

# Hearts Aflame: From Sorrow to Joyful Witness

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[ 0 : 00 ] But we're going to turn to our Bibles now, to our reading for this morning. And we're reading! together in Luke's Gospel, in the last chapter, chapter 24. And boys and girls, do listen along with your mums and dads.

You'll be going out to your own junior church after this, after the next hymn. But listen along and then ask your mum and dad what they've learned over lunchtime. How about that? Make sure they listen when you're not here. Luke chapter 24, we're reading the middle portion, starting at verse 13, down to verse 35. Last week we read the first section, which is about resurrection morning. And here we are later on in the afternoon. That very day, two of them, two disciples of Jesus, were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

And they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, what's this conversation that you're holding with each other as you walk? And they stood still looking sad. One of them named Cleopas answered him, are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened here in these days?

And he said to them, what things? And he said to him, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.

And how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.

[ 1 : 52 ] Yes, and besides all this, it's now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning.

And when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they'd even seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see. And he said to them, oh foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things?

And enter into his glory. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going further, but they urged him strongly saying, stay with us for it's toward evening and the day is now far spent. So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.

[ 3 : 19 ] 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? And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem.

And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together saying, the Lord has risen indeed and he has appeared to Simon. And then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Amen. May God bless to us his word. We'll do open your Bibles once again to Luke. Luke chapter 24 and follow along.

Luke chapter 24 and follow along. Where is your heart? What has captured it? What controls it? What lights it up?

Maybe you sit here with a heavy heart, a heart devoid of hope or purpose, searching for some. Perhaps you've been a Christian for a long time, yet you feel somewhat apathetic about the cause of Christ.

[ 4 : 42 ] Slow of heart when it comes to the mission of the church. Perhaps the sheer predicament that our city faces, hundreds of thousands destined for a dark eternity, perhaps that no longer stirs you as it once did.

It feels distant, detached. Maybe you wish it were otherwise. You wish you were more eager for the gospel, not only for how it shapes you, but how it spreads, taking root in our youngsters, our students, your friends, your colleagues.

Or perhaps you feel burdened, beaten down by the demands of family, by feeling parents, work pressures, worries about the future.

And so the thought of a life that pulses with missionary purpose feels beyond reach. To imagine Christian service as the beating heart of your life just seems fanciful.

Well, Luke wants to minister to hearts just like that. Hearts that are heavy and sad. And he wants to give hearts that burn within.

[ 5 : 52 ] Hearts filled with wonder at the risen Christ. And fitted to be witnesses to the risen Christ. That's what we see all the way through chapter 24 of Luke's gospel.

Last week at the empty tomb, we saw that the woman's perplexity was met not with sight, but with scripture. It was the remembrance of Jesus' words that turned confusion into conviction.

Made them proclaimers. And now Luke continues on that same day, verse 13, that very day, still resurrection day. And there are two disciples who walk away from Jerusalem on a journey clouded by sorrow.

They speak of Jesus, but they do not yet understand him. And yet the risen Christ himself will draw near and walk beside them. And by the end, their hearts will burn within.

Their eyes will open. Their feet will move so that their mouths can be opened to proclaim the wonders of the risen Christ. And so the question that Luke presses upon us all the way through this chapter is, how does such transformation happen?

[ 7 : 00 ] How? And his answer throughout this chapter is the same. It's by the words of the risen Christ. As scripture is opened, understood, and believed, sadness gives way to joy and despondency to declaration.

The risen Christ turns sad and confused disciples into joyful witnesses by opening the scriptures to reveal that the Christ must suffer and enter into his glory.

And so the first thing we see in these verses, verses 13 to 24, is the disciples' confusion, which is a misunderstood hope. The disciples' confusion, which is a misunderstood hope.

Misunderstood hope always breeds miserable hearts. Many of our deepest disappointments in the Christian life flew from expecting Jesus to save us from the wrong things and in the wrong ways.

Notice that very day, two of the disciples who had heard the woman's report were walking to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. Still Resurrection Sunday. The tomb is empty. The angels have spoken.

[ 8 : 14 ] The women have declared. Yet these two have not understood. Verse 14, they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. They walk and talk, processing what they've seen and heard.

No doubt their discussion was full of feeling. But it was not illumined. They can recount the events accurately. Jesus' mighty ministry.

