



BURNING THE RESURRECTION INTO THE HEART

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Luke 24:13-33

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What did the resurrection of Jesus mean to first century disciples of Jesus? Many Christians today believe that the resurrection is an historic event that may affect them when they die, but it has little or no impact upon them in the here and now. For the moment, they live sad, disappointed lives, whiling away the days until they die and go to heaven. What does the risen Christ do for people who feel that this is all there is to the resurrection?

Our text this morning from the gospel of Luke tells the story of two disciples who believed that Jesus was a prophet—they hoped he might even be the Messiah—yet they were not prepared for his death, and they were completely in the dark about the implications of his resurrection. Their hearts were sad as they journeyed from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus, following the devastating events of the previous few days in Jerusalem.

In this text we see the heart of our Lord for people such as these disciples. The resurrected Jesus is passionately eager to press into their hearts the meaning of his resurrection. He will not permit them to remain in their ignorance, just as he will not allow us to remain in ours. Our text, then, traces the process by which people come to recognize the risen Christ. Everything that Jesus did for the two disciples of this story, he desires to do for each of us by means of his Holy Spirit.

We pick up the account in chapter 24 of Luke's gospel, beginning with verse 13:

I. Jesus Engages Two Travelers In Conversation (Luke 24:13-24)

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were conversing with each other about all these things which had taken place. And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached, and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. 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. 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?" And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. 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. But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. And 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." (NASB)

(a) The Place of Encounter

The story opens with the account of two travelers walking on the road to Emmaus. These men, who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, probably were followers of Jesus. They might even have been part of the throng that had lauded him during his tri-

umphal entry into the city just a week earlier. Now they are on their way back to their homes. It is on this highway that Jesus appears to them and enters into conversation with them. This is an early indicator that the message of the resurrection of Jesus is meant for the highway more than it is meant for the temple. Indeed this message was to be taken out from Jerusalem and spread by witnesses throughout the whole earth. In my own experience, my greatest times of intimacy with the Lord Jesus have taken place while I was traveling on some highway or other, either at home or abroad.

(b) The Timing of the Encounter

Secondly, notice the timing of the encounter. Jesus intersects the journey of these disciples as they are engaged in an intense discussion about the events of the past few days. For their part, they are kept from recognizing Jesus, thus he is able to ask them probing questions. He begins by saying to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" The number and choice of verbs used in this question by Jesus reveal that these men were asking and fielding questions back and forth between themselves as they tried to make sense of the things that had happened in Jerusalem on that fateful week. That Jesus had been a prophet was accepted by many, but the thought that he might have been more than a prophet, that he perhaps was the Messiah who would redeem Israel, was another matter altogether. Jesus, however, had not been victorious over the Roman conquerors. Far from it. He had been delivered over to his enemies and crucified, just like other failed revolutionaries. And with his death, all hope of a revolution vanished.

But then, these disciples recalled a time when Jesus had referred to some strange things concerning what he called the "third day." Strangest of all, certain of the women insisted that they found his grave empty when they went to prepare his body on the morning after the Sabbath. They claimed to have seen angels by his tomb, but there was no body. These men had a lot to talk about, yet they couldn't put all the facts together into one coherent theological equation.

Just then, right at the moment of their greatest pain, Jesus, in the guise of a fellow pilgrim, comes alongside them and speaks to them. That is when God comes alongside us, too. When our hopes have come to naught, and we begin grappling with what we know in the Scriptures, although as yet our understanding is painfully lacking, it is then that Jesus visits us. This is what we learn at the sick bed and the grave. This is what we discover with the divorced and the destitute, the addict and the unemployed. When our world collapses and everything lies in ruins about our feet, it is then that Jesus comes alongside us. If this is where you find yourself on this Easter morning, you are a candidate for the fruits of the resurrection.

That is the point at which Christ now speaks to these disciples. He begins by dealing with the impediment that prevented them from recognizing who he was.

II. Jesus Reeducates Them: Dull Hearts To Burning Hearts! (Luke 24:25-27)

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into

His glory?” And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

(a) Read the Whole Story

The problem lay in the fact that these men had not read the whole story. Their unbelieving hearts had read the Scriptures selectively; they left out the parts that did not appeal to them. But a thorough reading of the Scriptures would teach them that there would be no glory without suffering. First comes the suffering, then the glory. That was why the hearts of these two travelers were sad: it was because of unbelief.

