

Resurrection Conversations

Second in a Series

Third Sunday of Easter / April 26, 2020

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Luke 24:13-35

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

- **Last Sunday, Waiting for the Resurrection**
- **May 3 - Resurrection Abundance**
- **May 10 - Resurrection Promises**
- **May 17 - Resurrection Response**
- **May 24 - Resurrection Unity**

Dear Friends in Christ,

Story of my friend Mike spending many hours putting puzzles together, working hard to put together 1000 or 2000 pieces or more. He takes great pleasure in finishing a puzzle, and occasionally, he will frame and deliver to a friend. One might even say his heart burns with joy as he gets close to completing the project.

I don't know how long it takes for an average person to put together a puzzle, but I did read one article that suggested it was one hour for every 100 pieces. What we do know is how long it took God to finish the Old Testament puzzle of carrying out His plan of salvation. 4000 years or so is what the scholars suggest. Today I invite you today to think of God's great plan of salvation as a giant puzzle starting with God's first promise to Adam and Eve that He would send a Savior, the puzzle pieces coming together one by one, the call of Abraham to be the father of many nations, the nation of Israel enslaved to Egyptian oppressors for 400 plus years, the Exodus, the puzzle pieces coming together with the crossing of the Red Sea, the 40 years of wilderness wandering, the conquest of Canaan with the Lord providing victory upon victory, decades of exile to Babylon and then to Assyria, God sending one prophet after another to preach and to call to repentance, and then as you well know, when the fullness of time had arrived, God taking great pleasure in sending His Son into this world in the flesh, then Jesus working hard at living the perfect life not a one of us could even come close to living, Jesus sweating, crying, and bleeding his way all the way to the cross, his heart burning with affection for a world full of lost and condemned sinners, it was for the joy set before him that he set his face towards Jerusalem, he willingly suffered under Pontius Pilate, he was obedient even unto death on a cross.

And at just the right moment in history, just when masses of Israelite believers were giving up hope, just when he had suffered all that he was appointed to suffer, when he had fulfilled all prophecy in perfect fashion, he cried out that it was finished, the Old Testament part of the puzzle completed, and in that moment, can you imagine how the heart of God

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was burning, as the earth was quaking and the curtain in the temple was tearing and many saints were arising from the dead? And oh the pleasure of God in heaven above as He raised his beloved Son from the dead on the third day, and He exalted Him back onto the throne on the 40th day, and then on the 50th day, the Day of Pentecost, the New Testament part of the puzzle begins.

Today's sermon theme is "Resurrection Conversations, and we focus on how the Holy Spirit can bless our conversations in such a way that God's Great Commission can go forward, or to say it another way, that the Name of God might be kept holy among us and His Kingdom would come more and more into our midst.

In these days of coronavirus and so much of life as we know it being turned upside down and inside out, the Holy Spirit would invite us to be trusting in our God, to be trusting that His agenda is the same as it has always been which is for sinners in all of the nations to be repenting and to be believing and to be attracted to Jesus Christ and His Church. And not only are we to be trusting that God has a plan to prosper and to heal and for his kingdom to be advancing, we are to understand that the way that we respond to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is a piece of the puzzle. The way that we conduct ourselves towards one another is a piece of the puzzle. The way that we think and speak and act, the good habits that we form and the bad habits that we break are pieces of the puzzle.

Two meditations, three Resurrection Conversations, for you today on this Third Sunday of Easter, as we continue our resurrection of the body celebrations. **First, we explore how Jesus opened up the Scriptures to those two early disciples in such a way as to make their hearts burn. And secondly, we explore the opportunities we might be having in these days to engage in post-resurrection conversations as a way of making hearts burn with the love of Jesus Christ.**

First, we explore how Jesus opened up the Scriptures to those two early disciples in such a way as to make their hearts burn.

Back in the 70's and 80's many of us used a method of outreach called Evangelism Explosion. We would train our members to go out two by two and initiate conversations that would hopefully culminate in people affirming their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior.

- Part 1 was chit chat.
- Part 2 of this conversation was the asking of two questions: "If you were to die tonight, are you certain that you would go to heaven?" If you were to stand before God in heaven and he were to ask you why should he let you into heaven, what would you answer?
- Part 3 of the conversation, depending on their answer to the questions, depended was a five-part presentation - 1) Heaven is a free gift neither deserved nor

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earned. 2) Man is a sinner and cannot save himself. 3) God is both merciful and just. On the one hand He is merciful and does not want to punish, but on the other hand He is a just and holy God, and it is in nature to punish.

