just before daybreak, when they arrived at the tomb.<sup>2</sup>

### **While at the Tomb... (Luke 24:1-12)**

#### **News that Proves (vv. 1-8)**

*A job to do (v. 1)*

***[1] But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared.***

The purpose of their trip couldn't be clearer. They have come to anoint the dead with their spices. It's a plan hatched by love, not by faith. They came expecting to find a dead Jesus.

So, imagine their shock when they find what they found.

*The women's discovery (vv. 2-3)*

***[2] And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb<sup>3</sup>, [3] but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.<sup>4</sup>***

The first shock was that the massive stone that had been placed in front of the tomb had been rolled away. The second shock was that the tomb was empty.

There was no body to anoint. Jesus' body was gone!

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<sup>2</sup> I would mention that "*three days and three nights*" was a term in Jewish usage that referred to any part of three successive 24 hour periods. Seventy-two hours are not required between Jesus' death and resurrection to fulfill the prophecy.

<sup>3</sup> A cave, hollowed out from the side of a cliff, with an opening large enough to climb through, but only while ducking down. We don't know how large the interior may have been.

<sup>4</sup> He is, here, called the "Lord Jesus." This is the first time in Luke's Gospel He is given this title (significantly, post-resurrection), but He is referred to as "the Lord Jesus" over a hundred times in the rest of the New Testament.

So think back to a time when you were completely surprised by some turn of events. Maybe it was a come from behind win (or loss) for your favorite team or an election result you never saw coming or a financial windfall or a Dr.'s report.

Something happened and it was so unexpected that you didn't know what to do next. You just stood there, processing, mouth open.

THAT, I'm sure, was what was going on with these women. And then, mid-gawk, things got even more interesting. Two angels showed up and all of a sudden the tomb cave got crowded. (Yikes!) We're not surprised when we read that the women were terrified.

*The angels' announcement (vv. 4-7)*

**[4] While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; [5] and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground...**

The women did not speak to the angels. But the angels did speak to them. Roughly paraphrased, they ask, *"What in the world are you doing in a tomb looking for The Living One? Sure, ladies, Jesus was dead for a brief time - but He is not dead now!"*<sup>5</sup>

The angels continued, reminding the women of what Jesus had told them earlier.

**[6] "He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, [7] saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men (Well, He did say that...), and be crucified (And He said that, too...), and the third day rise again (He also said THAT...)." <sup>6</sup>** (Luke 9:22; 17:25; 18:32f)

<sup>5</sup> [5]...the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead?"

<sup>6</sup> By "risen," the angels did NOT mean that Jesus was, in some way, still alive "spiritually." They meant that He was fully alive - body, soul, and spirit - never to taste death, again.

Now light bulbs go on in the women's minds - and fireworks go off in their hearts! - as **[8] they remembered His words.**<sup>7</sup>

They realize now, *"We could have slept in!"* They could have saved themselves a long walk to the tomb on Easter Sunday morning if only they had remembered!

But their forgetfulness brought them the honor of being the first to *hear* the news of the resurrection AND the honor of getting to *announce* the resurrection first to others!

They ran back into the city with hearts on fire!

**"Too Good to Be True" News! (vv. 9-11)**

*The women bring good news!*

We picture breathlessness and eagerness and enthusiasm. They reported what had just happened to them at the tomb **"to the eleven and to all the rest."**<sup>8</sup>

So now, just like that, there are over a dozen believers!

Among the believing we now count several women and the eleven remaining apostles. Because, well, unlike the women, who didn't remember Jesus' words, the apostles did remember and were fully anticipating a resurrection...

...not so fast. The men did NOT believe the women's report.

<sup>7</sup> When He was with them, Jesus would sometimes speak figuratively. Maybe that is how they had been taking His words about resurrection. Now they saw that He had meant to be taken completely literally!

<sup>8</sup> We know the apostles (minus Judas Iscariot) were there. Then, there would have been Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and no doubt others, too.

*Unbelievably, the apostles disbelieve (v. 11)*

**[11] And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they *WOULD NOT* believe<sup>9</sup> them.<sup>10</sup>**

You and I hear things we don't believe pretty regularly. I've even heard that you can't believe everything you read on the internet.

But it is not that the words of the women were unbelievable. Luke tells us that the men *WOULD NOT* believe.

What is prompting their unbelief here is not that the report was unbelievable. It was a reflex self-defense mechanism.

You can almost hear their thoughts: *"I put my trust in Jesus once - I'm not going to do it again. I may get burned once, but not twice."*

Most of us are familiar with self-protection. It can kick in after a failure of almost any variety, from business to romance.

Our hearts get broken once, or twice - or more times. It hurts. So, at some point we refuse to try again, to risk again.

We wall off our hearts and by so doing guarantee that we will never again get hurt. And we also guarantee that we will never know the joy of intimacy or the thrill of discovery.

Joy is always going to be out of reach unless we are willing to risk, to be vulnerable, in other words, to trust.

And on that first Easter Sunday morning, most of the disciples chose the safer route of not believing - and by doing that they shut themselves off from joy. They *WOULD NOT* believe.

