

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Title: “Burned Out or Fired Up?”

The title of my message today is a question ... “Burned Out or Fired Up?” Which of those would characterize your life today ... your marriage ... your career ... your relationship with Christ? Are you burned out or fired up? Today I want to show you how the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ took two burned out, discouraged people and transformed them into two fired up, courageous disciples of Jesus who became part of a movement that changed the world. I’m praying that same thing will happen for all of us today.

Open your Bibles to Luke 24:13. This is one of the many eye-witness accounts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Christ isn’t a myth or fake news or an alternative fact. It’s as real as your birthday.

This event takes place on the Sunday evening after the Friday when Jesus was crucified and buried. On Sunday morning some of the women who followed Jesus went to His grave to finish preparing His body for burial. When they arrived they were startled to find that the stone over the tomb had been rolled away. While they were standing there two angels came and announced to them the unbelievable news ... “He is not here; He has risen!” The women ran back to where the rest of the disciples were and announced what they had seen and heard. But the rest of them thought it was nonsense. Peter ran to the tomb to check it out for himself; but for many of the others, as far as they knew Jesus was dead and with the flame of their hopes snuffed out they simply went back home. Now Luke zeroes in on two of those disciples. **Read Luke 24:13-14.**

Later we’re told that one of the two was named Cleopas; the other disciple is unnamed. They’re just two ordinary followers of Jesus rehashing all that happened that weekend ... Jesus’ arrest, trial, beatings and finally His brutal crucifixion on a hill called Calvary. That was the end of Jesus as far as they knew. So now they’re shuffling along the road with their shoulders slumped in discouragement, talking about all that had happened. **Read Luke 24:15-16.**

It wasn’t that the lighting was poor or that they were so consumed with their own conversation and grief. The Bible says they were *kept* from recognizing Him. Jesus deliberately concealed His identity. Jesus could have immediately showed Himself alive to these two just like He will do for others. But for now He stands in the shadows.

That's the way God works sometimes. He's there, just in the shadows. He lets us wrestle with our questions and doubts. There have been times like this in my own life when I had no answers, only doubts and questions. At the time I couldn't see God anywhere in the picture. But as I look back I see that my faith really grew in those dark times because I had to trust God even when I couldn't see the evidence of His presence.

In v.17 Jesus asks, "So what are you two discussing?" It's like they are paralyzed; they can't take another step. And it says their faces were downcast. Their faces couldn't hide the discouragement in their hearts. They are burned out. And we know about burnout. It's an all-to-common experience. Burnout happens when all the fuel of our life has been consumed and we don't feel like we can go on. And from our two friends here we learn that...

BURNOUT CAN BE CAUSED BY ... DEVASTATING CIRCUMSTANCES

The one named Cleopas asked:

Luke 24:18 - "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

It's like Cleopas says, "What planet are you from? Everybody knows what has happened." Jesus replies, "Really? What things are you talking about?" This is all very humorous if you stop to think about it. Of course Jesus knew what happened, but He is coaxing the confusion out of them. He's allowing them to deal with their disappointments and their doubts by talking about it.

By the way, this is a good thing to keep in mind when you pray. Be honest with God about your questions, doubts and confusion. He can handle it. And He knows it anyway. So just tell Him.

Well with that invitation all the confusion just comes tumbling out of Cleopas' mouth. He's burned out by these devastating circumstances. We also know that...

BURNOUT CAN BE CAUSED BY... INCOMPLETE INFORMATION.

They think they have all the facts. **Read Luke 24:19b-21a.**

All that is accurate information as far as it goes. Yes, Jesus was a prophet, powerful in word and deed. But He was more than that. Yes, the Jewish authorities

handed Jesus over to the Roman authorities to crucify Him, but that's not all that was happening. And, yes, Jesus was the redeemer of Israel, but not in the way they thought He would redeem them. And the incomplete, inaccurate information led to great disappointment. That's the next thing we see about burnout.

BURNOUT CAN BE CAUSED BY ... UNMET EXPECTATIONS.

ILLUSTRATION – Maybe you watched the Academy Awards back in February when one of the biggest snafus in television history took place. Actors Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway were to announce the winner of the Best Picture of the Year. Warren Beatty opened the envelope and hesitated because what he saw didn't make sense. He had actually been given the envelope for another award ... Best Actress. And the card said, "Emma Stone, *La La Land*." Faye Dunaway looks over at the card, sees *La La Land* and announces it as the Best Picture. The cast all raced up on the stage in a wild celebration. They had even started their acceptance speeches when someone grabbed the microphone to announce that there had been a terrible mistake. *La La Land* wasn't the winner. Actually *Moonlight* had won the Best Picture award. You can see the disappointment on the faces of the cast of *La La Land* as they shuffle off the stage. Things didn't turn out at all like they expected.

And so it was for these two disheartened disciples.

Luke 24:21a - but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

You see, it was their incomplete information that led to their unmet expectations. They had invented a version of the Messiah that was not accurate. They expected the Messiah to come like a military super-hero to shake off the rule of the Romans and to reestablish the glory of Israel. This is the version of the Messiah many of them expected Jesus to fulfill. None of their scholars picked up on the fact that the prophets predicted that the Messiah would *not* be a super-hero action figure. He would come as a Suffering Servant who would die bearing the sins of His people. That's how the Messiah would redeem Israel. But they missed that. So when Jesus was crucified and buried, that whole vision collapsed in disappointment.