- Part 4 of the conversation is Jesus. God has solved this dilemma of being both merciful and just at the same time by sending his Son Jesus, punishing him instead of us.
- Part 5 of the conversation is that this gift is received by faith, saving faith more than just head knowledge.

Was that method of outreach the best way to go out into the community and evangelize? I'm not sure, but as we turn to our Gospel lesson for today, we may be certain that Jesus was and is and ever shall be the perfect conversationalist. We are privileged today to explore one of the first recorded resurrection conversations. Six observations, I would offer.

- Observation #1 is that Jesus alongside, and He listened in.
- Observation #2 is that He asked two good questions: What are you talking about? And when Cleopas wondered out loud whether he was the only visitor to Jerusalem who didn't know the things that had been happening, Jesus, the omniscient Son of the living God, asked quite innocently, "What things?"
- Observation #3 is that Jesus listens to everything they want to tell him.
- Observation #4 is that He talks straight with them. He names them as foolish and slow of heart, he rebukes them for not knowing what they should have known.
- Observation #5 is that He points them to the written Scriptures and explains all that the prophets had predicted concerning himself.
- Observation #6 is that He reveals Himself to them as a way of helping them to be strong in their faith and in their desire to spread the Good News. He stays with them into the evening meal, at which time he breaks bread and as he blesses that bread, perhaps it is that they see the nail marks in his hands, but in any case, their eyes are opened, they recognize Jesus, He vanishes, and all kinds of puzzle pieces fall into place for them.
- The result of that resurrection conversation is that they 1) reflect on how their hearts were burning as their beloved master explained Scripture, 2) they hurried back seven miles to Jerusalem, and 3) they found the eleven disciples and others who were gathered and 4) they initiated a resurrection conversation of their own.

And secondly, we explore the opportunities we might be having in these days to engage in post-resurrection conversations as a way of making hearts burn with the love of Jesus Christ. Three examples we would consider this morning, one from each of our three Scripture lessons already read.

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Example #1 comes from Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2. We note that Peter started off his resurrection conversation by quoting Old Testament prophecies, He pointed folks to the miracles of Jesus, he directed the conversation towards the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of Christ into heaven. He preached both Law and Gospel in such a way that listeners repented and believed and wanted to be baptized.

The Kingdom of God is like five Facebook friends who are arguing on social media about whether the most recent press conferences conducted by President Trump and Governor Walz. The conversation is headed south, and it's turning ugly, when all at once, one friend inserts a prayer, asking God to bless both the president and the governor with wisdom from on high, asking God to heal those who are sick and dying, asking God to help us to learn all that He is wanting us to learn in these days.

Example #2 comes from I Peter 1. We learn from Peter the importance of conducting ourselves in such a way that others will be attracted to Christ. We are reminded that all of life is to be in response to the fact that we have been ransomed with the precious blood of our Redeemer. We are challenged to not just be contented with loving folks who are easy to love (phileo is the Greek word), but rather to love folks who are not so easy to love for the purpose of leading them to repentance and a stronger faith.

The kingdom of God is like congregations of believers all over the country full of folks who spend this next week looking to encourage friends and family towards patience, looking for ways to share the love of Christ in tangible ways. Some of them are making masks, others are reaching out to friends on the telephone, others are sending notes of encouragement and gift cards to friends and family who are losing income, others are making a special effort to listen to and understand those who are annoying them in a variety of ways, still others are directing conversations towards that which is of good report, that which is noble and excellent and of virtue.

Example #3 comes from Jesus Himself on the road to Emmaus. We learn from Jesus to listen carefully, to ask good questions, to speak truth in love, to know Scripture well, and to nudge folks into a deeper relationship with their Savior.

The kingdom of God is like a medium sized congregation in a medium sized town full of folks who believe more and more they are living in end times. As often as they feel confused and frustrated, they go running to Holy Scripture, they rest in the promises of their God. They understand that the things that are happening to them are meant for God to be working inside of them. They see their lives as individuals and collectively as pieces to a puzzle that will fall into place according to God's schedule. As often as they listen well to their God, their hearts tend to warm up and even to burn. They make a strong effort to ask

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good questions, and their best days are when their conversations are directed into the very presence of Jesus Christ. He is risen, He is risen indeed. Alleluia!