

Luke 24 v 15

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 16 June 2013

Preacher: Mr David Macdonald

[0 : 00] While seeking the Lord's help and his leading and guiding on our thoughts, let's turn back to the portion of his word which we read in Luke chapter 24. And I would like us this morning to take for ourselves for a text words which we find in verse 15.

Luke 24, verse 15. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

Especially these words, Jesus himself drew near. Luke chapter 24 begins with the account of the narrative of the resurrection of our Lord.

The woman went to the tomb early in the morning and they found the stone rolled away, the tomb empty, and angels saying to them, He is not here, for he is risen.

Pilate did everything that he could to make sure that nobody would break into the tomb. In Matthew's gospel, chapter 27 and verse 65, he says to his guards, Go and make the tomb as secure as you can.

[1 : 24] Go and put a stone in front of it. Go and put my seal on it. Go and stand watch in front of it. Go and make sure that nobody can break into the tomb.

And Pilate did everything that he could to make sure that no one would break in. But he didn't reckon with the fact that the one on the inside could break out.

You see, Pilate did everything to make sure the disciples wouldn't steal away the body of our Lord. But there was nothing he could do to stop our Lord rising from death itself and breaking out from the tomb from the inside.

And you know, that's the glory of the gospel this day. It's so wrapped up in the glory of the risen Jesus. He is not here, said the angels.

He is risen. And because he is, he sits on the right hand of God on high. And because he's not in the tomb, we can come here every large day and we can worship the Jesus.

[2 : 38] That's not where they put him. But the Jesus who's risen again to life. Death could not defeat him. And the grave could not hold him.

Jesus rose to life. He is not here. For he is risen. And because he is risen, we can believe that he is here by his spirit with us every time we worship him.

And then it tells us of the account of these two men who travel from Jerusalem to Emmaus. The Bible does not tell us much about these two men other than one was called Cleopas and the other one remains unknown.

All we know about them is that they were disciples. They followed our Lord. And they're making this journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

Roughly seven and a half miles. A journey that would take them around two hours. And why were they making this journey? Well, people believe that perhaps they were at the Passover feast in Jerusalem.

[3 : 49] And now they were making their way back home to their homes in Emmaus. But I believe there's another reason. And I believe that they were giving up on their faith in Jesus.

They were giving up from being disciples of our Lord. You see, the word tells us that they were disciples. They possibly left their homes in Emmaus to go on to follow Jesus.

And now they're making their way back home. And scripture tells us they were sad. And the reason they were sad, they tell us in verse 21, We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

What they're saying here is, We thought that this Jesus whom we were following was the one to bring back Israel to being a world power.

We thought that he was the one to be our earthly king. We thought that we were going to be the Israel of old. And that we would have a king to lead us into battle.

[4 : 53] And now they've killed him. Now he's dead. Our hope has been dashed. And now we're going back home to live our normal lives.

We thought that Jesus would do this for us. We thought that Jesus would act in this way.

And now that he hasn't, well, we're not going to follow him. My non-Christian friend in here, have you ever used an excuse for why you're not following the Lord?

I thought that God would enter into my life in this way, at this time. And when he didn't, well, I'm not going to follow him now.

He hasn't come into my life the way that I thought he would, or the way that I wanted him to, at the time that I wanted him to. And now, well, I'm not going to follow him at all.

[5 : 53] My Christian friend, have you ever uttered these words? I thought that God would act in my life in this way. I had a plan for my life.

I had it all sorted out. I knew where I was going. And then God entered in with a whole different providence. And he changed my path. And he changed my life.

And now, well, now I'm not going to follow him. Because he's done something that I didn't want him to do. My friend, who are we to dictate to this God?

This is the one who sits on heaven's throne. This is the one, the Bible tells us, who does according to his own will with the inhabitants of earth and with the host of heaven.

And there's none who can stay his hand. He does whatsoever he wills. Our chief end is to glorify and enjoy him.

[6 : 57] He does not exist to serve us. But we exist to serve him. So if he enters in with a certain providence, it is our portion to be obedient to him and to follow after him and to follow where he leads.

But you know what I love about this story, and that is so often the case in life, is that God's way is better by far.

You see, these two men had this plan for what they thought Jesus was going to do. Oh, Jesus will be our earthly king. And we will be a great world nation again.

Oh, maybe just for a short time. Oh, it'll be great. But in actual fact, after a lesson in biblical theology from our Lord, they're instructed that Jesus will be their heavenly king.

And they realize that God's plan and the reality of the situation is far better than they possibly even imagined. My friend, with the blessing of hindsight, how often have you realized that too?

[8 : 08] Looking back at a time in your life when you said, I think it's going to go this way and I want it to go this way. And God came in and entered in in a providence that sent you the opposite way.