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<sup>9</sup> The Greek word describing their unbelief is *"apisteuo"* - same word used as in 24:11 when the apostles **"would not believe"** the women's report from the tomb.

<sup>10</sup> These men were not on the brink of belief, needing only an excuse to launch into a proclamation of resurrection. They were utterly skeptical. Clearly irrefutable evidence was needed to convince them.

Today, don't allow yourself to be caged in by self-protection. Take courage. Dare to believe. Dare to imitate the lone exception among the apostles.

**News That Changes Lives! (24:12)**

Simon Peter heard the women's report, and opened himself up to hope. He cast off self-protection. Luke tells us, **[12] *But Peter arose and ran to the tomb...***

Enough of this "walk by faith" stuff. Peter didn't walk. He *RAN* by faith!

And when he arrived at the tomb, he stooped down, looked in, and saw a scene that amazed him. The body definitely was *NOT* there.

Peter took in the scene, took a short leap of faith, and jumped to a resurrection conclusion.

Luke tells us that **"he went back to his home marveling at that which had happened"** - and we are to understand that Peter went back believing that Jesus was alive. He will soon see much more evidence, but the empty tomb convinced him.

Peter...

- didn't see a heavenly vision.
- didn't see an angel.
- didn't see Jesus.

But he believed on the basis of the word of Jesus, the testimony of the witnesses, and the evidence of a cold, empty tomb.

Today, you and I stand in Peter's shoes.

- If you were in Jerusalem right now, you would see an empty tomb. And the body of Jesus has never surfaced.
- You can hear the two-thousand-year old testimony of the women right here in Luke 24.
- You can also read Jesus' promise that He would rise from the dead.

And, like Peter, you can go home marveling at what has happened!

Today, you can place your faith in a crucified and resurrected Jesus who will give you eternal life, will forgive your sin, and will make you a daughter or a son of God!

Slate wiped clean. Fresh start. New beginning.

Now, what we have just seen is a great scene. And it's also a pretty well-known scene.

But to wrap up our time together we're going to move away from that scene and move on to another, somewhat less familiar, scene. It is a story that only Luke records.

I'm eager for us to look at this narrative together because I think it speaks very directly to where many of us find ourselves from time to time - maybe even right now.

Luke continues the story of what happened on that first Sunday. And he brings us from the story of Jesus' most famous disciple - Peter - into the story of two of Jesus' not very famous disciples.

They were walking from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus.

### **While on the Way to Emmaus... (Luke 24:13-35)**

#### **Two Disciples Take a Hike (vv. 13-14)**

***[13] And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.***

These two men had left Jerusalem at some point on Sunday morning and there is a lot about this episode we don't know.

One of the men was named Cleopas. He's not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. His friend is not even named here.

We don't even know exactly where "Emmaus" was located, just that it was about seven miles outside of Jerusalem, in one direction or another.<sup>11</sup>

We catch up to them ...***[14] And they were conversing with each other about all these things which had taken place.***

By "***these things***" Luke is referring to Jesus' last days, His trials, His crucifixion, His burial. These two men would have been still reeling from the horrors of Friday's crucifixion.

As they walked and talked, they were joined by Another.

#### **The Two Are Joined by a Third (vv. 15-24)**

*The incognito Jesus (vv. 15-16)*

***[15] And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached, and began traveling with them. [16] But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.***

WE know (because Luke tells us) that this Other was Jesus. But, Cleopas and his friend didn't know. By some means, He was veiled to them. They saw Him only as a stranger on the road coming out of Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup>

Walking faster than they were, He had caught up with them and began walking with them. The Stranger spoke.

*Jesus questions them (v. 17)*

***[17] And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad.***

<sup>11</sup> The name means "warm springs" and could have been one of several places. A good guess is that Emmaus was at a location seven miles northwest of Jerusalem on the road to Lydda, near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps His glorified body was not immediately recognizable. Or maybe they didn't recognize Him because He didn't want them to recognize Him.

Did you catch their mood? They look sad. These guys are depressed.

The two explain "the things" that have been happening (vv. 18-24)

### Surprise (v. 18)

**[18] And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?"**

The Stranger played along, "What things are you talking about?" So, the two gave their report about Jesus to Jesus.

### Synopsis (vv. 19-21)

**[19]... "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, [20] and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. [21] But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened."**

Let's notice a few things from this very fine little speech.

They called Jesus a prophet. They weren't being disrespectful. It's an honorable thing to be called a prophet.

But, they don't call Him "Messiah." They don't believe He is the Messiah, at least not anymore. Not since what happened on Friday.

Did you catch it? **"We 'were hoping.'** We're not hoping anymore."

But, then, they do admit to being confused.

### Confusion (vv. 22-24)

**[Luke 24:22] "But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning,**

**[23] and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. [24] Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."**

"So, you see, Stranger, we're just not sure what to make of it all."

At this, the Stranger spoke. Cleopas and his friend still didn't know who it really was who was speaking to them. And His first words to them don't exactly pass the, "How to win friends and influence people" test!

