

**Resurrection Conversations**  
**Second in a Series / Raised with Christ**  
**Third Sunday of Easter / April 22 and 23, 2023**

**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?”**

Dear Friends in Christ,

There are at least two kinds of people in this world - those who are good at putting puzzles together, and those who are terrible at it.

One of my best friends from Minnesota named Mike is really good at it. He spends hours piecing together puzzles with thousands of pieces. He has a definite system to it. He organizes the pieces according to shape and size. 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, on the other hand, am awful at puzzles. I'm not good at it. I have no patience for it. A couple of years ago, Debi and I decided to put together a thousand piece puzzle in our spare time, instead of just watching TV. The puzzle sat there, and Debi would work on it and then it would sit there some more. One night I went over to help her, and I spent a half hour without fitting even one piece in its spot. It was not fun, it was frustrating, and within a few days, we put and packed the puzzle away, never to be seen again. Do not, I repeat, do not give me puzzles for my birthday, nor for Christmas.

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, and the Old Testament part of the puzzle was completed.

On that first Easter Sunday morning, the New Testament part of the puzzle began. The puzzle included 40 days of Jesus appearing to and convincing His followers that He was in fact alive and well. It included a memorable ascension into the heavens on the 40th day and a supernatural outpouring of His Spirit on the 50th day. From that day forward, until His Second Coming, Jesus has invited us to join Him on His mission. Or to say it another way, as Jesus did in today's text - to help our neighbors move from Point A to Point B. In the case of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, Point A was hearts full of sadness and confusion and disappointment. And Point B was to have hearts that were burning with joy and clarity and hope.

Last weekend, we began to explore what it means for the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts a *resurrection faith*. Today, we explore the importance of participating in *resurrection conversations*. Last week we learned that those who are setting their hearts on things above will be 1) rejoicing in God's patience and 2) trusting in His plan. Today, *we see Jesus conducting the perfect conversation. Secondly, we see the conversation coming to a perfect conclusion as they enjoy table fellowship.*

***First, we see Jesus conducting the perfect conversation.***

***And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.***

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 why should he let you into heaven, what would you answer?
- Part # 3 of the conversation was a summary of Holy Scripture. A puzzle with five pieces, if you will. #1 Heaven is a free gift that is neither deserved nor earned. #2 All people are sinners who cannot save themselves. #3) God is at the same time holy and gracious. According to his holiness, He must punish sin, but according to His mercy, His great desire is to forgive. #4) The centerpiece of the puzzle was Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all prophecy, suffered all that was necessary, and at the cross - upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, with his wounds we are healed
- Part 5 of the conversation was that God’s gifts of grace are received by faith alone in Christ.

We’ll never know how effective those conversations were or what fruit they bore. And that’s ok. What’s important is that we understand the importance of prayerfully engaging in conversations in our circles of friends and family in a way that helps others move from sadness brought on by the circumstances of life towards the true and lasting joy only Christ can offer. To help others move from the confusion caused by a broken and messed up world towards the clarity offered by our risen and ascended Savior. To help others move from hearts full of disappointment and dashed dreams and unmet expectations towards pure ecstasy that comes with repentance and forgiveness of sins.

This morning we would spend time in the presence of Jesus Who does all things well. Specifically, we listen in on the perfect conversation. Five observations I offer with regard to this resurrection conversation, as Jesus encourages them to piece together the puzzle of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

- Observation #1 is that Jesus came alongside, and He listened in.
- Observation #2 is that He asked at least two simple and 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.

Up until now, Jesus had prevented them from recognizing Him as the risen Lord. He engages with them as a fellow sojourner. Luke records that He acts as if he were going farther. They urged him to stay, and so He did.

- ***Secondly, we see the conversation coming to a perfect conclusion as they enjoy table fellowship.***

Luke records that ***“When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. They recognized Jesus, and as they did so, He disappeared.*** First we see Jesus as the perfect listener, the asker of perfect questions, and the Teacher Who perfectly explains. Now we see Jesus doing what He often did - combining the teaching of the Word with table fellowship.

The table was set for an evening meal, and Jesus had reclined for dining in Jewish fashion. The two reclined with him. The strange fact is that Jesus did not act as a guest, but as the host. He took the bread in his hands and pronounced the blessing. As they were taking the bread from his hands, their eyes were opened. This brings the conversation full circle from v 16, where Luke records that ***“their eyes were kept from recognizing him.”***

They now realize that Jesus had entered a new state in which he appeared and disappeared at will. A state of exaltation in which Jesus would be fully using His divine power and knowledge. They realized that their own hearts had started to burn while Jesus was explaining Scripture to them. Back to Jerusalem they went with hearts ever so eager to tell the Eleven this good news of great joy.

Professor Art Just from the Ft. Wayne Seminary suggests that the meal of broken bread at Emmaus reverses the first meal recorded in Scripture - when Eve and then Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And that at this meal distributed by the risen Christ, eyes are now opened to see in Jesus the Seed of the woman promised in Genesis 3:15. To recognize that at the cross, Jesus had in fact crushed the head of the serpent who had bruised his heel.

A resurrection conversation that culminates and comes to a dynamic conclusion at table fellowship. During His earthly ministry, Jesus was famous and much maligned for eating and drinking with open sinners. For reclining at the table with drunkards and gluttons and prostitutes and tax collectors. New Testament writers picture Jesus as attracted to broken and messed up and hurting sinners.

Which is still true today. At our Lord's Supper, Jesus is the host and we who are broken and messed up and hurting are the guests. He is the generous Giver, and we are the grateful recipients. He is the Lover, and we are the beloved. As often as we eat and drink in His presence, that often our sins are forgiven, our faith is strengthened, and our testimony goes forth that Jesus is our Redeemer, our Savior, and our Friend.

One of my favorite conversations of all time was with an elderly lady in a Waterville, MN nursing home. Her name was Delilah Anthony, and I would bring her Holy Communion once a month. Her Confirmation certificate from the 1950's was framed and on the wall near her bed. She would often ask me if I was Pastor Mueller, who had instructed and confirmed her. (Not!)

We would do the usual chit chat, and then I would share a Scripture and a prayer with her. As we prepared for Holy Communion, I would remind her that Jesus died for her. At which time her eyes would get big, and she would ask, "Jesus is dead?" Every month, the same question, "Jesus is dead?" Of course I would answer, "But then He rose up on the third day, Delilah." And she would visibly relax and rejoice that her Savior had risen. Our conversation would culminate with a confession of her sins, absolution, and this relieved and contented woman receiving the very body of her Savior that had been broken for her / the very blood of her Redeemer that had been shed.

The kingdom of God is like a congregation full of folks who have their not so great days, their good days, and their best days.

On their not so great days, their devotional life is shallow, and they just sort of wander through the day with no particular purpose to their conversations.

On their good days, they engage in a serious way with Holy Scripture, and the Law and the Gospel are like a two part puzzle that is like a lamp unto their feet and a light for their conversations.

On their best days, they eat and drink at their Lord's Supper with repentant hearts, and as they depart in peace, they do so with a whole new perspective on life.

On every day, they are the beloved and forgiven people of God, precious in His sight.