

The Road to Emmaus

by Robert Constable

The sermon emphasizes the need for burning hearts and passion for the Lord Jesus, and how Jesus deals with the disciples' lack of passion and fervor through his love and scriptural exposition.

Duration: 39:29

Scripture: Luke 24:13

Topics: "Emmaus", "Passion for Christ", "Reviving Faith"

Description

Robert Constable reflects on the story of the Road to Emmaus, emphasizing the need for burning hearts among believers. He highlights the disciples' despair and loss of passion after Jesus' crucifixion, noting that while they remembered His deeds, their enthusiasm had waned. Constable urges the church to rekindle its fervor for Christ, reminding that true passion comes from listening to Jesus and understanding His message. He encourages believers to seek a deeper connection with Christ, which can reignite their faith and enthusiasm for service. The sermon calls for a revival of passion in the church, akin to the disciples' hearts burning as Jesus spoke to them.

Transcript

And shall we ask the Lord's blessing on our meeting tonight? Gracious God, our Father, we thank Thee that we can come into the presence of the living God, and that we can tune our hearts to receive from Thee what You have to say to us. Help us to do this this evening, we pray. We pray that what we consider together this evening might find entrance into our hearts, and might affect our lives, might conform us more perfectly to the image of the Lord Jesus, might help us in our service for Thee.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Luke, chapter 24, and we will begin reading at verse 13.

And behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem, about three or four for long. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass that while they communed together in reason, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these, that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad? And one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty indeed, and word before God

and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.

And beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women also of our company made us astonished which were early at the sepulchre. And when they found not his body, they came saying that they also had seen a vision of angels which said that he was alive.

And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said. But him they saw not. Then said he unto them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went. And he made as though he would have gone further, but they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him. And he vanished out of their sight.

And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? They rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together in them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of bread. And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace.

This is an old and familiar story, isn't it? How many times we have taken this walk with the disciples on the way to Emmaus. How many times we have heard them say, Did not our hearts burn within us? And I want to think about that phrase tonight with you. I want to think about this matter of burning hearts, because I am convinced that the great need of the church today is burning hearts.

We have principles. We have practices. We have procedures.

We have plans. We have programs and panaceas. But we have very little passion today.

Very little passion. I submit this to you for you to think about, that no man can ever know all there is to know about the Lord Jesus Christ. But we do know a great deal.

We have studied his life. We have analyzed his words. We have researched his time.

We celebrate his birth. We wonder at his death. We bear witness to his resurrection.

We sing of his coming again. But you don't see very much enthusiasm. You don't see much fervor, much fire, much burning passion today.

All the fanatics have gone to the Super Bowl. Where is the passion among the people of God? Oh, we want people to think we have it. But, you know, there isn't much heat in painted fire.

Not much. We make our protestations of love, and we have some beautiful hymns in our hymnals that we sing in honor of his praise. But sometimes it almost seems, doesn't it, as though we have to come to meetings and get out the hymn book and sing the hymns in order sort of to stir something up and make us really feel like we sense his presence and that we are with him.

And oh, I wish we could stop this business of working things up. We get lots of talk. We get lots of meetings.

People get together and talk. But what the world needs, and what the church needs, is an overwhelming and majestic passion about the Lord Jesus. Now, this is a post-resurrection story that we have read here this evening.

And we live in post-resurrection times. And Jesus, it is the same Jesus it was before the crucifixion. But he is wondrously changed.

He is wondrously changed since they saw him last. And he is forever different. Now, these disciples about whom we've been reading here this evening, I don't quite know how to put this.

But they have lost something of their devotion. The shine has gone off it, as it were. Oh, they still love him.

They still love him. They haven't lost their love for him. But he's gone.

We trusted it had been he. They haven't lost their faith exactly. Only in some senses they have lost their faith.

We trusted that it had been he. But their passion, their fervor for the Lord Jesus was as flat as anything could be. It was flat out.