Unbelieving hearts are sad hearts. This is the problem with the health and wealth gospel that is being preached today. Unless we come to terms with the cross, when our own time of suffering and trial comes we are not prepared for it. The cross was the stumbling block that prevented the two travelers from seeing the resurrected Jesus. This is the problem with the Jews still today, and why they have two Messiahs—one triumphant, the other a suffering Messiah.

And these men missed something else: they missed the climax of the story.

(b) Read the Story With a New Lens

They were looking for the redemption of Israel, but Jesus opened up the Scriptures concerning not Israel, but himself. Here is what they missed: Jesus himself was the climax of the story! This is what the prophet Isaiah reveals in these astonishing verses:

“You are My servant, Israel,
In Whom I will show My glory.” ...
To bring Jacob back to Him, in order that Israel might be gathered to Him
...to restore the preserved ones of Israel.” (Isaiah 49:3,5,6).

Jesus is Israel! Every promise for the restoration of Israel finds its fulfillment in him. And his resurrection from the dead was the event that began the restoration. Every single promise—the seed, the land, the new temple, the new city, the new land of peace—must be seen through the lens of the death and resurrection of Christ.

If you are a Christian and you are looking for restoration here on earth, you will always have a sad heart. What you are longing for in the future is present now on a bigger scale than you ever realized. If we understand this, we can see why the apostles were so excited about a “new” temple being built by the Messiah. They weren’t looking for a stone building in Jerusalem, but a building “made without hands,” eternal in the heavens, made with living stones (1 Pet 2:4-10), one that would one day descend from heaven and fill the whole new creation (Rev 21:2).

At last, having “explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures,” the disciples began to understand the implications of the death of Jesus. Verse 32:

(c) The Result: A Burning Heart

And they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

This is the first step in getting to the heart of the resurrection. When your world collapses, go back and reread the whole story—and read it with a new lens. Then, when you see all the promises as they are fulfilled in Christ’s death and resurrection, your sad hearts will become burning hearts.

Later that evening, something that Jesus does over a meal helps the two disciples recognize him.

III. Recognizing the Risen Christ (Luke 24:28-35)

And they approached the village where they were going, and

He acted as though He would go farther. And they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” And He went in to stay with them. 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. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” And they arose that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, “The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon.” And they began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

Their hearts so burned with what this man had told them on the road, when it seemed he would travel farther, they urged (literally: “compelled”) him to stay the night with them, and Jesus accepts their invitation. In the book of Revelation, it is Jesus who does the inviting: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Rev 3:20).

At dinner, there is a mysterious reorientation of the disciples’ relationship with their guest. Jesus changes roles, and becomes the host. Moving to the head of the table, he says the blessing over the bread. At once their eyes are opened to see Jesus as he really is. Heaven has come to earth. Finally, the men realize that what they had longed for Israel had already been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus. They learned that the Messiah had been with them all along, but they were prevented from seeing him because of their dull, unbelieving hearts.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead initiated a whole new world order. The King is alive, the temple is being built, a new land is being created. All of this is going on right now. It can be seen in the midst of the ordinary events of life, but it requires the eye of faith to see it.

What a marvelous thing it is to be visited by the risen Christ! No wonder the disciples said to themselves, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road?”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great English preacher of the last century, shares his own experience of being visited by the risen Christ, in these words:

When the Lord visits us in the night, what is the effect upon us? When hearts meet hearts in fellowship of love, communion brings first peace, then rest, and then joy of soul. I am speaking of no emotional excitement rising into fanatical rapture; but I speak of sober fact, when I say that the Lord’s great heart touches ours, and our heart rises into sympathy with Him.

At such a time there is a delightful sense of rest; we have no ambitions, no desires. A divine serenity and security envelop us. We have no thought of foes, or fears, or afflictions, or doubts. There is a joyous laying aside of our own will. We are nothing, and we will nothing; Christ is everything, and His will is the pulse of the soul. We are perfectly content either to be ill or to be well, to be rich or to be poor, to be slandered or to be honoured, so that we may but abide in the love of Christ. Jesus fills the horizon of our being.

At such a time a flood of great joy will fill our minds. I am persuaded that there is no great actual distance between earth and heaven: the distance lies in our dull minds. When the Beloved visits us in the night, He makes our chambers to be the vestibule of His palace-halls. Earth rises to heaven when heaven comes down to earth.

Have your hearts right with Him, and He will visit you often, until every day you shall walk with God, as Enoch did, and so

turn weekdays into Sabbaths, meals into sacraments, homes into temples, and earth into heaven. So be it with us!

(From C. H. Spurgeon's unpublished sermons.)

To conclude our service, I have asked Roxanne Melinat to come and share us the visitation of the risen Christ in her own life.