And it's only after time looking back, you can say, oh, I'm so glad that it went his way and not my way. His way is better by far.

And then we note that Jesus comes and draws near to those who endeavor to know the truth. We find these two men and they're walking along this path and they're discussing things about Jesus.

And it's then that Jesus draws near. Is that not the truth in all our experience as well? When we seek him, we will find him.

Jesus always draws near to those who endeavor to know the truth about him. My friend, if you've never sought him before, seek him now and he, you will find him.

[9 : 24] But the final point I want to make by way of introduction is the way that Jesus does draw near to them. You find them walking along and they're so engrossed in conversation and it's as if Jesus just draws near to them very quietly and very quickly.

And they're so engrossed in conversation that perhaps they don't even see him coming. You know, if you were to ask them after this journey, when did you meet Jesus?

They might say, well, I can't tell you. All I know is that he met us along the way. And my friend, how true is that when you look back on your own Christian experience, it's not so much that you found him, but that he found you along the way.

You might not have gone out of your way at times to find him, but he always comes and finds you when you need him most. It's not so important that you found him.

What's most important is that he found you. Oh yes, we love him, but only because he first loved us.

[10 : 40] It always starts with him. He always initiates the program. We love him because he first loved us.

So we find Jesus drawing near to these two men. And I want to just ask one question this morning. I want to ask, what happens as a result of Jesus drawing near?

What happens specifically for these two men on the road to Emmaus, but also the same answers apply to you and to me this morning. I want to suggest four things that happen as a result of Jesus drawing near.

The first thing is a burning heart. Verse 32, 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?

A burning heart. What does this mean? What does it mean to have a burning heart? Well, I believe Jeremiah sheds light on this.

[11 : 51] In chapter 20 and verse 9 of Jeremiah, this is what it says. Excuse me. If I say I will not mention him or speak any more in his name, there is in my heart, as it were, a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

Here Jeremiah is saying, when I think about not being able to speak about God, there is within me a burning desire and a burning longing that means I have to speak about him.

I cannot stay silent when I have to speak about him because there is this fire within me which means I must speak about my Lord.

And I believe every one of you in here, if you're a believing Christian today, you've experienced this burning heart. If you recall back to when God began to work in your life, when he first convicted you of your sin, and you had this desire to be wherever he was.

You had this desire to go out to church and to hear God's word preached. You had this desire to be in the fellowships and in the gatherings. You had a desire to be wherever he was because there was this fire within you that meant you couldn't keep away.

[13 : 23] You had to be where Jesus was. And that's the truth that we find with these two men on the road to Emmaus. But it's interesting to note when they have the burning heart.

You see, in verse 14, it tells us that they were talking to each other about Jesus. But they don't have the burning heart then. It's only when Jesus speaks to them.

And you know, how true is that as well in our own experience? When Jesus speaks, men and women listen. We find it in all the pages of the gospel.

When he spoke, there were crowds there waiting to listen to his every word. He spoke direct to the heart. And when he did, hearts went on fire for him.

No man ever spoke like this man. This man speaks to the heart. And when he does, hearts are on fire for him.

[14 : 33] It's one thing, these two men realized, it's one thing to speak about Jesus. But it's a whole different thing to have Jesus speak to you.

Because when Jesus speaks direct to you, things change, and your heart goes on fire for him. What does he speak about?

Well, it tells us in verse 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

Oh, what I would give to be on the road to Emmaus and to hear that sermon. C.H. Spurgeon describes it as this. It's the best teacher from the best textbook on the best subject.

The best teacher is Jesus. The best textbook, the Bible. And the best subject, himself. Here, Jesus speaks direct to these two men, direct to them about himself from God's word.

[15 : 48] And they listen because he speaks direct to their heart. And their heart is set on fire for him. Oh, have you not found that to be true?

How many times have you sat here and you've listened to great men from this pulpit and they're preaching about this Jesus? But it's not so much their words that speak direct to your heart as the small, still voice of the Lord.

And when he spoke to you, your heart went on fire and you had to listen to him. But my question is, why was their heart not always burning?

They tell us it burnt when he spoke to them concerning himself. But why, when they were speaking about Jesus, just a little bit earlier on, why did their hearts not burn then?

Their subject was a good one. Oh, it was a great one. But their hearts didn't burn then. Not because of the subject, but because of themselves.

[16 : 59] The subject was a great one. The subject of Jesus and the things that he did was a great one. But the reason their heart didn't burn was because their heart was so filled with doubt.

Their heart was so filled with despondency before Jesus spoke a word to them. They didn't really believe in what they spoke about.

Is that not the reason why our hearts don't burn within us? Is that not the reason why we are so often, like the church in Laodicea in Asia Minor, Jesus convicts them of being lukewarm?

How often are we lukewarm? Why are our hearts not always burning for him? And the reason is because we so often doubt.

