

April 10, 2005
3rd Sunday of Easter
Luke 24:13-35
Pastor Ott

What is Your Heart Condition?

When I walk into a hospital room to visit someone, quite often there are a lot of different wires and leads and things hooked up to the person, especially if they are in a critical care unit or intensive care unit. You can look up at the monitor that is above the bed and see all kinds of things, all kinds of information—heart rate, blood pressure. You can see the rhythm of their heart beat. To the trained eye, you can learn a lot of things about the condition of their heart just from seeing what some of these monitors say. To find out their physical heart condition at that point in time, doctors have a lot of information at their hands.

But there are other times in life when our heart condition isn't as easily diagnosed. Times when our hearts hurt, when they are confused, when they are anxious, when they are uncertain. You can't hook up a monitor and see that. You can't hook up a monitor and see the pain and the anguish that at times comes into our lives and touches our heart and affects us. That can't be seen.

This morning our Lord gives us an answer. As we look at the condition of our hearts and we want to see what our heart condition is, the Lord provides us some diagnosis. This great physician of body and soul reminds us this morning where the answer is to hearts that are downcast, foolish and slow like he said to those people that were walking on the road to Emmaus. He offers us his prescription which leads our hearts to become burning with resurrection joy.

The events I read to you from Luke 24 take place on Easter—it's that day, on that same day it says right at the beginning. "*Two of them*"—the "*them*" would be disciples—followers of Jesus. These two people that were walking along and discussing everything that had happened, literally they were bouncing ideas back and forth off of each other. These were people that were not clueless. They were disciples. They were followers. Perhaps they had seen some of the miracles. Maybe they had seen people come back from the dead, the blind with sight and all of these other things that Jesus had done. Perhaps they had even heard the Bread of Life discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, or some of Jesus' other powerful teachings. We are not talking about people who were clueless. They were faithful church-going folk I suppose we would say today.

But as they walked that day, their hearts were having a problem. They were confused, they were uncertain, and they didn't know what to make of things, so together they walked and bounced ideas off of each other to try to understand everything that had happened. The one they had followed, the one they put their trust in, had been betrayed, tried, convicted, crucified, died, was buried—now they had all these reports that morning that his body was gone, that he had risen. But others went and couldn't see it, and they didn't know what was going on. So they were chasing down one blind

alley after another trying to explain it to each other—trying to find some hope among their hurt, some confidence among their confusion. But they kept running into dead ends.

All of a sudden as they were walking those seven miles, Jesus comes and starts walking with them and we are told that he kept them from recognizing him, and you might wonder why. If he had just said, “Hey look it’s me”, then they would have understood everything, right? Everything would have been better. We might think Jesus is being awfully mean here, but that’s not the case. He keeps them from recognizing himself so that he can teach them a greater lesson that is going to last them much longer—that is going to be a blessing to them and also a blessing to us.

He asked them the question—“What are you talking about?” Cleopas answers and explains all the things that had happened and kind of sounds like, “Don’t you know anything?” Then Jesus answers these people who we are told had stood still with their faces downcast. The hurt was evident in the way that their body language was talking. Jesus answered people who were hurting with words that might surprise us. He says to them, *“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”* Here is the great physician of body and soul making his diagnosis. Here is the problem with your heart condition—you are foolish, you are slow and you are downcast. You have the answer here in front of you but you haven’t been looking at it. So as he walks with them on the way to Emmaus, it says *beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.* And how the Messiah had to suffer, die and rise again.

His prescription for their hurt for their soul was getting into God’s Word and seeing all the things God had said beforehand about what the Messiah would go through. It wasn’t, “Hey look at me, trust your eyes.” It was “Hey look in the Word and let the Spirit work in your hearts.”

Interesting prescription—because as you and I walk through this lifetime, we might not be walking seven miles in one stretch ever, but we are going to walk at times when we are downcast, when we have things that are troubling us, when we are uncertain about what the future will bring, when we are faced with sickness, when we are faced with heartbreak, when we are faced with decisions and we have honestly no clue what is the right decision to make—our hearts can become heavy, our faces downcast and the simple greeting from someone else leads us to snap back at them because we are downcast.

