

Hearts Burning

Hey church family, man is it good to be back. I take one week off to teach at a Men's Conference, and it was good but this is the place I want to be, and you are the people I want to be with. And I've come a mission from God. Like the Blues Brothers, not to put the band back together. No, but to bring a word. A word not my own. A word that is so powerful that if you're discouraged, I'm hoping you would leave encouraged. If you were confused about God's activity in your life, you would gain clarity. If you felt like giving up on life or on God, today would be the day you dig back in - gaining a strength not your own. Sound good? Turn to the person next to you and say. Encouragement is here!

I heard a great story about a young man named Luke Terry who is a baseball player, he's a catcher and batting 3rd for his team, but there is a caveat. He only has one arm. When he was young he contracted E. Coli that eventually attacked his arm. Because of what the disease had done they needed to amputate. This was when Luke was 19 months old. But having one arm hasn't held him back. I saw this video of where he is now of him throwing the ball as a catcher and I just need to share it with you. Isn't that amazing! Catch the ball, flip the glove, catch the ball again, throw the ball. I wish I had footage to show you his hitting skills. I don't. But here's what I wonder. Do you think somewhere along the way he would ever had an opportunity to give up hope? How many times do you think he had to practice that, in order for it to look so fluid. That I'm sure didn't come over night. His coaches tout him as the hardest working player. But is it perhaps because he more than anyone else knows what it is to be in a situation that looks impossible, looks hopeless, and was still able to push through.

Regardless of his experience and my guessing into it we all know what it is to feel hopeless. It's for every student who does their best in a class, on a paper. Only to get a grade that doesn't live up to expectations. It's the worker at a company banging his or head against the wall. Spending hours thinking about how to fix the problem, but coming up with no viable solutions for the workplace. So it is what it is. It's the couple who are in a season, and it's dark, and the kids needs are so overwhelming it seems it will never end. It's that single person who longs for companionship and someone to fill the void but still can't find it.

Have you ever been there, been completely hopeless? I don't need a raise of hands. But if you have I wanted to share with you something. There is a passage from our lesson today that says, "*We had hoped that he was the one.*" These were disciples talking about Jesus. They thought he was something, but maybe not. That phrase we had hope. It's so convicting. It speaks of disappointment and disillusionment, speaks of shattered dreams and hopelessness.

I wonder if you and I have ever been in a similar position with with God. And at this point I wanted to welcome you if you're just joining us. Maybe you don't consider yourself a Christian. But you can relate to this phrase. Yeah, I had hope in God but if I told you this part of my story. He let this happen, or this was my experience. And now I'm just not so sure. See I had hope, but maybe just maybe my hope was misguided.

If you've ever been in that place my prayer is that God will show up in such a powerful way this morning to lift you up. My prayer and hope as we meet him in the Word he reinvigorates your life. See I believe when it comes to God there is reason for a sure hope, a certainty over this one called Jesus. So let's get into it.

Our lesson for today is Jesus speaking with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. It's a 7 mile journey and some say that would be a 2 - 2.5 hour conversation. And it's just one of those conversations that stick with you. Makes an impact. The equivalent to us maybe that cross country car ride where there aren't any good radio stations, all they got is the twangy country station. So you have to talk. I remember vividly a talk I had with another pastor when I was on my way to a conference and the impact my bishop had on me in a good way with love and knowledge. He was laying it down. So this is one of those memorable conversations. And it's a conversation that by God's grace restored their hope. So they meet with Jesus. And they experience the comfort of having their hearts burning out of love for God, comforted by this. Man may the Lord do such a work in our hearts. May he bless this discussion.

You know it's interesting the spin people can put on things. I look back just fifty years ago when they were trying to convince you smoking was healthy. Here are some of the adds I found. Give your throat a vacation. Helps with digestion. Helps you not to overindulge. Which goes to prove you can sell almost anything if it promises to lose weight. I think the truth campaigning has been an effective correction of that. It's interesting the spin our kids get on truth from their friends or from tv. There is so much important information we need to get across, but it seems we are fighting against what their friends say or do. Fighting against movies like storks, against cultural norms but my friends go to bed at Midnight, fighting against the wrong influences. (Sox) Sorry low blow.