And we so often have unbelief mixed with our belief. And when we do, our hearts will never be on fire. Oh, may we believe wholeheartedly and may we seek to hear the voice of this Jesus speak direct to our hearts.

[18 : 12] And when we do, our hearts will burn. A burning heart. Secondly, opened eyes. Verse 31.

And their eyes were opened and they recognized him. For their eyes to be opened, they first of all had to be shut. And we read that in verse 16.

Their eyes were kept from recognizing him. Now, I don't believe that this was a natural or a physical error on the part of these two men.

I don't believe that Jesus appeared to them naturally and they just didn't pay attention to who this was. And it was only when he was sat in front of them that they looked at him clearly and realized who he was.

I believe that this was something far greater than a physical power. This was a spiritual power that kept their eyes from recognizing Jesus.

[19 : 08] After all, these two men were disciples. They spent time following Jesus. And when he was there speaking to them, making their hearts burn, surely they would have realized who this was.

But their eyes were kept. Mark, in his gospel, tells us that Jesus appeared in another form. I don't know what these things mean, but all I know is that in the same way that God kept the mouths of the lions in the den shut, he in some way affected the eyes of these two men on the road to Emmaus so that they could not recognize Jesus as who he was.

And when, it wasn't that they were blind in any way, they still saw, but they were just kept from recognizing Jesus until their eyes were opened.

And you know, I don't know of a greater comparison of what it's like between the non-Christian and the Christian. You see, it's the same Jesus that these two men looked at when their eyes were shut and when their eyes were opened.

It's the same Jesus. And if I was to bring Jesus before a non-Christian today, and I ask you as a non-Christian, what does this Jesus mean to you?

[20 : 29] Well, you might tell me, well, he's a great teacher and I love hearing the stories, but in actual fact, he means nothing to me. And I bring the same Jesus before a Christian and I ask the Christian, what does Jesus mean to you?

The same Jesus. And they tell me, ah, he's my all. He's my everything. Take anything from me, but don't take my Jesus.

It's the same Jesus. To a closed eye, he has no beauty, no form, and no comeliness. But to the opened eyes, he is the altogether lovely one, the one who is fairest among ten thousand, the beautiful one.

Oh, don't take my Jesus away, the Christian would say. The non-Christian would say, well, if you take him away, so be it. He doesn't mean much to me.

And you see, it's sin that closes eyes, and it's grace that opens eyes. And if you're still in here, and you're still looking at the same Jesus with closed eyes, and he still means nothing to you, oh, my friend, I plead with you.

[21 : 50] Pray that God would open your eyes, that you might see him as he is, see him in all his beauty, and that you too would see him as the Christian sees him, as my all, and my everything.

But what I love about this too is that when the two on the road, when they're back in the home, and Jesus opens their eyes, and for that split moment before he disappears from their sight, when their eyes are opened, all they see is Jesus.

Oh, my friend, what a beautiful sight when your eyes are opened to see none save him only. And when that moment comes and their eyes are opened, he's all that they see, and he's all that they want to see.

How true is that in our own Christian experience? When you were converted from death to life, born again, and your eyes are opened, all you see is Jesus, and all you want to see is Jesus.

No one and nothing else matters in that moment. And he takes up your whole gaze. And there's also something else that they realize that is beautiful as well.

- [23 : 08] When they were walking along the road, and they were sad, and they were downcast in themselves, possibly thinking, God has left us.
- But when their eyes were opened, they realized he was with them all along. Oh, my friend, is that not a great thought?
- Have you ever experienced that? Going through the difficulties and the hard times of life when providence has been hard, and you may go through it and think, I'm here alone.
- There's nobody with me. And it's only with the blessing of hindsight, when God opens your eyes, that you see, ah, he was with me all along.
- And he opens their eyes, and they see him, and they realize that he was with them all along. And our challenge today is to see him, and to only see him, and to only gaze on him.
- [24 : 12] See, all too often, with our opened eyes, we take our eyes off him, and we look at different things, and the problems, and the providences, and our eyes are taken off him, and he's no longer the focus of our gaze.
- C.H. Spurgeon puts it like this, do not think so much about your faith as about the Christ whom by faith you are looking at.
- You see, with your opened eyes, you gaze at Jesus, and you only gaze at him. Is it not with Peter when he was walking on the water, when he had his eyes on Jesus, he could walk on the waves.
- But when he took his eyes off Jesus, that's when he began to sink. And it's all too true with us as well. When our eyes are on Jesus, all things are well.
- But when we begin to take our eyes off him, and we begin to look at ourselves, then doubt enters in, and we begin to sink. My friend, gaze on Jesus with your opened eyes, and make him your focus.
- [25 : 24] A burning heart, opened eyes. Thirdly, a walk of faith. Verse 33. And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. They began the day with the belief that Jesus Jesus was dead.
- And now, they must go on with the belief that he's alive. Tozer puts it like this. Faith is a journey, not a destination.
- You see, they had to get up and they had to move from that place. They couldn't stay where they were because they had a walk of faith to start on. And there would be ups and there would be downs.
- There would be good times and bad times for them. But in every single battle that they faced, they had to return to this one meeting. And they had to say, oh, I can face every foe because I know my Jesus is alive.
- I know he's risen. And because he is, it doesn't matter what I face in life or in death. I know that my Jesus is alive.
- [26 : 36] And because he is, I can go on. That was their walk of faith. To say when they're asked, will you also go away? They had to say, to whom else?
- Because we know that we have found the one of eternal, never-ending life. He is our Lord. And he offers life that never ends.
- And so they could go on in this walk of faith, face the battles and the foes when they come, in the knowledge that their Lord has won the war.
- And friends, that's how it is for you and me too. We must go on in our walk of faith, wherever it might take us, whatever battles we might face.

