



**3 EASTER**  
MAY 3/4, 2014

ACTS 2:14a, 36-42; PSALM 116:1-4, 12-19; I PETER 1:17-23; LUKE 24:13-35

**FIRST LUTHERAN**  
PASTOR SCOTT FULLER

*Open Eyes, Burning Hearts*

*Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

I love this passage of scripture. It's one of my favorites for a number of reasons.

-It takes place on the first Easter day when all the followers of Jesus are caught in that **twilight zone** between the **real** experience of his death...and the seemingly **un-real rumors** of his resurrection.

-The main characters are two unknown disciples – **regular folk** – not part of the special twelve.

-And I love how Jesus meets these two where they are.

**He** comes to **them**,  
**he** seeks **them** out,  
**he** finds **them** in their **confusion** and **grief**.

Then, the Lord lets them **talk**,  
lets them **tell** their **story**,  
lets them **relive** their pain and **revisit** their sorrow.

-And, in a **strange** sort of way, I love how

- Jesus **scolds** them for *not trusting*,
- Jesus **scolds** them for *forgetting* what they'd been taught,
- Jesus **scolds** them for *failing to pay attention* to what they'd *learned* in the **Bible**.

Certainly **no one** likes to be admonished, but a **scolding can** serve a very useful purpose. **At its best, what good can come from being made to face our failures?**

A good talking to can help us face something we've been avoiding; to correct a wrong that has become a burden; to strengthen a relationship that has undergone some strain.

It's like a ***time-out*** for someone who's throwing a tantrum... Sometimes we need the **external** law to impose a **break** in our **behavior**, give us some breathing room, or just give us some space to re-alert our focus.

Carolyn and I **often** said that putting our **kids** on **time-out** was as **important** for **us** as it was for **them** – and it works with these disciples as well.

-I also love the fact that Jesus doesn't just **scold** them, **jump out** of his **disguise** and then **scamper off**. **Instead**, on their journey,  
 -he gives them the opportunity to be **recaptured** by the **magic** of **faith**;  
 -he **walks** them through the scriptures,  
 -**reminds** them of what they'd been taught,  
 -helps them **re-discover** the **grace** that was **always** present –  
 just **hidden** behind the **tragedy** of their **grief**.

-And of course I love the part about the **meal**...where the disciples' eyes are finally opened and they see that their **new-found friend is**, in fact, ***Jesus himself!***

Here's a question for you: **What is it that finally gives the Lord away?**

It's Jesus breaking the bread, and saying the blessing;  
 it's that muscle memory,  
 it's that familiarity of practice,  
 it's that reaffirmation of a shared experience...

And, the most **important** ingredient is that it is **God's Spirit**, in **both** the **words** *and* **actions** of their supper, who makes Christ's presence real in the meal for **them** – *and for us!*

**Then** their eyes are opened.

**Then** the light clicks on.

**Then** the pieces come together and **realization dawns**.

And **then** their aching, breaking hearts start to burn with the fire of the Spirit's inspiration.

So let's recap the experiences of these two disciples:

They don't see Jesus once he's dead and buried.

They don't see Jesus when he's first risen and on the loose.

They don't see Jesus when he's walking and talking with them.

They don't see Jesus – until they see him

break the bread and offer the blessing.

And then they realize that they had, indeed, seen him all along, recalling how their hearts burned with the Spirit's fire as he taught them on their walk...

This whole notion of *not seeing* vs. *truly seeing* is the main theme of a wonderful movie entitled, The Spitfire Grill.

A young woman named Percy is about to be released from prison, and has decided that a little town in the state of Maine named Gilead is the place where she would like to start over.

Ironically, you and I know Gilead from the song as a **biblical** place that offered a soothing ointment for wounds and rashes. It also came to be known as that **spiritual** place – in Christ's presence – where our **souls** can be **soothed** and our **hearts** can find healing.

The chorus goes like this:

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;*

*There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

Let's sing that together...

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;*

*There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

So this young woman with a painful past moves to the small town of Gilead...and is met with a **less than warm reception**. But the crusty widow who's been running the Spitfire Grill restaurant needs the help, so she hires Percy and gives her a place to stay. The young woman is hopeful that indeed, Gilead **will** soothe her sin-sick soul.

But **many** of the people don't share her hope. In fact, they don't see much good at all – in **anything**. Businesses have closed. People have moved away – and none have moved in. The town can't see a future with any hope...and what often happens in such situations is that people let their anxieties determine how they behave toward each other.

As bad luck would have it, a large amount of money goes missing from the Grill, and **some** people are sure that **Percy** is to blame. **Others** think it's a mysterious **mountain** man who stole the cash. So a **search** party is **organized** and **armed**, and **out** they go looking for the culprit.

I'll tell you right now that the ending of the movie is sad – but it's **also** simply **stuffed** with **redemption** and **grace**. You will not be sorry if you rent this wonderful video.

So let's recap the experiences of the citizens of Gilead:

- They don't see a good reason to hold out any hope for their town.
- They don't see a lot of good in each other.
- And they certainly don't see any good coming from letting an ex-con settle down in their midst.

Yet Percy sees the potential for **good** in this town – she is, in fact, the Christ-figure in this heart-warming story.

Percy meets the townspeople where they are. Percy encourages those who are less than confident. Percy reaches out to souls who are wounded. Percy even manages to re-establish a bond between her employer and the woman's son. **He's** the mountain-man, an emotionally scarred, but harmless Viet Nam vet who cannot thrive in society, so lives the lonely life of a hermit.

Percy is able to save him...and in her selfless act, the people of Gilead find a new beginning. Those who are **guilty** of **dis**-believing grasp at the chance to change, and together **all** face the future with **open eyes**, and **hearts** that **burn** with the promise of hope.

Let's sing that chorus again:

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;  
There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

And as you have figured out by now, the story of our two disciples – and the story of the good people of Gilead – is also the story of you and me.

For we are ordinary people, often tempted to despair of hope when life gets hard, and to dis-believe in God's grace when disappointments mount.

Yet the truth is that we are never forgotten, abandoned or rejected by God. In fact, by the grace of God we continually discover that Jesus comes to us, that Jesus seeks us out, that Jesus finds us in our confusion and grief.

And then the Lord listens to us as we share our story, as we re-live our pain and our grief. Then he takes in his hands a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. He blesses them and gives them to us saying, *Take and eat, take and drink, this is my body & blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.*

And at that moment, we're truly able to see that Jesus is always there for us, teaching and guiding and blessing us to be a blessing.

May God keep our eyes always open, and our hearts always burning with the flame of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

3 Easter Emmaus Road 2014