May 22, 11 Luke 24:13-35

HEARTS STRANGELY WARMED

May 24, 1738 a young preacher was walking along the streets in England wondering what God had in store for him. He was an Oxford Scholar, went on mission trips to America to convert the Indians and others with little success. On one failed and frustrated voyage home a great storm arose blowing their ship every which way. He was scared to death. He believed, as many others did, that this storm was going to destroy their boat. He thought what if this was his night to meet his maker, was he ready? The storms kept coming and many were in the same shoes as this young man returning to his home wondering what was to happen. In the corner of the ship the young man noticed a group of people on their knees in prayer. He watched with awe because it seems this little band of Moravians didn't seem afraid at all. They were at peace. They prayed, perhaps sang hymns of praise, and rode out the storm with fewer fears. When the storm finally passed and calm came this young preacher was still in awe of this small group of people. They now had smiles on their faces and lifted their hands to the Lord in praise, perhaps even singing "Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind and now I see." Maybe they continued their time of praise by singing, "When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul."

The young preacher approached the Moravian leader to ask why he and his little band were not afraid of dying. His answer….they all knew where they were going. The young man looked at the man with a questioning look as the man told him of their assurance that no matter what happened to them, that their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior guaranteed them a place in his kingdom. The rest of the trip John Wesley met often with this Moravian pastor to try and understand their differences. When he

arrived home he was told to seek more help from the Moravians in order to understand how he could have the assurance of his salvation. While it took many visits he was always told by Peter Boehler, "Mr. Wesley, you need to preach God's grace to your people until you have received it. And then continue to preach God's Grace because you have it." And so John Wesley did that. He preached about God's amazing grace, but had not felt it in his own life as of yet. He still had questions about his salvation until the night he took his walk down Aldersgate Street and experienced a life changing experience as he heard singing in a church that drew him inside. It was there on May 24, 1738 John Wesley, the founder of our denomination, heard someone speaking about Martin Luther's understanding to the Book of Romans which changed his life. For it was in that Book of Romans written by Paul that Luther found that it was by faith one is saved, not works. That it was through Jesus one is saved by faith, that we are all sinners in need of the Savior. Listening to the introduction to this book John Wesley's heart was "strangely warmed" and he left that place with peace in his heart, and a new understanding of God's word that he too was saved by the grace of God and that his sins, all of his sins, were washed away by the blood of Jesus Christ at the foot of the cross. When he shared his story with his brother Charles, Charles was able to tell him that in recent days he too found the truth. But instead of being a preacher, his sermons were through his music, which to this day, still touch hearts of the people. John Wesley now had God's Grace, and he now preached God's grace to sinners and lives became strangely warmed wherever he preached. A joyful John Wesley had found his assurance that God loved him and that Jesus died for him.

Hearts strangely warmed. We would say Martin Luther's heart was strangely warmed when he realized that it was through faith that one is saved, not works. All the beatings he did to his body, all the sleeping on the cold floors, or on his cot without a mattress could not help him find salvation. Reading and translating the Book of Romans brought him to the verse that says *'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of*

God, and are justified freely by his grace through redemption that came by Christ Jesus.' My friends, it wasn't long after this that the Reformation began. Luther might not use these same words, but his heart was 'strangely warmed' when he realized the way to heaven and salvation was through faith in Christ.

Turning to God's word this morning two young men have been in Jerusalem for almost a week. They had come, like all good Jewish people, to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. While there they heard about a man named Jesus who had done some amazing things. They heard how he brought his friend back from the grave. They watched on this particular Sunday as he entered the city to cheers and sounds of praise. They followed and became intrigued by what he was preaching. Though others felt Jesus was a threat, they saw him as a peaceful man full of God's love. They saw his anger when he cleansed the Temple, but they also knew how those that were there had been cheating the people, they included. So they followed and listened and began to accept his teachings. In reality their hearts were strangely warmed as they sat and listened to the Master teach about the things of God. They were given new hopes, new assurances of a better life. They were excited about their new found life. But that was Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday. Things turned bad on Thursday and Friday because this man they had been following had been arrested, put on trial, found guilty and sentenced to death on the cross. They couldn't believe it. This man was innocent. Yet others believed he needed to die. They watched as they placed him in his tomb and they went to their place of rest to celebrate their Sabbath with broken hearts. All their hopes seemed dashed. They believed this one man, this carpenter from Nazareth was the one that could lead their nation back to God. But now he was lying in a tomb. And that, my friends, was Friday, but Sunday was coming.