In order to understand the sweetness of where I am today, you have to understand where I've come from. God snatched me from death and gave me life.

Rape, pillage, plunder, murder, incest. We were like any other Old Testament family! I was born to a woman trying her luck on her third marriage. I am the third of her five children. The first three of us all had different fathers. When my father learned that my mother was pregnant, he wanted her to abort. Instead, my mother named me Roxanne, which means "the coming of dawn." By the time I was a year old, they were divorced, and I've never met him.

When I was three, my mother married her fourth husband, my stepfather. Up until then, we lived with my grandparents, who were raging alcoholics. I was sexually molested at age 6 by my great grandfather. My stepfather was physically and emotionally abusive. He was tall, 6'4", with a deep, reverberating voice. I remember caving inside whenever he would walk up to me yelling. I remember trying to go through life being invisible so as not to encounter his wrath.

As a child, I remember my mother being hit. I remember being hit. I can still see stars when I reflect on being slapped across the face, trying to explain my side of a misunderstanding. No conversations between adults and children occurred at the dinner table, unless we were being belittled. I kept my eyes on my plate.

As I became older, I was not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities after school or attend school games. I remember having the phone snatched out of my hand when I received calls. Hanging up the phone, my stepfather would declare, "When you get A's, then you can have the luxury of talking on the phone." I never did get A's, so I was fairly isolated and lonely. Mostly, I remember being told continually how stupid I was and how I knew nothing. Even today, this is the worst battle area for me. When I find myself in an academic setting, if I do well, I discount it as being too easy; if I struggle with it, it proves what I was told all along.

When I turned 16, I asked my mother for my birth certificate. I wanted to get a job and go to Europe in the summer, like some of my friends. She handed it to me. That's when I saw a different name for "father" on the certificate. I was devastated to learn that my stepfather was not my father. My mother never did say anything to me about it and I didn't ask. Life was hell. I was lost. Inside, I suppose, I was already running for my life. Sometime in that sixteenth year, I ran away. I spent the weekend with my boyfriend, who was home from college. I got pregnant. Abortions were illegal, but with both of us working on finding someone who would perform one, we went to another state and I had an abortion at four months along. My mother knew what we planned to do, so she made up a story for my stepfather, about me going away for the weekend with a girlfriend and her family. He was furious that she let me go. He never did find out what really happened.

I had reached a point where I knew I couldn't endure living at home any longer. My boyfriend's father was a lawyer. He had clients whose estate he managed, who had always wanted children but couldn't because she had had so many abortions. They wanted me to come and live with them. So at 17, my mom signed a form giving me permission to leave home legally, and I moved in with them. They were kind and giving to me. They bought me expensive clothes, a stereo, albums, and

gave me a car to drive to school. I tasted freedom, and I was never going back to being locked up. After graduation, I went wild. There would be periods of time when I would not come home for days. I'd go from one party to work, then off to another party.

It was the time of hippies and free love. I heard about a group of people driving a purple school bus from New Jersey to Colorado. I knew some of them, so I packed up my belongings and was on my way.

At this time I was searching for God. I tried transcendental meditation, eastern religions, agnosticism, even dabbling into witchcraft. While in Denver, I was reading "Rama Krishna and His Disciples." The only line I remember from the book was, "If you cry out to your god, he won't deny you." So one starry night, in an empty parking lot, I looked up and cried, "Show me yourself! I can't find how to reach you!" I waited for a sign, a shooting star, anything out of the ordinary. Nothing happened. I was very depressed. Maybe there was no God. Maybe there was but, but He was not mindful of us.

Within two weeks, I went to Arizona to visit my aunt. I was up late one night in December and I saw *The Robe*. I have no idea why an Easter movie was on just before Christmas. God can do whatever He wants to do to accomplish His purposes. I cried after watching it.

At this time in 1970, I decided to hitchhike up to Washington to visit my parents. I had no idea why I was doing this. I just felt it was the thing I should do. While there, I met a man who lived on the Olympic Peninsula. I went for a visit and decided to stay. He lived on a small homestead in the middle of a vast forest. A river ran a short distance from the front door. I thought I had died and gone to heaven.

On Easter morning, 1971, I had this overwhelming urge to go to church, which was really strange, since I hated Christianity. Church was so superficial. An offer was made to go boating down the river, so the river won out. The following Sunday, I awoke with a stronger urge to go to church. So off I went and I stopped at the first church I came to, the Assemblies of God. While there I was overwhelmed by the music and message. I remember, when we were all standing at the end of the service, I had the thought, "I need to get out of here!" I turned to go, but my feet wouldn't move. Then the invitation came for those who wanted to know Christ to come forward. I heard God quietly say, "This is what you've been looking for. Go forward!" I did.

