

Heartburn

“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?’” Luke 24:32

Heartburn. Most of the time, we hear that and it’s something that we’re trying to relieve. To our physical selves, heartburn is unpleasant and unwanted. However, this weekend, heartburn is spoken of in a different way, a spiritual way. **“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?’”** (Luke 24:32) This kind of heartburn isn’t something to be relieved, instead it’s something to be sought and desired.

So, have you had spiritual heartburn? I’m sure that’s not a question you get asked very often. You might be uncertain about whether you’ve had that “spiritual heartburn” experience. Answering this question could get tricky quickly. If you eat certain foods and then go lay down and read the Bible, you might find yourself trying to distinguish between physical and spiritual heartburn. Like physical heartburn, spiritual heartburn has symptoms that help us recognize what we’re experiencing. However, the symptoms for spiritual heartburn aren’t simply sensations and feelings. No, the symptoms for this kind of heartburn are rooted in the context of God’s Word.

To diagnose spiritual heartburn, it helps to zero in on what those followers of Jesus said in the rest of their statement. **“‘Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?’”** The spiritual heartburn these disciples experienced was connected to Jesus’ conversation with them on their journey and what He shared from the Bible. The circumstances that led to their experience centered around Jesus joining them in their heartache and relieving their pain by the promises of God He did truly fulfill. Heartache eased by Jesus’ fulfillment of God’s promises that’s what delivers spiritual heartburn.

Starting with our Gospel reading, let’s unpack this further by pondering variations of heartache found in our three readings this weekend. Those two disciples walking to Emmaus, Cleopas and his friend, they were experiencing heavy heartache. Jesus, their teacher, their leader, their friend, had died and hadn’t redeemed Israel like they had hoped. Sadness filled their hearts as they walked away from Jerusalem where all these difficult things had just taken place. They were dealing with loss. The loss of someone they cared about and the loss of hope. To put it mildly, they were disappointed with their religious leaders and perhaps even disappointed with God. Another potential Savior for Israel had sprung up and now seemingly faded away. And to add salt to this emotional and spiritual wound, the news of Jesus’ resurrection seemed to them rumors of false hope.

As we heard earlier, Jesus entered their heartache. He allowed them to voice the details of their dejection. And after listening to them, Jesus boldly led them out of their grief. Starting with Moses, that is the books Moses wrote – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy – along with the Prophets, Jesus explained the Scriptures highlighting their emphasis on Him. The revelation of the Scriptures in the light of Christ completely altered those disciples’ heartache. What had appeared to them as loss and failure, that left them disappointed, was now brought into new light with the necessity of God’s plan for salvation. Everything they had interpreted as a deflating end was the stunning beginning of the difference that Jesus’ resurrection was going to make from that point forward.

For the clinching moment, Jesus remained with these followers as requested. When they sat down to eat, once again Jesus attached His Word of blessing to their meal and in that moment, they recognized Jesus! From heartache to hearts full of joy! Jesus had entered their heartache to reveal His Word of hope and joy so that their hearts burned and ignited in them newfound purpose to share what had happened. And so, they ran another seven miles back to Jerusalem to let Jesus’ other followers know that His resurrection was more than a rosy rumor, but indeed a resolute reality. Heartache turned heartburn.

The other two readings this weekend demonstrate for us that the Lord can work this same result in different kinds of heartache. In Acts, through Peter, the Holy Spirit convicts the hearts of the crowd gathered for Pentecost. The same crowd that several weeks earlier had gathered for Passover and cried out in favor of Jesus’ crucifixion. At Peter’s address their hearts ached from the wrong that they had done, and they were despairing of what to do. Through Peter, the Lord didn’t further burden them in their despair, but rather pointed them to

His work. Peter called on this crowd to confess in repentance the conviction the Spirit had worked in their hearts and to receive the Lord's baptismal work. From the heartache of sin, guilt and shame, 3,000 people were given heartburn for the Lord who had saved them!

Then there is our 1 Peter reading, where Peter addresses the heartache of this fleeting life. Like the flowers and grass, this life decays quickly. Here today and gone tomorrow. Like water slipping through our fingers, life easily escapes one's grasp. Yet, instead of leaving his hearers to spiral out of control in this sobering reality, Peter anchors his listeners to the Word of the Lord that remains forever. The very Word of good news preached to them. Through Peter again, the Lord enters His people's heartache turning it to heartburn by His Word of promise and fulfillment. From the heartache of the chaos produced by this fading life, the Lord's delivers heartburn via His Word of security and stability.

Based on these readings, we now have a qualifying component for our original question. To recognize spiritual heartburn, we need to recognize our own heartache. Have you been dealing with loss? The loss of someone you loved? The loss of hope? Has this loss caused you to be disappointed in those around you, perhaps even in God? Do you feel strung on by rumors of false hope? Still today, the Lord seeks to enter your heartache. He comes to listen to you in prayer. He desires to speak with you through the Bible and through His messengers He places in your life. Beginning right now with His resurrection hope and affirmed in the breaking of bread, He is turning your aching heart into one that burns with joy and confidence in His living and abiding word.

Maybe your heartache right now is from the guilt and shame of the sin you've committed that hangs over your head. The Holy Spirit has led you to see your shortcomings and now you aren't sure what to do. Here again in this moment, the Lord doesn't burden you further by looking for answers from within yourself. Instead, He points you to His work. In repentance, return to the font, to your baptism. Remember that the gift of your Savior's death and resurrection isn't a limited time offer! Jesus connects you to His gift daily by these waters so that daily you might receive anew the forgiveness that washes you clean from the guilt and shame of your sin. By His washing, the Holy Spirit is creating within you a clean heart released from its aching to burn with the assurance that you are God's beloved child.

Perhaps life's temporary nature is breaking your heart at this time. Your heart aches as change and decay are in all that you see. Truly, nothing is built to last. Chaos and calamity are constantly drowning out any moment of peace. Even this heartache the Lord continues to enter. He comes to reconnect you to His enduring Word. The very Word that is being preached to you at this time. He is moving your heart from being consumed by aching at all this world's fleeting struggles to anchoring your heart in Him, the One who lasts, the One who was, who is, and who will be. And through this shift, He delivers to you a heart that burns for Him, for His Word, for His security and stability.

People loved by God, be encouraged, right now you are experiencing spiritual heartburn. As the Lord walks and talks you through your heartaches with His Word, He is leading you to hearts full of joy, peace, hope, and love – hearts that burn within you. Don't be discouraged and don't be disappointed if what you feel doesn't feel like a heart that burns for Him. God is at work. Remain in His Word and He will show the spiritual heartburn He is delivering to your life regardless of whatever feelings you might be experiencing at this moment. Because His promises never fail, neither will His ability to move you through your heartache to heartburn.

As we wrap up our time of meditation and reflection, I encourage you to pull out the hymnals in front of you. Open to the inside of the front cover, where you'll see prayers for worship. Find the final prayer titled, *For blessing on the Word*, and I invite you to join with me as we close with this prayer. Lord God, bless Your Word wherever it is proclaimed. Make it a Word of power and peace to convert those not yet Your own and to confirm those who have come to saving faith. May Your Word pass from the ear to the heart, from the heart to the lip, and from the lip to the life that, as You have promised Your Word may achieve the purpose for which You send it; through Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

In Christ,

Pastor Dan