What we find is *the wrong spin can destroy hope*. I consider the disciples on their way, and they had a spin to the story. **v.21 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. 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.** They had information but it wasn't all connected. They had a spin but not the true story.

We live in an age where unlike anytime before more and more people are trying to put their own spin on the story of Christianity. I remember with such high hopes when this movie came out, in fact I was at a church conference and they showed the preview. Russel Crowe as Noah alright. Christians are cool again. Watch out world. But then I saw it. And that wasn't the story that was a spin. Then Exodus. I think of our schools who seem to at times promote anything other than Christianity, and spin against or away from it. I think of the History Channel, the Da Vinci code, glib incomplete references to the Bible that try to spin us away from the sure hope we have. The spin away from God and away from the true story is out there, and it is there every day.

And what was Jesus reaction. **v.How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!** I wonder if he was thinking at all. Who told you these other things, and who have you been listening to. Because you haven't been listening to my Word.

Is it possible there is a connection to our lack of hope and the voices we've allowed in to go unchecked. Is it possible that Jesus would ask us, "Who have you been listening to." Cause it

hasn't been me. Now this is not the sermon that says never listen to other music, never watch tv or a movie, let's boycott it all including DisneyWorld. Not saying that. But if you constantly lean into all these other sources of information, and allow it to go unchecked never consulting with the Word. We too can end up misguided, confused, and without hope. I consider how Luther explained the 3rd commandment which was all about worship, "We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." So the two ways we destroy hope is by despising the teaching of the Word, and neglecting the Word. This is what we want to repent of this day.

So what is the solution? *Lean into God's truth to have hope renewed.* What Jesus then did is give them the full story. He drew everything together in a masterful way. It kind of reminds me of these childhood art projects - connect the dots. Anyone remember doing those. I always liked them because they were the only art projects I did that looked good. Who can guess what it is? It's an elephant. So Jesus was talking about the Old Testament and connecting the dots of how the seed of Eve connect to Jesus, and the offspring of Abraham, and down the line all spoke of what had just happened. Dot after dot after dot, until they finally got the picture.

I saw a great video of young kid who was able to connect the dots and find Jesus in every book of the Old Testament. It was so well done I thought I would share it with you. So I wonder how much of that Jesus was doing here. Don't you remember Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, riding in on a donkey, the one who would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, the one who would die without a bone being broken, the one like Jonah who would be locked in the belly of the grave for 3 days, but come out of that belly 3 days later. I wonder how many aha moments they had.

And if you're just joining us let me make an attempt to connect some spiritual dots. The reason you feel hopeless, or have felt hopeless like we all have is because of something common that we share - sin. Sin gives this empty feeling, this guilty feeling, this lost feeling because it separates us from the true love of God. But Jesus is real. As real as the hair on my head, and the breath in my lungs. Jesus did come for us. And Jesus forgave all of our sins. His cross for us speaks about forgiveness won. This day you have the right to be called a child of God not because of anything you have done, but because of everything he has done for you. See this hope, this life, this life - is a gift. And the power of the Holy Spirit working through this Word and through Baptism is able bring dead spiritual things to life. The Spirit is able to make clarity over things that were once confused. And the greatest clarity I have to offer you is this. The love that you long for, that you need and I need separately, we have found. For Jesus was not just a good man and teacher, he was not just a historical figure, most of all he is the Messiah. He is my Messiah, and while I cannot control this I pray he is your Messiah.

You know this whole lesson reminds me of favorite teachers. Who here remembers their favorite teacher? I had many but one was my Dad. I remember having him for my Confirmation Class, and talking to him in the car about religious things or German classes. I loved when he could explain to me God and his Word, and I've needed and still need at times that teaching from him. There is a need for teaching as this explains, the disciples didn't get there on their own.