### **Opening the Scriptures - and Finding Jesus! (vv. 25-27)**

**[25] And He said to them, 'O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?' [27] And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.**

How long does it take you to walk seven miles? Walking at a pretty good clip, it probably takes you a couple of hours.

If you're low on energy - like Cleopas and his friend were - it can take a good bit longer.

So let's assume that Jesus has well over two hours to explain what we today call "The Old Testament" to these two disciples.

Wouldn't you have loved to have been there!

Jesus would have mentioned the scene in the Garden of Eden where God promised a coming redeemer after Adam and Eve fell into sin.

He would have told them the story about the *almost* sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham's son, which pictured the *actual* sacrifice of God's Son, the Messiah.

He would have explained the sacrificial system which foreshadowed the Messiah's sacrificial death.

Luke tells us that Jesus spoke from ALL the prophets.

So, is it too much to think that Jesus found references to Himself in Isaiah AND Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi!?<sup>13</sup>

Jesus talked and talked and talked about the Messiah while they walked.

And I'm betting that by the time they arrived at Emmaus, Cleopas and his friend were seeing how the life of Jesus fit pretty perfectly everything that was foretold about the Messiah.

Well, all good things must end, and the three have now reached Emmaus. The journey is ended.

### **Hearts Aflame! (vv. 28-34)**

*One journey ends... (vv. 28-29)*

***[28] And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. [29] But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them.***

The three men sat down to eat late in the afternoon when Cleopas and his friend had one of those "eye-opening moments."

*...and another "journey" begins (vv. 30-31)*

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<sup>13</sup> Surely He would have spoken from the great prophecy of Isaiah 53, where Isaiah describes the sacrifice and victory of the Servant of the Lord.

***[30] And it came about that when He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them.***

You can almost picture them looking back and forth at each other and then at Jesus.

*"Hey, wait a minute! That sure looked familiar. Cleopas, do you remember back in Galilee when Jesus fed the 5,000? He took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it out the same way. Hey, Stranger, you remind me of Someone..."*

And with that - Jesus was gone. He vanished right before their eyes.<sup>14</sup>

Now, listen to what they say in His absence.

*Hearts fan into flame (v. 32)*

***[32] "Were not our hearts burning within us - hearts on fire! - while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"***

And with that, they arose (meal uneaten?) and returned to Jerusalem, covering those seven miles like it was a competitive 12K!<sup>15</sup>

When they got back, they burst into the room where they found the rest of the disciples.

*Energized!! (vv. 33-34)*

***[34] "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon!"***

Keep in mind that it is now late in the evening. These two began the day defeated and sad. They have now walked fourteen miles on

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<sup>14</sup> ***[31] Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.***

<sup>15</sup> ***[33] And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them...***

rough, rugged uphill and downhill roads - and they are completely energized! What happened?

The same sort of thing happened to them that happened to the women in the morning, that happened to Peter a bit later, and that happens to brides and grooms on the day of their wedding.

Tiredness is overcome by events. Excitement consumes exhaustion.

The hearts of these two disciples were set on fire by the fresh wind of the resurrection, the spark of hope that was now burning in their hearts, and the gasoline of the life-changing words of Jesus.

### **Conclusion:**

Now, to wind up our time in the Word today, I'm going to point you to the very end of Luke's Gospel where he gives his own version of the Great Commission.

While Cleopas and his friend were telling about what happened on the road to Emmaus, who should show up but the resurrected Jesus!

First, He showed them His nail-pierced hands and feet to assure them that it really was Him. Then He ate a piece of broiled fish to prove that He wasn't a ghost

And then He spoke.

***[46]... "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, [47] and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] You are witnesses of these things. [49] And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."***

Much of this is very similar to what we read elsewhere about spreading the Gospel, making disciples, and worldwide impact.

But did you hear the cautionary ***"but stay in the city until..."*** The mission is not to start until they were ***"clothed with power from on high."***

And THAT is a reference to the promised Holy Spirit who would indwell, anoint, baptize, and fill them for service.

So, they waited there in Jerusalem. They were ready with the mandate: Go to the whole world. They would take aim with the message: Jesus saves. But they weren't to "fire" yet.

They waited for days that turned into weeks. Seven weeks in all. They were Ready. Aim. Aim. Aim...

And then came Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came to each of them. They were filled with power. No more waiting. The arrival of the Spirit meant FIRE!

And off they went. They took the Gospel from Jerusalem to all Judea and to Samaria and to the remotest part of the earth.

Jesus has given you and me the same mandate and mission He gave those first followers. And today He doesn't say, "Wait." He doesn't say "wait" because anyone who has received eternal life in Jesus has also received the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

You have friends who need your Jesus - tell them. There are family members who need your Jesus - tell them. There are people at your workplace who need your Jesus - tell them.

Let's passionately pursue life-changing relationships with people who don't know Jesus. Let's bring our friends to Jesus. Let's all be "on mission" for His Great Commission. For He is Risen!

He is risen, indeed!