No more fervor, no more fire. Did you ever in your imagination when you read this story see more discouraged people, more people dragging themselves along the road than these disciples of the Lord Jesus? I think you never did. And what I want to consider with you this evening are two things that are in this story.

The first thing I think we will take a look at together are the disciples. Their possession, what they did have, and what they lacked. And I trust that as we look at this and we think about what these disciples had and what they did not have, that we will be applying that to our own hearts as we consider this about what we have and what we do not have.

The second thing I would like us to think about in connection with this story is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. His quest, his method, and his victory. And I think if we look at these two things that the Lord will speak to our hearts about them.

Now, I don't intend tonight that we should just contemplate an old story with which we are very familiar. I have asked the Lord that we might make a present-day application to our own souls tonight about what we're going to look at here. I hope you haven't come just to hear a talk, but to make an application.

Let's think about the two disciples. They still loved their Lord. They still believed in him, somewhat.

They didn't go on this walk to Emmaus forgetting. They didn't go and say, well, all right, let's go. We'll start with a new start now.

No, they didn't go that way. They did not go forgetting. They went in bitter disappointment, in despair, and in disgrace.

They were down, down, down as they talked together. By the way, but as they talked together, they still spoke well of him. You noticed what they said about him, didn't you? A prophet, mighty in deed and in word.

Oh, the things they remembered. Oh, the things they remembered. They loved his memory, just as a lot of us love his memory.

They thought he meant so well. He meant so well. But listen to the tone of the things that they said.

They'd lost their hope. We trusted. This is past tense.

They'd lost their confidence. There wasn't anything else to take hold of. Oh, they remembered.

Oh, they remembered how he used to talk to them about the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven. And how he lifted their hearts as they contemplated with him the joys, the kingdom of heaven, which he told them was very near.

They had been with him, and they remembered that day in Cana, that day when for the very first time he had done a miracle before them. They never had been able to understand how he turned that water into wine, but they had drunk of the wine. They remembered that.

Oh, that was a day. That was a day. Remember that day at the wedding? They remembered the day when he walked down the pathway by the little village of Nain and coming to a cortege, a little group of people, weeping, weeping, weeping, carrying a casket.

And the mother following, whose heart was broken, and Jesus looking at them, couldn't take it anymore himself. And he said, young man, arise! And they'll never forget how he sat up and how they helped him down from that casket, and Jesus gave it to his mother. Oh, they would never forget that.

They'd never forget how day by day as he moved about the country, and they in his blessed company, the crowds began to gather. There were more people day by day, little crowds at the beginning, which became great multitudes as he served God amongst them. They remembered the stories that he used to tell, wonderful stories.

Oh, they would hang on his words while he spoke, when he told them about God. And he said that God was their Father. They hadn't known that before.

But Jesus said, He is your Father, my Father. Oh, what a thrill this revelation was to their hearts. They remembered the day when walking along, they heard that commotion in the crowd, and that man yelling out like he did.

He wanted Jesus, Jesus! And he kept calling him, and they said, Quiet! And he wouldn't quiet down, and Jesus said, Bring him over here. It was a blind man who came as people led him to Jesus. And he said, Lord, if I could only have my sight.

Jesus gave it to him. And everybody around were dumbstruck, and they couldn't believe it. They called the man in and interrogated him and put him to the third degree, and he said, One thing I know, that whereas I

was blind, I can see.

Oh, they remembered that. Boy, that was a day. They remembered, too, that one time they were quite a ways away, quite far away.

Jesus said to them as they were resting, Our friend Lazarus is asleep. And they said, Well, if he's asleep, Lord, he doeth well. And Jesus said, He's dead.

They were shocked. Philip said, Let's go with him. Let's go with him.

He's going back to Bethany. Let's go with him and die with him if we need to. The Jews are going to kill him.

Jesus started that walk back to Bethany. They went with him, brave disciples. They had to screw up their courage to make that walk those days.