Good Friday. The cross. Even reports of resurrection. They can recount those events accurately, but they cannot interpret them rightly. They do not understand. So verse 15, while they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

There's something beautiful about that line, isn't there? In the midst of sadness and despondency, here is grace incarnate walking along beside them in the person of Jesus. We as readers are privileged to see this, whilst these disciples weren't actually aware of what was happening.

We're more clued in than they were. And so these two disciples move away from Jerusalem, the place of redemption. Yet the Redeemer is walking along with them. In their sorrow, Jesus draws near, as he so often does.

[ 9 : 26 ] And he asks, verse 17, what are you talking about? And then look at the detail there that Luke gives us. They stood still, looking sad.

So we have some everyday disciples, noon to the eleven, but not the eleven, heading away from Jerusalem with heads dripped and hearts despondent. Notice their reply to Jesus carries a note of consternation, verse 18.

Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened? Their tune actually shows how significant these events were. Headline news.

Everyone would have known what was happening. But the irony, of course, is that Cleopas and his companion are the ones who did not know just how significant these events were.

For it was far more significant than even they could imagine. So Cleopas recounts the events. Verse 19, Jesus, a mighty prophet in word and deeds.

[ 10 : 33 ] Verse 20, was betrayed and crucified by the leaders. All true. But though they could tell the story, they could not see its meaning. Verse 21 is the key line.

We had hoped. We had hoped. That he was the one to redeem Israel. They had believed what the prophets had spoken, what they'd written.

But not all that the prophets had written. They had faith. They had longing. They had hope. But it was misplaced. And so it was frustrated. As all misplaced hopes will be.

We had hoped. Past tense. They see in Jesus' death the evaporation of hope. The defeat of it. They believed in redemption, but in the wrong kind.

Their hope was likely for some political liberation. Not salvation from sin, but freedom from room. Renewal for Israel. Not full-blown redemption. Notice, they even speak, verse 21, of the third day.

[ 11 : 38 ] A phrase used by Jesus to foretell his resurrection. They've had the women's report, verses 22 to 24. The empty tomb. The angels.

But these facts only seem to deepen their confusion. They have all the facts, but they do not understand. The cross and resurrection make no sense to them. They spell defeat and sadness in their minds.

And so it's a frustrated hope. And that is always the case when Scripture's promises are filtered through our own expectations.

We so easily construct a Savior to meet our felt needs. When we don't get things the way that we want them. When our vision, our plan for how our life should be, for what salvation should look like.

When our plan for what a wondrous future should be doesn't pan out. Then what happens? Well, disappointment sets in. Sadness. Disillusionment.

[ 12 : 36 ] Bitterness. That can happen, can't it? If we think being a Christian means Jesus will keep us healthy, happy, fulfilled.

Well, what happens when the health scare comes? Your job disappoints. Your relationship breaks down. Your hopes are dashed. Well, we'll say with these disciples, won't we?

We had hoped. And when that happens, our hearts can never truly burn within us. Because our eyes are fixed on what we've lost instead of what God has done.

We'll only ever see our disappointment. The sadness that comes from our hopes being shattered. And friends, as a church, if we are or become caught up in our own personal wants and desires and hopes.

And these aren't shaped by the Scriptures and by eternity. Then the reality is that we will only ever be a frustrated church. Frustrated with one another when we don't get our way.

[ 13 : 43 ] Frustrated in our mission where we're happy to coast and maintain things as they are because it suits us and suits our hopes and our longings. Frustrated with our leaders.

And they want to draw us into costly and beautiful service of Jesus. We won't be having it. Because it will be a hindrance to what we want. It's our hopes. If our own ideas and desires for how we want life to be is what shapes us as a church, we will only ever be a frustrated church and will not be a fruitful one.

But it need not be so. You see, verse 15, Jesus drew near to these disciples with their misunderstood hope. And he draws near to us.

Right now, here as we gather, as we gather in his name and sit under his word, he draws near. And the remedy is always the same.

And it's that remedy we see, secondly, in verses 25 to 27. We see the disciples' conviction, the message brought home. It is the unpacking of the message of the Scriptures that reshapes our hopes and sets our hearts aflame in service to Jesus.

