

# HEARTBURN

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I remember on the TV former Denver quarterback, John Elway, letting us know that all those years he put heat on the football when he was throwing it as a quarterback in the NFL, he was also feeling heat in his tum-tum. From his old commercial and all the others, one would gather that heartburn is quite a problem in this country. I think it is, however, quite the opposite. There's not enough. Oh, to be sure, there is the heartburn of jealousy, or lust, or bitterness, or stress. But that is not the heartburn of which I speak.

John Wesley, the father of the Methodist Church, wrote in his journal on May 24, 1738: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed." Blaise Pascal, the famous mathematician, had this sewn into the lining of his daily suit jacket: "The year of grace 1654. Monday, 23 November ... From about half-past ten in the evening until about half-past midnight. Fire. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. Not of the philosophers and intellectuals. Certitude, feeling, joy, peace." Now I ask you, is there enough of this kind of heartburn in our land today? Have you felt this warmth?

We're looking at the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. We've noted that, in comparison to

all the verses on Jesus' birth, teaching, ministry, and death, the verses on what happened after the resurrection are few ... but they are significant. We came two weeks ago to some of those verses in Luke's gospel. To that chapter again we go this third Sunday in Eastertide. In the concluding half of it, there are three appearances of Jesus noted before he ascends into heaven. The first has a good number of verses, the last fewer, and the middle one hardly any at all. The middle one is merely a second-hand report, "The Lord has risen and appeared to Peter."

The first and the last appearances have similarities. Both have Jesus doing a Bible study. Both have this Bible study offered in the context of people who are failing to recognize Jesus and doubtful about him. And both have meals. Apparently, resurrected bodies can eat (and, I, for one, being a person who likes to eat, am glad about that). In the one, there is the breaking of bread, and in the other there is the broiling of fish. But in the one, the one with the bread, there is one thing more that isn't in the other. Can you guess what it is? Heartburn. Do we, do you, have enough heartburn?

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
then these words: Luke 24:13-35 *Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. [14] They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. [15] As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; [16] but they were kept from recognizing him.*

*[17] He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"*

*They stood still, their faces downcast. [18] One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"*

*[19] "What things?" he asked.*

*"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. [20] The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; [21] but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. [22] In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning [23] but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. [24] Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."*

*[25] He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! [26] Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" [27] And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

*[28] As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. [29] But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.*

*[30] When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. [31] Then their eyes were opened and they*

*recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. [32] They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

*[33] They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together [34] and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." [35] Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. The word became flesh and dwelt amongst us, full of grace and truth, and from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.*

“How foolish you are and slow to believe ... were our hearts not burning within us while he talked with us?” The passage begins with slowness of heart but it moves to fire in the heart. This passage, then, is about slow to glow. I don’t imagine there is a one of us who wouldn’t like the candle of the Lord lit inside of us. So this movement from no fire or low fire to true fire, how does it happen? What’s involved?

First of all, it is clear the Bible is involved. They were slow of heart “to believe all the prophets have spoken.” “Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” Their hearts, they said, were “burning within us while he talked with us and opened the Scriptures to us.” If we add to this that the words about breaking of bread seem to point us toward communion, which is a type of Bible object lesson or message, then we

have yet another reference to the God's word. So clearly, the Bible is involved.

I remember talking with a church organist once and when I asked her how she was doing spiritually these days, whether she felt close to the Lord, like she was growing, her answer was this. "Yes, I feel good" and then she added why she said something like this. "My life has been markedly different the last nine years over the previous many. I grew up in the church, but my spiritual walk has been transformed due to a commitment to Bible study. Nine years ago I became involved in a weekly Bible study program called BSF (Bible Study Fellowship)." That's a testimonial of moving from slow to glow and the main component was the Bible.

I have always like what Martin Luther said, that the Bible is the cradle within which the Christ is laid. In other words, the Bible is about Jesus. There are lots of genres, lots of stories, lots of history ... but all is about Jesus. Read the Bible looking at it with him and read it looking for him and your heart will be strangely warmed.

A second step in the movement from slow to glow has to do with an attitude of receptivity. I was trying to squeeze into some traffic on Rt. 1 the other day and the lineup of cars perpendicular to me was inching along. One driver spotted me wanting to get in and wagged her finger at me in such a way to say, "You're not getting in front of me."

Sometimes we're that way with God. "You, God," we say, "are not coming in where you can influence my life with that religious stuff." (Or maybe it shows up as -- If we do read the Bible, it's just as literature, but not as a medium for God speaking to me.)

These two disciples had had their leader crucified so they were now getting out of Dodge. They may have been nervous. They may have been discouraged. These, interestingly, can be times of receptivity.

The Lord finds them and just asks them a question. They could have brushed him off, but they didn't. They answered. Then they shared. Then they walked. They invite him in. That's receptivity. Are you open toward God? It takes some openness for our hearts to be strangely warmed.

Someone once asked, "What's one word that we could pray that our friends who don't believe that Jesus was God's son could say?" The one word is "Maybe." If you could pray for them to say one word, pray that they would say, "Maybe." See, that reflects some small sincere openness.

Thirdly, and finally, the movement from slow to glow involves none other than the living Jesus himself. We could study the Bible for a hundred years. We could have a friendly attitude toward it. But the fire in the empty hearth inside of us, the hearth always meant to have a fire in it, cannot be lit by an idea about Jesus, or by an outline gleaned from the Bible about Jesus, or even by a commitment to the church of Jesus. All that is kindling in the hearth, but the fire takes the living Lord Jesus himself. It takes an encounter with the living Jesus himself. The gospel of Luke doesn't close commending the risen Jesus on the basis of an empty tomb. It closes commending a risen Jesus on the basis of people's personal encounters with him alive.

Have you had an encounter with Jesus? The disciples on this road to Emmaus, look at them, they

recited the whole story of Jesus, how he was a mighty prophet, did great miracles, was crucified by the leaders, and his tomb was empty ... they had the story but they had no fire. They knew a Jesus who was, but not a Jesus who is. Have you had an “ah ha” moment? A personal realization that this Jesus is true, and that in sincerity you are trusting yourself to, not a theological proposition or a figure of history from the past, but to him? Christianity at its heart is about fire in the heart, it is a society of burning hearts.

So today, I don't just invite you to read the Bible or have an attitude of receptivity. I show you the Bible's message on this table, I say to you whether you are dejected or whatever, open to him, open your mouth and your life, and may this meal be you praying, “Living Lord Jesus, fire of life, come into me.”

*If you would like to talk with someone about this message or your spiritual life, or to have someone pray with you, the pastors and elders of the church would welcome your call. [pastorjeffwood@gmail.com](mailto:pastorjeffwood@gmail.com)      [www.welovefirst.org](http://www.welovefirst.org)  
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