And what I believe is that *constant Bible teaching brings strong hope.* One of the environments we offer is just starting up again. It's called Starting Point. It's an opportunity to get teaching, or to connect the dots over areas that may have confused you spiritually. I consider

teaching children how good it is to have a plan to raise them up in the Lord. Some plan on having family devotions or using arms of the church to help them, some plan on Christian schools. Whatever the case to have strong hope those children need constant teaching. Someone who can explain to them as well how this all fits together. Let us not despise preaching and teaching of the Word but be content to gladly hear and learn it often.

But you know what is something really interesting about this lesson? It's like Jesus is in stealth mode. Like how can he be right there in front of them without them noticing. It reminds me of the movie the Fate of the Furious. Yes, I love those movies. And this plane they were using could go undetected by radar because it avoided the satellites at just the right time. So Jesus is right there, but they do not see them. He is completely undetected. And you know what I learn from this.

Disappointment destroys hope. They were so fixated over Jesus as an earthly king, come to throw off the Roman oppression. They were so frustrated over not knowing what everything meant, that they couldn't see hope was standing right in front of them signaling a new beginning. But can't you and I relate. Disappointment destroys hope and in a similar way blocks our view of Jesus.

I don't know your story inside and out, but I know at one point or another you've been disappointed with life. I know you can relate with the idea of a shattered dream. And it's these periods of disillusionment that can cloud our view of Jesus.

But where is Jesus. Where is the one they had hoped in. He is right in front of their faces. Standing there talking with them proof that even though they might have given up on him, he did not give up on them. Standing there to console and connect the dots. He is there and he isn't going anywhere. Friends I'm here to tell you, your God has yet to leave you. He has yet to leave me. He has yet to forsake us. He is our constant, our comforter, and our guide to the very end - whether the journey is 7 miles, 14 miles, or 70 years. He is here.

But maybe there is a correlation between disappointment our inability to see God's face. That what *we are most disappointed in is what we were most distracted by.* Yes the disciples were disappointed he was not an earthly king, so it is good he disappoint for they had yet to realize his full identity. As long as they were focused on that they could never see him for who he actually was. It was not as an earthly king to throw off the Roman oppression, it was as spiritual king to throw off the devil, to throw off the penalty of sin and grant a peace and freedom that lasts way further than they ever thought.

Maybe you're disappointed because your job hasn't panned out according to your plan. Maybe you've been disillusioned because of the people who have left or let you down. And maybe God is reaching out today saying. No, no don't you see. They were distracting you. These things were leading you on a path away from me. So I had to remove it, I had to allow this to happen so you could see my face. So you could know I was always with you. So you can know I am your greatest love.

And the presence of God. It did something. It was a love so good, a presence so powerful that they confessed about being around Jesus. v.32 **“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”** *The presence of God brings heart burn.*

The idea reminds me of something I did recently. I tested my fireproof tongue recently and I may never learn. I picked up some Ghost Pepper salsa. I figure it won't be too bad they usually dull things down with tomatoes and other. Nope. Not dulled. Spicy salsa ever had, and while my tongue survived the rest of my body didn't. I was up that night for two hours because of the heart burn it brought.

The heart burn Jesus brings to put it mildly is better. It's the idea of comfort, of peace, of restoration. And I believe *heart burn from Jesus restores hope*. See these disciples weren't saying we had hope. No they were saying we have hope. And what Jesus did for them was so good that though they just traveled a 7 mile journey they would run back the 7 other miles to tell them about Jesus victory, and Jesus presence, and Jesus goodness.

Friends we need some heart burn. We need the presence of God through his Word, through this place called the church, through prayers and our calling on him to be near. And he can give hope and encouragement. I love the passage from Romans that says, "13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13) I don't know about you but that's what I want. I want a hope that's overflowing, that has so much it superabounds, that it cannot be contained. It's a hope I find in him and share to you. He is the God who has loved us and never left us. He is the God who carries all our hurts and pains. He is the God moving in our lives so that we might better see his face and understand his true identity. May the Holy Spirit move in your heart and your life. May he remind you this day he has always been faithful, and he will not stop being that.