[ 15 : 01 ] When Jesus draws near, everything can change. And as last week, it begins with a rebuke, verse 25. Jesus says, Oh, foolish ones!

And slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. It's easy, isn't it, to cherry-pick the parts of the Bible that we like, the parts that suit what we want, to hope in Jesus, yes, but in a Jesus partly formed by Scripture, partly by our desires, a Jesus who accommodates to us, acquiesces to us, and so a misshapen Jesus, ultimately a Jesus who's too small.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus met people whose expectations for the Christ were out of step with Scripture. And these two disciples were the same. They had real hoops of a Messiah, of the Christ who had come.

They believed the prophets, but notice what Jesus says, not all that the prophets had spoken. They'd skimmed over passages that spoke of a suffering servant, a suffering Savior, gravitating instead perhaps to promises of a glorious future for Israel, embracing the crown, but ignoring the cross.

But a crown without the cross cannot see if it isn't able to provide what is most needed. These disciples could not fathom the full wonder of Jesus' salvation because they missed that his death and resurrection were the crowning accomplishment of his ministry.

[ 16 : 44 ] For these disciples, their horizon for salvation was limited to this world, empire, rulers, national renewal, not eternity and redemption for the whole of creation, which grooms under the curse, not the undoing of the catastrophic effects of the fall.

And so what do sad hearts need? And slow hearts. What cures foolish longing for the wrong things? Well, notice what it is.

It's an exposition of the Scriptures. That's how Jesus ministers to these disciples. You see, he's not yet revealed himself before them so that they can see him because what they need first is to see Jesus, the Jesus of the Scriptures, not the Jesus of their imagination, back to life.

You see, verse 26, Jesus goes on, was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? That word necessary, it's speaking of a divine decree.

What must be because God has ordained it. So Jesus wants to make perfectly plain that it is in God's design. In God's design, the suffering of the Christ is no accident to be regretted, but it's a necessity to be rejoiced in so that Jesus can indeed enter into his glory.

[ 18 : 12 ] You see, Jesus' destination, as we've been seeing all the way through Luke's Gospel, his destination was not Jerusalem. His journey was always to and through Jerusalem and to and through the cross to then be taken up in glory.

The cross was not a deter from glory or indeed the death of it. No, it was the very road to it. To miss the suffering of Christ, to be baffled by the cross, to misconceive of the salvation that Jesus actually offers and accomplishes in favor of a salvation that we might like or imagine.

A salvation that deals with our here and now only. Salvation that tends to felt needs, to miss out, that is to miss out on Jesus' glory. He must suffer in order to enter it.

And because he has, he goes ahead to open the way, not just to Jerusalem, but to the Father's house, to a kingdom free from the curse and the shadow of death.

He's going to prepare many rooms in his Father's house so that those who do follow Jesus can join him in glory, join him in a kingdom, a world, a heaven that is set free forever from the very things that would most trouble us and trouble our souls.

[ 19 : 36 ] From the things that would bring lasting frustration, lasting destruction. Namely, everything that comes from the curse, from the dark shadow of death. And so, verse 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself.

Perhaps he began with Genesis 3, the crushed serpent's head, but the bruised heel of the serpent crusher. That had to happen because of the grim reality that sin had entered into the world and into humanity.

And with it, brought the terrible curse of death that hangs over all of humanity and that would have the last word on our lives unless we're rescued from it. He might have shown them the Passover lamb of Exodus.

Salvation through a spotless sacrifice. Perhaps in Leviticus, showing the price of fellowship with the Holy God. Blood.

Likely taking them to Isaiah, showing the servant pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, whose chastisement brings us peace. By his wounds we are healed.

[ 20 : 55 ] And many, many, many other places that show that the beating heart of the salvation that was always promised, a salvation that couldn't possibly be achieved without the suffering, the death of the Messiah.

Because freedom always comes with a terrible price. A price paid in blood. And yet that price is what brings cosmic victory.

Glory. Jesus' purpose extends far beyond Israel to the undoing of the fall, the righting of every single wrong, the promise of hearts set free not only from sin's penalty, but from its power and its presence forever.

However, this is Jesus' great ministry to sad and disappointed disciples to preach to them the scriptures that speak of him, to show the dire need of a Savior who deals with humanity's greatest problem, and to show that every thread of scripture converges on his cross and resurrection.