We go on knowing that our Lord has won the war, that he is not here because he is risen and because he is, I can face tomorrow and every tomorrow like it because my Jesus is alive.

[27 : 40] A walk of faith. Finally, very briefly, a life of witness. Verse 35, then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

It was late at night. They were all ready to sleep in Emmaus, but they got up and they made the two-hour journey all the way back straight into the apostles' house.

Why? Because they couldn't keep their mouths shut. They had to testify of what had happened to them.

They had to tell of what Jesus had done for them. My friends, how true is that for us when we are converted.

They say that a converted Christian is the one who has the biggest heart for witness. And I don't know if that's true, but I can see where they come from because when you're converted you have this urgency and you have this desire to go out and to tell everyone, why can't you see?

[28 : 45] I've found this Jesus. This Jesus is everything. Why can't you see him like I've seen him? And there is this desire to leave Emmaus. Emmaus is no use because they have to tell the people in Jerusalem that Jesus is alive, that they've met him.

He's not in the tomb. And so they make the two-hour journey and they get to Jerusalem and they burst through the door of the apostles' house, wearied as they would have been from the journey, possibly out of breath.

What would have been their message? What could they say? Well, perhaps they used the word of Job of old. I know my Redeemer lives.

And they stand before the apostles and they testify to the fact Jesus is not dead. He is alive. And you know, however difficult the witnessing experience might be, and don't get me wrong, it is to make this journey and to burst through the apostles' door was not easy for the two on the road to Emmaus.

And it's not easy for you and for me in this lost world to tell them of the need of this Jesus when all they do is persecute us. But we must tell them because of the importance of the message that we have.

[30 : 10] We must go to lost souls and say, I know my Redeemer lives and because He does, He's changed my life and He can change yours too.

It was the importance of the message that meant the two could not stay in Emmaus. They had to go to Jerusalem and they had to tell this message.

That was their first witnessing experience. You mark my words, it wouldn't have been their last. And it's the same for you and for me too. We have so many opportunities, so much potential.

We must go out and say, I know my Jesus lives and because He does, that message changes lives.

Jesus threw near to these two on the road to Emmaus and because He did, He gave them a burning heart. He gave them opened eyes. A walk of faith and a life of witness.

[31 : 15] And it's the same for you and for me too. If Jesus has drawn near to us in our experience, He has spoken to you in a way that has burnt up your heart for Him.

He has spoken to you in a way that has opened your eyes to see Him. He has spoken to you in a way that means you have a walk of faith ahead of you, come what may.

and He has spoken to you in a way that means you have to speak about Him. That's what happens when Jesus draws near.

My friend in here, if He's not drawn near to you, what could be better than this? What company could be better than the company of this Savior?

May you pray. I plead with you today. May you pray for this company. May you pray even today that Jesus would draw near, that He would speak to your heart, that He would open your eyes, give you a walk of faith and that a life of witness.

[32 : 18] Maybe it's apt to conclude with the same words I concluded to the children with. Whoever has the Son has it all.

There's nothing else you could possibly want. May we all know Him. Amen. Let's pray. Our gracious God, we give you thanks for the accounts of men and women who met you in the Bible.

And we give you thanks that we can see them and we can draw so many comparisons from their experience to ours. We give you thanks that you still meet with men and women today.

And we pray that you would meet with us today. Meet with us at the point of our need. May we have the burning heart within us when you speak directly to us.

May we have our eyes opened to see you clearly, to see you in all your beauty. May you give us a walk of faith. Help us when times are hard, when we think we cannot go on.

[33 : 27] Help us to see that you are with us all along. And help us in our life of witness to go out to this sin-sick and dark world and to tell them of the Jesus who drew near then and who still draws near now, who made differences then and can still make differences now, who was risen then and is still alive now.

Oh, help us in all these things and pardon our every sin. For Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.