We understand disappointment, don't we? Others disappoint us and let us down. If you put your ultimate hopes in another human being you'll be disappointed sooner or later. There are times when we disappoint ourselves. Looking at the road map of our lives we can all point to places where we made a wrong turn ... sometimes

with disastrous consequences. And we would give anything if we could live that chapter of our lives over again. We may even feel disappointed in God when He doesn't come through for us on our timetable. These two travelers in Luke 24 felt that way.

Luke 24:21b - And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

They remembered that Jesus said He would be crucified and raised *on the third day*. But as far as they knew Jesus was nowhere to be found. And it's all a bitter disappointment. And they didn't know what to do with themselves.

ILLUSTRATION – I talked recently to a widow who had been married for fifty years when her husband died. She couldn't remember life without him. Now she struggles with who she is and what she's supposed to do with the rest of her life. Devastating circumstances, disappointing seasons like this leave us uncertain about the purpose and direction of our lives.

Now here's the pivot in the story ... the turning point. Jesus listened to their disappointing story; then He helps them make sense of it. **Read Luke 24:25-26.**

You see, if they had paid careful attention to what God said in the Scriptures and if they had taken Him at His Word they would see that this is exactly what God said would happen. Things are not swirling out of control. God is working everything according to His perfect plan. Christ *had* to go through the sufferings of the Cross to get to the Glory of the resurrection. So the sufferings of Christ were not meaningless. It's what *had* to happen if sinners like us could be saved.

So if there was meaning in the sufferings of Christ, then maybe there's meaning in my sufferings. And if there was glory after Christ suffered then maybe something better is waiting for me on the other side of my suffering. That's hope. And that's just what burned out people need ... hope. Notice...

THE FIRE RETURNS WHEN WE ENCOUNTER CHRIST... IN THE WORD OF GOD

This is where it starts.

Luke 24:27 - And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Now I say this fires them up because a few verses later we see that it's at this point that these two disciples begin to feel something burning in their hearts.

Luke 24:32 - 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?"

You see, the Bible they had been reading or hearing read all their lives had the answers in it. They just didn't see it. All through the OT Scriptures God had been working on a plan to redeem, not just Israel, but the entire human race. And Jesus walked them back through those old Bible stories showing how they all pointed to Him.

If you go to see a movie filmed in 3D you need 3D glasses to see it clearly. And the whole Bible is filmed in Jesus and you need "Jesus glasses" to see it clearly. With your Jesus glasses you see that there's a unifying message all the way through the Bible. It starts back in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, when Adam and Eve first sinned. Their relationship with God and with His perfect creation was ruined. But God already had a recovery plan. He promised Adam and Eve that one of their descendants would deliver the human race from their sins. Starting in Genesis the Bible explains how God will raise up a deliverer to save people from their sins. And all of that was fulfilled in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When Christ died on the Cross He was bearing our sin. And when Christ rose from the dead, He broke the power of sin and death. So when we put our trust in Him and what He did for us, we can have forgiveness and eternal life. Yes, even today if you put your trust in Christ, that's what He will do for you.

So with their Jesus glasses on these two travelers saw how God's big picture was perfectly fulfilled in Jesus ... and the fire returns to their hearts when they encounter Christ in God's Word. But also...

THE FIRE RETURNS WHEN WE ENCOUNTER CHRIST... BY RECEIVING HIM.

How can the resurrection of Jesus Christ move from a just a religious belief to a life-changing reality? It has to become personal for us. Well, our two travelers finally arrive at Emmaus, their hometown. Jesus has walked with them along the way and to this point they still didn't recognize him. The Bible says that Jesus would have kept travelling...

Luke 24:29 - 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.

They invited Jesus into their home, and they shared a meal. And Jesus took over. He took the bread, gave thanks, broke off pieces and gave it to them. And in that instant it says...

Luke 24:31a - Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him...

You see, when we act on the light we have and open our hearts to Christ just like these two opened their home to Him, Jesus becomes real to us and He changes us.

Many years later Jesus sent a letter by one of His angels to a burned out, lukewarm church filled with burned out, lukewarm believers. He said...

Revelation 3:20 - Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

So on this first Easter the fire returned to the hearts of these two disciples. And they were so fired up by the fact that Jesus was alive that they had to tell someone. You see...

FIRED UP DISCIPLES ARE WITNESSES FOR CHRIST.

Read Luke 24:33-34a.

How do you explain the fact that a few dozen timid, confused followers of Jesus were suddenly forged into a movement that shook the whole world? How do you explain the fact many of them became so bold that they risked the loss of everything, including their lives because they couldn't keep quiet about Jesus. The only explanation is that they had personally encountered Christ. And their lives were filled with hope.

ILLUSTRATION – Tim Keller in his book *The Reason for God* helps us understand the power of hope in this way. Two women whose lives are virtually the same in every way are hired to work on the same assembly line in a factory. Their job is put part A into slot B, then hand that product off to the next person on the line. They are to do this over and over for eight hours a day. Their situations are identical except for one difference. The first woman is told that at the end of the year she will be paid \$30,000. The second woman is told that at the end of the

year she will be paid \$30 million. After a couple of weeks the first woman is bored with her job and burned out. She complains that her job is driving her insane. But the second woman is fired up, even though she's doing the same job as the other woman. You have two people who are experiencing identical circumstances in radically different ways. What makes the difference? It is their expectation of the future. One is bored and burned out because she doesn't have much hope for the future. The other is fired up because there's something great ahead for her. That's the power of hope.

And I'm not saying that money is what gives us hope. In fact, we all know that it doesn't really. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is Good News because in His resurrection Christ conquered our greatest enemies of sin and death. And with our lives united with Him by faith we have hope that there's great future awaiting us in heaven. And that hope gives meaning to my life today.