Now, accomplished by the risen Lord from the women have reported. These disciples begin with sad hearts because they have slow hearts.

[ 22 : 15 ] But, look ahead to verse 32. They end with burning hearts. What makes that change?

It's not spectacle, but scripture. Our hearts are not ignited by raising hands, but by opened Bibles.

It's tempting to think that what would really transform us, what would really do this for us, is to have a grand experience. If only I had walked for seven miles with Jesus.

But no, what changed them was Jesus unrecognized opening the scriptures. verse 32 tells us plainly, their hearts burned as he opened to them the scriptures.

So, friends, we can be confident the transformation of our loved ones, our colleagues, our neighbors, our city does not depend on the fantastical, but on the faithful exposition of God's word.

[ 23 : 24 ] The thing that turns sad, skeptical, or scarred hearts is the gospel, the open scriptures. The thing that really does nurture our children and prepare them for this world and equip them for lives that are given to Jesus is the same thing.

It's the open scriptures. Open to them, open for them so that he can understand them. But also the open scriptures that are opened in our lives as parents.

It's not gimmick that will do that. It's the gospel. Getting them into the scriptures and getting the scriptures into them. And so the reality is that here in church under the preached word with the Bible open, here is the place where lives are changed, hearts are transformed.

The biblical gospel makes sense of the world, of this world and the next. It's sufficient for all that we need. Everything in its life finds its meaning in relation to Jesus, the author, the creator, the sustainer of this whole world.

And the scriptures that speak of him give us the true perspective on everything so that our hopes will not be misplaced, so that our Jesus will not be misshapen, and so that this world will not be misunderstood.

[ 24 : 51 ] And so that is what we can invite people to. That is what we can pour into people's lives to see them changed. Having confidence in the open Bible and the taught scriptures.

Now, we've seen that Jesus doesn't give these downcast disciples an experience. He gives them an open Bible. He doesn't show them his scars yet. He shows them the scriptures because it is only the open word that opens hearts.

And that means what fuels our service, what sustains our worship, what keeps our hearts burning over the long haul, is not some sort of atmosphere that we can create.

It's not busyness. It's not the next great ministry project. It's an ever-deepening understanding of the scriptures.

It's having the implanted word take root in our hearts. It's letting the word of Christ dwell richly in us. The reality is that if we chase burning hearts, if we chase deep joy in the Christian life through the hymns we sing, if we chase it through our activity in church, through our service, then sooner or later we'll find that we don't have burning hearts.

[ 26 : 17 ] We have bitter hearts. Because those things can never give us the joy we're looking for. They weren't meant to. No, no. That's to get things back to front.

Do you see? It's when the weight and wonder of the Christ of the scriptures hits us. When we see afresh the cross and the resurrection as the heart of God's plan, it's then that our hearts can truly burn.

It's when the fullness of Jesus' work and accomplishment is open to us that we find ourselves fueled for service, fueled for song and worship, fueled for witness.

The burning heart comes before busy hands. We don't sing our way into joy. We sing because our hearts have been set on fire by the word of the risen Christ.

And that's what we see in evidence thirdly in verses 28 to 35. The disciples consumed. We see their missionary hearts. The disciples consumed.

[ 27 : 22 ] We see their missionary hearts. When hearts are truly set on fire by the risen Christ through his word, they cannot help but become hearts that proclaim him. Hearts that burn in delight of the Savior soon become hearts that burst in declaration of the Savior.

The gospel that truly kindles the heart will always compel the herald. Verse 28, they drew near to the village to which they were going but Jesus acted as if he were going farther.

Luke shows us that this companion seems ready to continue on but the disciples are captivated, gripped by his exposition of the scriptures. They cannot bear to part with him.

So verse 29, notice they urged him strongly saying, stay with us. It's toward evening, the day is now far spent. This is just a little evidence that when the word is rightly received, it always produces hunger for more.

And here, that hunger is truly hunger for Christ himself. We as the readers can see that and know that, even as these disciples didn't quite yet know. And so Jesus does stay and they share a meal.

[ 28 : 38 ] It's later referred to as them breaking the bread. But this is not an early communion service. Luke doesn't say that and there's no mention of wine.

Verse 30, when he was at table with them, Jesus took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.