They came to Bethany, and they knew he'd send for Mary and for Martha. And no doubt one of them had run on to call Mary and Martha and tell them that the Lord was here. And they came out.

You know the lovely story, but you're looking back at it. They weren't. They were in it.

They remembered Martha coming out and falling at the feet of the Lord Jesus and all she said about if you had been here. My brother had died. He said, I am the resurrection and the life.

He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Do you believe that, Martha? She, not knowing what he was talking about, said, Yes, Lord. I believe it to you said it.

He said, Roll the stone away. Roll the stone away. And Martha objected.

And probably they all objected, too. He's been dead three days. Don't roll the stone away.

But because Jesus said, Roll the stone away, they rolled the stone away. And then those clear, clarion words of the Lord Jesus, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth.

They remembered that. You would have remembered it, wouldn't you, if you'd been in that company? You would never have gotten over that. They didn't either.

This is what they were talking about as they walked along and were sad. They remember that the Lord Jesus, beginning in Galilee, began his long trek up to Jerusalem. And how at the beginning there were little crowds here, little crowds there in the villages, but how the people stayed with him.

And as he moved toward Jerusalem, the crowds grew noisier and bigger all the time until he approached Jerusalem. And when he came through the gates of Jerusalem, they threw palm branches in the way. They sang, Hosanna! Oh, how high their hopes were then.

Hosanna! It's about to happen. It's about to happen. But did you walk home with Jesus that night? Oh, what a crestfallen group of men.

It hadn't happened. And since that, oh, what they had experienced. Oh, what they had gone through.

They had seen him taken and nailed to a gibbet of sheep. Oh, what they had seen. How their hearts had been torn to pieces.

And all their hopes, all their confidence, all their joy came crashing down. There was nothing left. Two sad disciples walking to Emmaus.

They had lost their hope. Their enthusiasm was beginning to wane. Their faces were sad.

Their tombs were flat. The fire was low, low, low. No passion.

No fervor. No vision. No virtue.

No force. No nothing. Kind of like the church today.

Not quite confident of his ability. The movement seems to slow. The victory doesn't seem to come.

And we begin to think that we must do it. And so we can't break into song quite so often. And because we can't sing quite so often, we don't sob quite so much.

We don't sob for the world and all its agony. We take a sort of fatalistic point of view. Yes, we believe in it.

Yeah, we believe in it. We wouldn't put it in the past tense quite so definitely. We might not say we trusted.

But we would say we trust in small letters. Not very much excitement about it. Not that we're less loyal to the Lord Jesus.

That's not the idea. It's just that we're not quite so sure the psalmist was right when he sang of the kingdom of heaven to the ends of the earth. He's near.

And he has promised to be with us whenever we meet like this in his name. But somehow, somehow we don't know it. We don't sense his presence.

We don't feel his nearness. As perhaps once we did. And the lack of our clear vision has made our elastic step drag just a little.

It bogs our spirits down. It limits our viewpoint. And our hearts are cold, aren't they? Well, they are.

Now, what does Christ do about this? How does he deal with these disciples? Let's change our focus now. And instead of looking quite so much at the disciples, let's look at the Lord Jesus. See what we see there.

He comes along the path. When I think of it, I rather imagine he came from behind them. And that in the process of their talking things over so sadly together, when people are sad and they talk, they stop often.

And they would have been standing there together, talking with their heads down, and just sort of weary. He comes walking along the path. His step is still elastic.

He comes walking along, and he catches up with them. Are you surprised that the disciples felt the way they did? Are you sitting here this evening and saying, Well, if I'd been one of the disciples, I wouldn't have gotten down like that. Well, if you're thinking that tonight, you know, you haven't gotten into the story.

You haven't been through what they went through. You can't be critical of the disciples and their attitude. And you shouldn't be surprised at it.

If you're going to be surprised, you know, you'd be surprised that Jesus came to them at all. What use has he got for people like this? But if you think that, then you don't know him. And you, if you think that, you don't very well understand his love.