We might think these guys should have known better, but think of how often you and I find ourselves chasing down blind alleys to find the answers for our hurts and our confusions. Think about it. Think about how often many people are so willing to shell out \$25 for the latest self-help book that is going to tell them every last thing that they need to know about being good and better and happy and whatnot. Think of how many tune in to Dr. Phil every day so they can find an answer to all the heartache. Think of how many people turn to the bottom of a bottle, to some pills, or to something else to find the answer. Think of how many people chase down the blind alley of having an affair because it is going to bring some excitement back into their life which they think

they need and they deserve because their faces were downcast. Think of how often you and I are just plain fools and we chase the wrong things—we go in this direction and that direction. We scurry and we hurry and then we are downcast and distressed and we don't look at the answer that's in front of us. We are just like these two disciples on the way to Emmaus, because like them, we've had the advantage of having God's Word in front of us. We've had the advantage of having God speak to us through his Word and through his Sacraments.

If I asked every member of our congregation, "Is God's Word important? Is the Bible God's inspired inherent Word?" I think the majority of the people would say yes. I certainly would hope so. And yet I still find it interesting that we aren't having more people in study together so that iron can sharpen iron as Scripture speaks of. So that we can learn from each other about God's Word, so that we can point each other into the right direction to find answers for our hurts and our disappointments and the things that confuse us. But to be honest, I've often heard more people talking about the latest Dr. Phil show than I've heard talking about Isaiah or Jeremiah or Romans or Corinthians.

Why is that? There is one reason. You and I are sinners. You and I at times are going to find reasons why we can't get together for group study, and that may well be. I understand that. But we are also going to find times where it makes more sense to us to get out the remote control and flip through until we find that episode of Seinfeld that we can say the words along with the person and watch that instead of actually opening up our Bibles and reading it on our own or as a family or whatever the case may be. Our hearts at times go through life downcast, slow to understand, and being foolish because we are sinners and we don't want to turn to the answer that's in front of us in God's Word. We want to go in other places. And because of it, you and I endure more hurts, more uncertainty, we have a lack of comfort that our God desperately wants us to have simply because we chase after our own minds—simply because we are sinful and sin makes us less than smart.

There are no two ways around it. We are just like these two disciples on the way to Emmaus. But here is the incredible part. Just like with them, our God is patient with us and loving with us and points us in the right direction. He opens our minds so that we can understand Scripture and then the prescription is there and it fills us and it takes away those fears and anxieties and instead it gives us the most wonderful kind of heartburn in the world—the kind of heartburn that these two disciples talked about today.

Don't you find it amazing that these two guys, after they have walked all this way, listened to all these things, and now they see Jesus as he starts to serve them the meal—they recognize that it's Jesus. And then he disappears from their sight right there at the table. He is gone. Don't you find it interesting that the first words that we are told that they speak are not, "Where did he go? What just happened?" Or, "Hey, that was Jesus, can you believe it? We saw Jesus! He is alive!" The first words that the Spirit recorded for us that they spoke were, "*Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?*" They talked about the effect of the Bible study Jesus had with them on Easter evening, not the fact

that they had seen Jesus. Doesn't that speak volumes to us about the power of God's Word to take away the hurts and the anxieties? Doesn't it speak to us volumes about how God's Word has the answers to so many things we struggle with and when we look there, we are going to find these answers? We are going to find God's love for us. That all of these things had to happen—God said it would happen. And as we look in Scripture, we are going to find out that a lot of the things that we stress and worry about, God tells us they are going to come, but he tells us that he is going to be with us through them all. He proves that his promises are certain because he lived and died in our place and took away our sins. If he loved me enough to live on the cross and die for me, now he is going to desert me as I face difficulty? NO! I am reassured of that truth time and time again as I dig into God's Word. I see his incredible love, his forgiveness. I see things that are wonderful, things that Dr. Phil can't show me. I see a Lord that loved me enough not just to make me but to buy me back from my own sinful stupidity through his life and his death. The love I find in Scripture is personal. It's directed toward each one of us. It is also personally brought to us as we come to the Lord's Supper where he says, "This is my body. This is my blood—given and shed for you."

Do you notice what they did? They got up and they ran back to Jerusalem—seven miles at dark. They had to tell others. They couldn't bear the thought of the others going another minute more without knowing this glorious truth that their Savior had risen. The more you and I know God and his Word, the more our hearts will burn as Scripture is living inside of us, and the more we are going to want to tell others, "Here is the answer. You are facing hurts. You are facing anxieties. You are facing worries. You are facing heartache. Here is where I find my comfort, and here is the comfort God has for you. His name is Jesus. His life was precious. His death paid for your sins and his resurrection assures you that you are loved and forgiven by God."

May our hearts be ever burning with more fervent love for God and the desire to speak his Words even more often than we talk about Dr. Phil!