Through many ensuing events, God led me down to Valencia, California, toward the end of the summer of 1974. There I took a job at Magic Mountain as a receptionist in the business offices. That's where I met Ed, my husband. After our first date, I knew he was the one I would marry, even though he wore plaid pants with cuffs.

One evening, in May, after we had been dating awhile, I was talking with him about marriage, to be more specific, that we should get married. He wasn't convinced. He wanted to develop the friendship more. That same night, while trying to sleep but just tossing and turning, it felt as though God was tapping me on the shoulder. Unable to ignore His persistence, I sat up and said, "What do you want?" He said, "You will marry Ed, but in My timing. Let it go." I replied, "Fine, but if he doesn't ask me by the end of November, I'm outta here!" The next morning, I told Ed that God told me we were going to get married. Ed replied, "Obviously that's a mistake. He would have told me first. I'm the man." I said nothing. Just smiled. On the last day of November, at 11 p.m. on the Santa Monica pier, Ed asked me to marry him. I had forgotten my ultimatum to God. It was then I remembered what I had said to Him. I laughed. God has a sense of humor!

Four years into our marriage, I began counseling to work on

my shame of having an abortion and to work on my family of origin issues. Perhaps the event that pushed me into seeking counsel was now Ed, and I wanted children. After trying to get pregnant for nine months, with no success, I thought it would not happen. I didn't deserve children. Then I got pregnant. But now I would have to pay for my sin by having this child deformed, or if not that, then it would be a boy. I would have to deal with my men issues though this child. I wrestled with these fears for eight months, until I came to an understanding that my God loved me and had only the very best in mind for me, whatever the outcome. I was convinced that I would have a boy. I had only boys' names picked out. It was a "she." Oh, how rich I was! Her name is Jessica, which means "wealthy." I would make sure my daughter knew that she was valued and a precious gift. During my second pregnancy, again only boys' names were chosen. I was so surprised to have a girl. It took us three days to name her. Her name is Ashlee, which means, "a dweller among ash trees," which is where I long to be. How could God be so good to me?

Along the way, God told me that Ed is His gift to me. He knew what kind of a husband I would need. Ed has always encouraged me in my love of woodworking. He has been supportive of any academic pursuits I've had. God told me that I am safe with Ed and that our girls are safe with him. Our Lord has told me that I am the twinkle of His eye. The walls of fear, designed to protect me, continue to fall little by little. I have every confidence God will continue His restoration process in me.

So, the first 21 years were spent surviving my family. The second 21 years God has spent restoring my spirit. In my forty-third year of life, I am learning the true freedom I have in Christ. It is a wondrous thing. I am looking forward to all Christ has in store for me. He has great things in mind for you and me alike.

There is nothing in my family history or life circumstances that would indicate a sweet or satisfied life, but as you heard my story, understand that it's really a story of what magnificent things God can do with one's life. He reached into the depths of my darkness and has brought and is bringing me life abundantly.

I awoke at 2 a.m. one morning in October, 1994, to write a poem for Brian Morgan's class. It was required. I don't do poetry, but I had the first few lines in my head. I started it and God finished it. It's His love poem to me.

LONGINGS

Longings of the heart get so crowded out
with wood that seems alive, but leaves me with doubt
that what I long for is really there.

Feverishly - mending sprinklers that water all but the heart
run run run
Hide from the ghosts that call my name
into busyness - it's all the same.

But late at night upon my bed,
the longings come back to dance in my head.

"Be free!" You whisper...from all your fear
Listen to My voice and then you will hear.

Gently I call your name...
...and will
until you hold no more refrained.

Remember what I've said about you
Remember the work we've done.

I AM what's true,
I AM the One that makes you new.
The desert you've been walking in
will flourish into oasis from within.

And as you learn all things from Me,
your pain will be but a memory.

For I loved you from your very start
enough, so much, I gave my heart.

Laughter I AM, when I behold your face.
For I AM not bound by time and space.

"The coming of dawn" - I named you
no mistake
Refreshment for a weary world, you'll make.

You're not sure that this is from Me,
but you just wait and you will see.

You're already whole, you just don't know it yet.
You don't believe me now, I'll bet.

"Show me yourself" you one day cried...
When you were looking for a guide.

Are you looking for a flash across the sky?
Here I AM, here you are, the twinkle of My eye!

October 11, 1994
2:06 a.m.