JESUS WARMS OUR HEARTS

1. By bringing hope to disappointed hearts
2. By bringing clarity to confused hearts
3. By bringing joy to grieving hearts

When I go to Northwestern Publishing House in Milwaukee, I like looking at all the pictures and paintings they have there. Many religious artists have done wonderful work with their paintings. I have two favorites. One is a painting of Jesus with a little child and he is holding his hand out to a butterfly. My other favorite is a picture of heart burn. There is no TUMS or Rolaids bottle in the picture. It is actually a picture of Jesus walking with two of his followers to the little town of Emmaus. The caption repeats the question those disciples asked themselves: Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road? That is the event get to look at today. We will see that JESUS WARMS OUR HEARTS. He warms our hearts by bringing hope to disappointed hearts, giving clarity to confused hearts and joy to grieving hearts.

What did you do on Easter afternoon? Maybe you watched a ball game or maybe took a nap or maybe since it was a nice day, you went for a little walk. So too, on that first Easter afternoon, we catch up with two of Jesus’ followers who had left Jerusalem and headed to Emmaus. The Bible only tells us one of the disciples’ names, Cleopas. Cleopas and his traveling companion were probably part of the 70 followers the Bible speaks of in addition to the 12 disciples. Perhaps the Bible does not tell us the name of the other disciple so that we can easily slip into the sandals of the nameless disciple and walk along with Jesus as he warms our hearts.

It would be easy for us to slip into the sandals of those disciples who seemed so disappointed on that first Easter Sunday because we have gone through some disappointing times in our lives. Maybe we did not make the team. Maybe we did not get the job. Perhaps we did not get to do all that we had planned in our lives as we dreamed of our future. That is OK because Jesus warms our hearts so often cold from the chill of disappointment. He brings hope to disappointed hearts.

We are told: Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about 7 miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, What are you discussing together as you walk along? These two followers of Jesus were talking about recent events as they walked along.

Soon Jesus came up behind them, but they were kept from recognizing him. When you come into a conversation, it does not take long to figure out if happy things or sad things are being discussed. Jesus came into a conversation where he did not have to look into their hearts to see they were filled with disappointment. He could see it on their faces and hear it in their voices. Things had not gone the way that these followers of Jesus thought things were going to go. Jesus was mighty in w and deed, they said, but he was sentenced to death and they crucified him. You can hear the disappointment oozing out: But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.

How you ever stopped at a stop sign and looked over at the people in the car next
to you? You should not stare, but you can get a pretty good idea about the conversation going on in the car just by looking at facial expressions and hand gestures. As Jesus walked up on two of his disciples, he was walking up on a conversation that was filled with disappointment.

What do people see when they walk up on your conversations? Does disappointment dominate your conversations? Can they see disappointment on your face and hear it in your voice a good share of the time? Or does disappointment ooze out in all of your talk even when there is not so much to be disappointed about? Maybe that disappointment shows itself in angry gestures. Maybe at times we have even expressed disappointment with God because he did not do things the way that we thought he should.

For that sin and for all the times we have let our disappointment cloud out the joy of Easter, God could justifiably sweep us away in judgment. After all, he owes us nothing but punishment for our sins. Our sins would rightly have landed us eternal disappointment in hell. But Jesus brings hope to disappointed hearts. He endured hell for us and died on cross to remove all our sins. Then he snatched victory from the jaws of death and the devil with his resurrection on Easter morning.

In addition to doing away with the greatest of all disappointments, Jesus also does for us what the Easter hymn says: He lives to guide me with his eye, to grant me rich supply, to comfort me when faint. He lives to hear my soul's complaint, to silence all my fears, and wipe away my tears, to calm my troubled heart. He lives all blessings to impart.

Jesus made a good assessment of the situation with his comment to the men: How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written. It would be an understatement to say that there was a great deal of confusion on that first Easter Day. These followers of Jesus had heard reports of angel sightings at the tomb, but Jesus they did not see. There were reports of a grave robbery. Some of the women said they saw Jesus. The soldiers who were guarding the tomb had been bribed to say that the disciples had stolen the body. Mary at first thought a gardener had moved the body. Into the middle of all of that confusion stepped the risen Lord Jesus to clear things up. Jesus warmed their hearts. Jesus brought clarity to their confused hearts.

Luke tells us: And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Jesus took them through the Old Testament to get their thinking straight. The events of the past week had been God's plan for saving them - to reconcile the world to himself!

At times, because we are sinful, confusion about these truths creeps into our minds. Jesus brings clarity to confused hearts. How does he do that? He does it the same way he brought clarity to the hearts of the disciples. He points us back to his Word.

A dog we had number of years was in the unenviable position of having six masters - six voices telling him what to do - sometimes all at the same time. No wonder at times he simply plopped down on the ground unsure of what to do.

Think of all the voices we listen to during the week. Thousands of commercial messages: Buy this - go there - eat this, and try that. Thousands of seemingly religious messages bombarded us this past week. Many of those voices were saying things that were the opposite of what Scripture says. No wonder it is easy for us to be confused. But Jesus brings clarity. Come to his house and hear his Word. Keep on asking Jesus to make you a regular in God's house each week so he can teach you. Let Jesus' voice in
his Word drown out all the other voices we hear as we come to Bible Study. Keep on listening to Jesus' voice as you study your Bibles. Wear your Bibles out! It is there that Jesus speaks to us and lifts away the confusion brought on by sin. It is through his Word that Jesus warms our hearts.

I am a fan of the old M.A.S.H. TV show. I have seen most of the episodes and can finish a lot of the actors’ lines. I still love to watch them even though I know what is going to happen next. That is even more true of God's Word. Jesus makes our hearts burn with the account of what happened on Calvary. Though we have heard it all before, our hearts are pricked again as we considered it was for our sins he suffered. For as long as we can remember, we have heard the Easter story but yet that ancient account clears our thinking about death and eternal life in heaven. Jesus warms our hearts!

When the disciples got to their destination of Emmaus, Jesus seemed to be going farther, but they urged him to stay with them. So Jesus did. They recognized him when he broke the bread at the table. It was true. Jesus was not dead. He was alive just as he said. What joy filled their hearts.

Think about the many feelings you have had in your hearts as you have come through the doors of your home. There has been joy and sadness. At times we have burst through the doors of our homes unable to hold in the good news and other times we have burst into tears as we have walked in the doors.

In joy and in sadness, Jesus warms our hearts. He stays with us. He walks through the door with us on good days and on days when our hearts are heavy. As our hymn says, he abides with us – in life, in death. In the midst of our grief and pain of death, Jesus brings joy with his Word: In my Father's house are many rooms. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place, I will come back and take you to be with me.

We thank God that the disciples on the way to Emmaus is more than just a nice painting to look at. It is the truth. It really happened. Jesus really does warm our hearts! Amen!

Pastor Keith J. Bilitz
St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, Alma City
Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Smiths Mill