Now Luke has used those same four verbs in this sequence twice before. took, blessed, broke and gave. He did it back in chapter 9 at the feeding of the 5,000 and he did it again at the Last Supper in chapter 22.

At the feeding miracle, Jesus provided bread in an event that was laced with Exodus echoes. And then straight after this miracle, he spoke with his disciples first about who they and others say that Jesus was, question of identity, and it's at that point that Jesus for the first time anticipates his suffering and death and resurrection.

The Last Supper, the second time we see these words, he identified the bread with his body soon to be broken for sinners. And so when Luke writes that he was known to them in the breaking of the bread, verse 35, he's connecting this moment to the whole story of redemption, to all that he has just been unpacking for them, reminding us that Jesus' purpose is bound up with his death and resurrection.

[ 30 : 17 ] And the bread, the bread recalls other significant occasions when that is made plain. And so verse 31, their eyes are finally opened and they recognized him and vanished, and as they do, he vanished from their sight.

But we need to ask the question, don't we, why have they not seen it before? Why could Jesus have disciples, as he has, who had heard him predict his death and resurrection so clearly?

Why could they not grasp it, grasp him and his mission, and what he'd accomplished until now? Luke's told us repeatedly, the disciples did not understand, it was concealed from them.

Back in chapter 9, after the first prediction, we read, they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them. Chapter 18, after the third prediction of Jesus' death and resurrection, we read, this saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

Why is that the case? Well, notice how Luke describes their ignorance. He tells us in verse 16 that their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

[ 31 : 34 ] Then in verse 25, he points to their slowness of heart. Luke is echoing here, Isaiah chapter 6, which says, seeing they do not see, hearing they do not understand.

They have hearts that are dull. And Isaiah chapter 6 makes clear that Isaiah's ministry is going to bring judgment on Israel for their perpetual disobedience, and so Isaiah's ministry was then going to be one that brought a hardening to heart.

His ministry would produce ongoing inability to perceive and understand the gracious word of God. And Jesus himself has already drawn on that same passage. Luke chapter 10, after the parable of the sower, listen to Jesus' words.

He says, to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom, but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

Spiritual blindness itself then is a mark of divine judgment. But now, on the route to Emmaus, notice what happens. The risen Christ reverses Isaiah 6.

[ 32 : 49 ] He's actively seeking to bring sight and understanding. He's seeking to change hearts. Now that the scriptures have been fulfilled, fulfilled in his suffering, death, and resurrection, now that that is something that's accomplished, he also fulfills the scriptures by giving sight to the blind and understanding to the dull of heart.

Jesus is the one who opens eyes and ears and minds. Luke chooses this reversal, this wonderful working of Jesus with three openings.

Verse 31, their eyes were opened. Verse 32, he opened to us the scriptures, scriptures, and then later on in next week's passage, verse 45, he opened their minds to understand.

Eyes opened, scriptures opened, minds opened. The risen Christ now gladdens hearts rather than hardens them. And friends, that is still what he does.

Jesus delights to open blind eyes and soften dull hearts, always through the scriptures, through open bibles, through the preached word. These disciples no longer need his physical presence.

[ 34 : 03 ] He departs from them because the word has done its work. Their hearts now see their eyes have missed. And so, verse 32, they reflect together, did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?

Notice the order. Their hearts burned not when they saw him, but when they heard him. It was exposition, not experience, that ignited their souls.

Their hearts burned because the risen Lord himself opened the scriptures. So, brothers and sisters, what is it that we need so that our hearts are set aflame in joyful service of Jesus?



It's a deepening grasp. of who Jesus is and what he's done. It's letting our hearts be captured by the inexhaustible wonder of Christ that bursts off the page of scripture.

And so, here's the encouragement and the comfort. That's not beyond us. It is not out of reach for you and for me to have hearts that are kindled with a longing to see our church grow, to see week after week more chairs needed at the back, more rooms put out.

[ 35 : 29 ] Because in our joyful witness of Jesus, more people have come along to hear and see him in the open scriptures. We don't need to see Jesus to have burning hearts, we need to hear him in his word.

And so, it isn't out of reach to have apathetic hearts set aflame, to be stirred again for gospel witness, for service. What is needed is simply this, to let the Bible shape our hope, to let the scriptures define our Jesus, and to marvel at the full scope and scale of what he has done, what has been accomplished already.