It's no surprise that he came by. The first thing that we are introduced to when he comes by and begins to speak is his statement, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. My, this must have sort of jerked them awake.

Who's this that's talking to us that way? But he came to deal with their foolishness and to stir up their slow hearts until they could burn and flame again. And that's what I want to happen tonight. God helping us.

Why did Jesus come? He came seeking love. That was his quest. He knew the love that was down deep in their hearts, covered over by all the lumber of their disappointment, hidden under the trash of their failing faith.

He wanted to bring that love back out. It was there. It was buried under doubts and problems and circumstances.

But he saw it. He saw it. And he sees it.

He sees it. Have you identified with these disciples tonight? Do you think that's right? My heart is pretty cold. It's pretty cold.

I have almost forgotten. He sees that. He understands that.

He knows what's beneath there. And he would bring it out. And I invite you with me to mark his method.

He gave them a new interpretation of old and familiar things. He didn't come and tell them anything new. Did you notice the phrase they used when they explained this situation to themselves after he was gone? Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us? By the way, while he talked with us.

Oh yeah. Not when they talked to him. Not when they explained all their doubts and problems and circumstances.

That didn't make their hearts burn. That was old stuff to them by now. Not when they talked about him.

Not even when they said he was a prophet mighty in deeds and in words. That didn't make their hearts burn. The fact that they could testify about how great he was.

That didn't make their hearts burn. The thing that made their hearts burn was while he talked with them. While they were silent.

While they listened. Now they began to see a new meaning in the scriptures. What did he talk to them about? Beginning at Moses and all the prophets.

He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. They knew these things. These men were soaked with the scriptures.

They knew these things. But when he went through the prophets one by one and spoke of David's king, fairer than the children of men. When he told them of Solomon's altogether lovely one.

Isaiah's child. Isaiah's king. The government upon his shoulders.

Ruling in the heavens. Oh, their hearts thrilled. They knew this.

When he told of Jeremiah's branch of righteousness, executing judgment and justice in the earth. The inevitability of the judgment of God against sin. His suffering for sin.

And his glorious victory over sin. Oh boy, they began to thrill. They began to say, I never saw that before.

I never realized that that was in Jeremiah before. He came to Ezekiel's plant of renown, giving shade and shedding fragrance. He talked to them about Daniel's stone cut out without hands.

Oh, what things their hearts took in. About Hosea's ideal. About Joel's hope of his people.

Obadiah's deliverer. The one who Nahum saw publishing peace. The anointed of whom Habakkuk sang as going forth to salvation.

Oh, wonderful words. Where have we been? Where have we been? The dawn of the day that Zechariah saw the sun of Malachi's vision. And he talked and he talked.

And they were silent. And their souls rose in wonder at what he said. And over their minds there broke a new vision.

And into their hearts there flamed a new understanding. Well, let's stop here for a minute. We're familiar with these things too, aren't we? You might be saying, well, we know all that stuff about the Old Testament.

Do you really know it? Do you really know it? Have you seen him in these things? Have you let him give an exposition of himself in all the prophets have written? Oh, the fire begins to burn. We need the familiar things should flame with new meaning. We need to listen, listen while he speaks, while he speaks.

What does he say to us? He isn't giving us a review like this. What is he saying to you? What does he say to me? Well, one of the things he says is this. Lo, I am with you even to the end of the age.

Isn't that great? You'll never walk alone. You'll never walk alone. In all your service for him, he's there.

He does not call you to do anything in your own strength. He's there with all his strength. He doesn't ask you to understand anything according to your so-called intellect.

He will make it plain. Lo, I am with you even to the ends of the earth. What else does he say? Go.

Go. This afternoon in this session, the subject was evangelism. Go.

Go. You heard him say go? Are you going? Are you hearing what he says? Or do you fill in all places with reasons? But they were silent. They listened while he spoke.

Sit still. And let him tell us his deepest meaning about these things. Pretty soon our hearts will begin to move and burn while we listen to him speak.

While he speaks to your heart and to mine.

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