These two men stayed huddled up in their room till Sunday morning. When they arose and started home they heard the news that some women went to the tomb but

found the tomb was empty. Some say he had risen. Others, especially the religious leaders who put him on the cross said some of Jesus' followers had stolen his body. These two decided it was time to go home before trouble arose in Jerusalem. So they got their things together and began the long journey on the road to Emmaus.

Let Luke describe it for us all. Luke 24:13-35

That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. [14] They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. [15] In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. [16] But they were not able to recognize who he was. [17] He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?" They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. [18] Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?" [19] He said, "What has happened?" They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. [20] Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. [21] And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. [22] But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb [23] and couldn't find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. [24] Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn't see Jesus." [25] Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? [26] Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?" [27] Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures

that referred to him. [28] They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he was going on [29] but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. [30] ***And here is what happened****: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. [31] At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared. [32] Back and forth they talked. "Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?" [33] They didn't waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, [34] talking away: "It's really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!" [35] Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.*

Can you imagine not knowing Jesus was with them? We might think they should have recognized him, or even his voice. But you know what, Jesus is with us always and we don't even know it. As the song says, "He walks with me and he talks with me and tells me I am his own." Oh how they had missed their new found friend. They had so much to learn as their lives were turning around. And they were saddened by Jesus death as they made that journey home. The two talked about what they had heard the Master say and teach. How they needed to have faith, to trust. Don't look at the circumstances around you, but trust in God at all times. Tough to do today with the Teacher gone. Who could lead them? And they walked along that dusty road seemingly hopeless.

Then out of nowhere a voice. "Mind if I join you? I'm heading your way." "Sure!" they said. "What's wrong? You fellows look pretty sad, like you lost your best friend." Then they told him their story. When they finished the voice said, "Have faith, my friends. Let me share with you some stores from God's word, stories you may already know." For those hours they were on that walk, those two men had the best teacher

anyone could have as he explained, and opened the Scriptures to them. As they walked, their sadness turned to joy because their faith began to change.

When they got home they invited the stranger to have a bite to eat or even stay the night. When the table was set, the stranger took the bread, gave thanks, blessed it and gave it to them. It was at that moment that their eyes were opened at who had been walking with them and who was sitting at their table. Not only were their eyes opened, their hearts were strangely warmed.

That Emmaus story never gets old because sometimes those guys are us on our journey of faith. Sometimes we forget that Jesus walks with us even though we don't feel his presence. But there comes a moment when our eyes become open and we realize Christ is here or wherever we go. It's like the sad story from a country western song where a little girl watches from behind a couch almost daily as her parents fight with one another. One day it ends in violence and she is brought miles away to another home, another town, another family. This family took her to church one Sunday and as she entered her class for Sunday School she paused at the picture of Jesus hanging on the cross. She stopped for a moment and said, "I know that man. But he wasn't on the cross. He was holding me in his arms and wiping away my tears telling me it would be okay the night my parents died."

Sometimes we sing, *"Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place, I can feel his mighty power and his grace. I can hear the brush of angels' wings, I see glory on each face; surely the presence of the Lord is in this place."* We are always reminded that he comes to still the storms, bring peace to those who are experiencing difficulties, and he brings hope to the hopeless. His presence changes everything.

Hearts strangely warmed. What a wonderful thing to happen. Hearts of stone being warmed by the grace of God's word. Hearts full of evil being cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. Hearts bent toward sinning finding forgiveness. That's what our faith is all

about. It’s about a spiritual journey, our own Emmaus walk toward heaven. It’s a journey of faith with many bumps in the road, many temptations to deal with, but with many days of joys and assurance knowing that Christ walks with us daily.

Maybe some of you here have had that moment when your heart was strangely warmed and you finally knew an accepted the fact that Christ died for your sins and you invited him to come into your hearts. What a great feeling. But maybe there is one here today whose eyes has been opened to the truth and has felt their heart being strangely warmed as God has spoken to you this morning and you are ready to make your decision for Christ. If so, you are invited to come to this altar of prayer and confession when we sing our final hymn in just a few moments.

Truly the presence of the Lord is in this place I can feel his might power and his grace. It’s the same power and the same grace that the Emmaus guys felt. It’s the same power and grace that Wesley and Luther felt. It’s the same grace and power Billy Graham felt. It’s the same grace and power Max Lucado felt. It’s that same grace and power that he offers to all who will believe the truth of the Easter story that Jesus died to set us free and that he lives today, and walks and talks with all his children.

Let the words to this chorus be our invitation:

OPEN MY EYES LORD
I WANT TO SEE JESUS
TO REACH OUT AND TOUCH HIM
AND SAY THAT I LOVE HIM
OPEN MY EARS LORD AND HELP ME TO LISTEN
OPEN MY EYES LORD I WANT TO SEE JESUS.