And what he will bring to completion. Now, this can serve as a diagnostic for us, can't it? Are we apathetic about gospel work?

Are we apathetic about heralding the good news of the risen Jesus? Are our hearts indifferent to serving him, to singing to him? Well, perhaps then our Jesus is too small.

And what we really need to hear from Jesus is a word of rebuke that says, oh foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.

[ 37 : 00 ] But it doesn't have to stay that way. Jesus draws near to his disciples still. He draws near in this very gathering to open up the scriptures to us and to reveal himself to us.

And look at what happens when disciples do let the Bible shape their hope, that the scriptures define their Jesus. Melted hearts become missionary hearts. Verse 33, they rise that same R and return to Jerusalem.

They rise that same R and return to Jerusalem. Look at the details Luke has already given us. Verse 29, the day was far spent by this point late on.

And then verse 13 told us they were seven miles away. But they rise that CMR and dashed all the way back. Even though it was the end of the day, even though it was seven miles away, they couldn't be stopped.

None of that mattered. Conviction had become compulsion. They couldn't not go. They had to tell what they'd seen. And they found the eleven and they declared those wonderfully beautiful, true words.

[ 38 : 07 ] the Lord has risen indeed. Their opened eyes through the open scriptures led to open mouths. What a transformation from verse 17, sadness, to verse 33, joy and proclamation.

They're not commanded to go. Their hearts compel them to. See, this isn't a reluctant duty, it's a real delight. That's what happens when the gospel grips our hearts.

They become missionary hearts, concerned to tell of Jesus. Because the gospel known deeply is the gospel shared gladly. What a contrast.

Verse 17, they stood still looking sad. We had hoped, but it's been dashed, verse 21. But now they run back to Jerusalem with faces full of joy to declare.

The misery, the disappointment, the frustration gives way to burning gladness and missionary zeal. Well then, are we, are you, glum and introspective, full of grievances?

[ 39 : 21 ] Or are we, are you, filled with a deep joy, even amidst the real struggles that are present in this life? Are we, are you, turned in upon yourself, upon ourselves, self-focused, self-interested, given to what the church can do for me?

Or are we, are you, fueled by missionary hearts for glad service, so that we long to see the people we know and love and encounter, drawn to the risen Lord Jesus?

Is our Jesus too small? Or has he stepped off the pages of scripture and grabbed our hearts and gladdened our hearts? Because when he does, our lives can never be the same again.

Sad, slow hearts are turned into servant hearts, and it becomes a genuine delight to make serving him our priority, the thing that shapes our lives above all else. But of course, in the midst of all that, some will say, oh, that's all a bit too much.

It's a bit too extreme. We mustn't end up doing something daft. Like letting this zeal for Jesus, this missionary zeal, turn us into some kind of zealots. Some will say, no, we must be sensible and rational, and that means not letting Jesus derail our career ambitions, our future, or even our family relationships.

[ 40 : 44 ] But hearts gripped by the gospel will gladly shape their futures around Jesus. That's something for our students to ponder, to consider, even if you're only in first year.

plan your life around where you can serve Christ most fruitfully, and then fit everything else around that. Hearts gripped by Jesus will become hearts given to him.

And if that is you and me, then it will be our life's joy to be his heralds, to play the part that we can in seeing more people awaken to the glorious good news of the risen Christ.

Christ. And so where is your heart? What has captured it? Is it a sad heart marked by disappointment and disillusionment?

Is it a heart slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken? It doesn't have to be. It can be a heart set ablaze with joy, with missionary intent.

[ 41 : 49 ] The gospel, the open Bible, can turn hearts, can sustain hearts for glad service of Jesus. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

Let's pray. Lord God, spare us, we pray, from peel imitations of Jesus.

Grant us instead a full-orbed understanding of and trust in the risen Lord Christ. And as you do so, would you set our hearts aflame?

Would you make us fruitful in your service? Lord, that indeed we would see many folks here in our midst brought to share in the joy of hearts that have encountered your son.

We so easily settle for less, but we ask, O Lord, grant your grace that we might receive Jesus as he is, all of him, in his word.

[ 43 : 13 ] So help us to this end, we pray. We do ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.