

Questions are asked in each of the lectionary readings this morning.

But I believe none of them are more demanding of an answer than the last question in our gospel, and it goes like this....

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”¹

I think a better translation of the question for us today is:

Are not *our* hearts burning within *us* in Northwest D.C. as He has opened the scriptures to us?

Scripture tells us in the book of Genesis God created a world, and in the book of Exodus, God created a people.

The Israelites were oppressed and enslaved under the brutality of Pharaoh. And God would commission a man named Moses. Moses, whose ministry was built on the foundation of strong and resilient women and who would stand barefoot in front of the glory of God.

Moses would hear the voice of God say from a burning bush,

“I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a ***good and spacious land***, to a land flowing with milk and honey.”²

Scripture then would testify to God who would go to extreme lengths, destroying every bit of Pharaoh's property to set His people free!

This God, the God who is majestic in holiness and awesome in glory,³

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is our God!⁴

¹ Luke 24:32

² Exodus 3:7-8

³ Exodus 3:11

⁴ Exodus 3:15

Are not our hearts burning as the scriptures have been revealed to us?

Scripture tells us, prophet after prophet after prophet speaks on behalf of the Lord our God, to speak **judgement, condemnation, destruction** and of **apocalyptic chaos**.

In the opening chapter of Isaiah, before we even hear of God touching the lips of the prophet, Isaiah tells us God is tired of our sacrifices, and burnt offerings and refuses to hear our prayer because our hands are full of blood from the evil we've committed.⁵

“But our God is *compassionate and gracious*, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”⁶

Scripture attests to a God who would hold back sending locusts and a shower of fire down out of judgement *and instead*, judge us on the metric of a plumbline and summer fruit basket.⁷

Scripture attests to a God who could have left a valley of dry bones in a graveyard, **yet chooses to speak life, and tell them to get up.**⁸

When we rightly deserve condemnation and destruction, *it is out of the overflow of mercy* our God judges us towards comfort, hope and restoration, and this is why we can sing.

Surely it is God who will save me

I will trust in Him and not be afraid, for the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense He will be my savior.⁹

Are not our hearts burning as the scriptures have been revealed to us?

Every single Sunday in Easter this season, we will hear from the Gospel of John, except for this Sunday, when we hear from Luke. Within the Gospel

⁵ Isaiah 1:15

⁶ Psalm 86:15

⁷ Amos 7 & 8

⁸ Ezekiel 37

⁹ Isaiah 12:2

of Luke, from the cradle, through the cross, and beyond the empty tomb, it's women who proclaim God's salvation.... and this salvation is now!

Today, a Savior has been born!¹⁰

Today, the scripture has been fulfilled!¹¹

Today, salvation has come to your house!¹²

Today, you will be with me in paradise!¹³

Are not our hearts burning, as the scriptures have been revealed to us?

More than in any of the other Gospels, Jesus preaches woes to communities in the Gospel of Luke.

One of my favorite translations translates "woes" to, "You have it coming!

"But you have it coming, *you rich people*, because you've had all the comfort you're going to get!"¹⁴

"You have it coming, *you* who have a warm meal night every night while you neglect your neighbors!"

"You have it coming, *you* who store up your treasures and your wealth!"

Are not our hearts burning, as the scriptures have been revealed to us?

Holy Scripture is more than a text, it's more than a book.

God did not write the Bible. Our Lord didn't write anything except in the dust.¹⁵

The Bible, Holy Scripture is the *Viva Vox Dei*... the Living Voice of God in our very midst if we dare open it.

¹⁰ Luke 2:11

¹¹ Luke 4:21

¹² Luke 19:9

¹³ Luke 23:43

¹⁴ Sarah Ruden's translation of Luke 6:24

¹⁵ John 8:8

Scripture is God revealing God's self to us and in that revelation, we become attuned to the work of the Spirit.

And as we are changed in the presence of God, Scripture teaches and convicts and guides my ways of living so that I can participate in the resurrection that started 2,000 years ago on that first Easter morning.

Scripture has been put together by many voices over time and across generations to point to our God who is still saving us because He loves us.

And yes, Scripture is messy, and contradicts itself and has been abused for imperial conquest and to keep people enslaved but it's what we have and it's enough.

As Christians, Holy Scripture must have some kind of authority in our lives.

We don't seek justice and rescue the oppressed because CNN tells us to.

We don't defend the orphan and plead for the widow because MSNBC has a segment on the topic.

Certainly the New York Times cannot tell us how to love our enemy.

We do things because serve a God whose orientation towards the world has been this from the start.

So then, a theology that is lived and practiced rest on principles that have been revealed in scripture.

We **strengthen community** because scripture teaches us about the community in Acts and how they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And how they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.¹⁶

¹⁶ Acts 2:44-45, and the Baptismal Covenant. Book of Common Prayer pg. 304

We **practice faith** because walking in the way of the Cross is the way of life.¹⁷

We **embrace our world** because God because “God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”¹⁸

We **build capacity** because we recall in scripture, the prophet Jeremiah instructs a community to build houses and plants gardens for prosperity of community now and for the prosperity of the community to come.¹⁹

And we are an **anti-racist** church because scripture tell us we “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness.”²⁰ Then it becomes our responsibility to demand a world where a 16-year-old black kid should not be shot for simply making a mistake.

Scripture tells us that “Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. So, you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”²¹

Are not our hearts burning, as the scriptures have been revealed to us?

Two summers ago, I worked at a hospital in Olympia, WA. This hospital was founded in the late 1800s by a group of nuns. And at the hospital, there are lots a legends, and myths, and stories about the sisters, and one of the legends goes like this.

One of the Sisters, Sister Mary, was skilled and gifted in working with kids. She would go around the pediatrics floor visiting kids in their hospital beds and caring for their parents while waiting for test results.

¹⁷ Matthew 16:24-26, Luke 9:23-25, and the collect for the Monday in Holy Week

¹⁸ John 3:16

¹⁹ Jeremiah 29:5

²⁰ Ephesians 6:12

²¹ Romans 6:9-11

One day the nursing staff came to Sister Mary in a panic and said, "You need to visit this girl! She is terminally ill, and giving us all kinds of problems please, Sister Mary go see her today.

So, Sister walks to the girl's room, introduces herself, come to find out, the girl's name is also Mary. Sister Mary sits down, and she and Mary begin having a conversation.

As the conversation goes back and forth and back and forth, Mary finally interrupts and ask, "Why are you visitng!?! I am going to die in this hospital die and there is nothing you can do about it! What do you have to offer me?"

And legend says, Sister Mary pulls out her pocket sized broken it open, and began to her a story.

Now this is how you know it's a really good legend because we are never told which story of Scripture! We don't know if it's one of the stories from the Old Testament or maybe a parable or possibly one of the miracles from the Gospels... we are never told. But what we are told is this:

For the first time in a while, Mary's heart began to burn with an unspeakable joy, and a hundred smile came across her face.

And she said, "When you come to visit me tomorrow, please, Sister Mary, tell me that story again."