

# Did Not Our Hearts Burn?

## 3 Easter, Year A – Luke 24:13-35

*preached by the Rector at St. Paul's, Henderson, May 4, 2014*

Lord, take my eyes and see through them. Take my lips and speak through them. Take my soul and set it on fire with love for thee. Amen.

Alleluia, Christ is risen! *The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!*

In this morning's Gospel lesson, this time from Luke's story, we once *more* meet up with some of Jesus' disciples who think it's all over. They have been through a roller coaster of a week: The triumphal entry into Jerusalem to the cheering of the crowds. The cleansing from the Temple of the merchants and the moneychangers and the cheats. The intense preaching in the Temple courts. The celebration of the Passover meal and Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Then the arrest in the garden, the trial, the denunciations, the crucifixion. Finally, it was done and they were confused and disappointed and broken-hearted. But mostly these disciples were tired, they were just... worn... out. Maybe they would have walked the few miles to Emmaus that afternoon, after leaving the hillside from which they had watched their master die. But because of the law, they couldn't walk that far until the Sabbath was over.

So here they are on the dusty road home on the first day of the week. Slogging along almost mechanically, letting one foot fall in front of the other, they talk about all that has happened. It doesn't make sense. How could everything have seemed so right and yet turned out the way it did? And how about the women who had been to the tomb that very morning and had found it empty? Do you suppose they *really* saw angels? Do you suppose Mary really saw the Lord? The two walk on and talk – a lot of questions – no answers.

Two weeks out from our own wonderful celebration of Easter, things are pretty much settling back to normal. By now the family and friends who came in for the weekend have long since packed their bags and their cars, and have headed down the road home, or back to school, or *wherever*. By now all the basketsfull of chocolate bunnies and marshmallow chicks and creme-filled eggs have been consumed and are well on their way to *re*-appearing on hips and middles and backsides. By now the new Easter outfits are hung back in the closet, waiting for the next big spring fling. It was a busy week and weekend – Holy Week and Easter. It was great at times, and hectic at times, and it was exhausting. Now it's time to get on with the normal pace of our lives, time to fall back into our regular customs and habits and rhythms, time to pick up where we were before the season went briefly into high gear.

As the two walk along, with the sun getting higher in the sky and hotter on their heads, someone approaches them from the rear as if overtaking them on the way. *We* know who it is, of course, but the two disciples don't know him. "May I join your walk and your conversation?" the stranger asks, and the two welcome him – after all, there's safety in numbers. "What are you talking about this morning?" he begins. The journey and the conversation both come to a crashing halt as the disciples look at this man as if he just crawled out from under some rock. But as their eyes suddenly fill with tears, they quickly shift their gaze to the ground. "You've come from Jerusalem. Do you mean to tell us that you don't know what's been going on?" They tell him the story we know so well. They share their hopes. They share their fears. They share their disappointment. And they share their *questions* about what it all might mean. Then, to their great amazement, the stranger sets them moving again – toward Emmaus *and* toward understanding. As they walk on together, he *re*-explains to them the prophesies of the Hebrew Scripture, this time in light of the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Over the last two weeks, each of us has met a lot of people on our road. Many of them were so busy in their own worlds, that they might not have noticed if we had run right into them. But others have been asking the same questions as the two tired disciples. Of course, they've *phrased* it differently.

Instead of, “Do you suppose she really saw the Lord?” maybe it sounded more like, “How was your Easter?” But let me tell you, it’s the same question, looking for the same kind of answers.

As the stranger speaks, the time and the journey seem to melt away and Emmaus arrives before the disciples expect it. The stranger moves forward, as if he is going on ahead. But they don’t want him to go. They invite him to stay with them for the night. There’s probably not too much in the house, but they can scrape something together so they can continue their conversation over supper. They clean the dust off themselves and sit down to the table. Each of them pours some wine and takes a bit of this and a bit of that. Then the stranger picks up the bread from the table, an odd thing for the *guest* to do. He blesses it, and he breaks it, and he offers it to them, and suddenly, they *know*! They *know* that the one they thought was a stranger, is really their Lord. They *know* that he has risen from death just like the women had said. They *know* that all the events of the past week had worked out *exactly* according to God’s plan. And they *know* that everything Jesus had told them – today on the road from Jerusalem, and on the long, long road that he had taken to *get* to Jerusalem – they *know* that every *word* was *true*. With tear filled eyes, they look up from the bread he had placed in their hands to see that he is not there anymore. He has gone, “vanished from their sight,” the Gospel says. But in his wake he has left peace, and he has left joy, and he has left a depth of clarity that overwhelms them. “Were not our hearts burning within us?” they say to each other, “while he was talking to us on the way?” They got up from the table and practically *ran* the seven miles back to Jerusalem to share the good news that had opened their eyes – the good news that the Lord was risen indeed!

Is that the urgency *you* have this morning? Now that the friends are home, and the goodies are gone, and the clothes are put away, are you ready to just get on with the rest of the year? Or is the risen Christ as alive in your life today as he was two weeks ago on Easter morning? Is Easter a done deal, a pleasant traditional remembrance, over for another year? Or does your heart *burn* like those of the disciples who knew the Lord in the breaking of the bread? You see, that burning is the whole *message* of Easter. That’s the life into which each of us has been born by our Baptism. That’s the life we celebrate each time *we* come to the table, each time we once *again* break bread in the name of the risen Christ.

Let us know him *today* in the words that all point to him as the completion of God’s plan. Let us know him *today* in the water that cleanses us from sin and makes us *his* beloved children. Let each and every one of us know him *today* in the breaking of the bread that is for us his own precious Body. Let the Spirit of the risen Christ take *charge* of our lives and set *every* heart to burning. And let that fire consume all our doubt and fear, all our prejudice and injustice, all our mean-spiritedness and moral cowardess, all our fault-finding and back-biting. Let the fire of the living Christ fill us with such love for him that we won’t just be ready to talk to the next person that comes to us with a question, but that we will be *running* to others on the road and asking them if *they* know what’s been going on with this Jesus! “Were not *our* hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the way?”

Take our souls and set them on fire with love for thee!

Alleluia, Christ is risen! *The Lord is risen indeed, Alleluia!*