All right, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad you're here with us today. Come on, whatever campus you're at, Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Louisville, online, somewhere in the world, let's just welcome each other together for a moment. We are so glad you are here with us, and I'm so glad you're here with us as we are having a conversation on fueling the fire. A conversation, a dialogue. We're reflecting. We're wrestling. We're working some things out. We're walking some things out. A conversation on the fire of God. What does it look like? What is it? How do we fuel it? How do we tend it? How do we steward it? We are people who are hungry for the fire of God. We want His presence. We want His power. We want His purity. There is a divine stirring among us, so we are responding and calling out to the Lord and such. And one of the things that I think we forget as a people is that when we come to Jesus, we have signed up to go on a journey of faith with Him. I think sometimes we forget this. Like we come and we sign up to follow Jesus, but I think we think about it as this individualistic personal, private thing, like Jesus is going to forgive our sins, get us to heaven when we die, and maybe scatter a few blessings along the way of my life. But that's not what you signed up for. You signed up to go on a journey in a community of faith to become like Him and learn how to live in the Kingdom of God. Did you ever see those things on Instagram when somebody posts something like what I think I look like versus what I really look like, what I thought it was going to be like versus what it's really like? I think sometimes we think this is a private, personal, individualistic thing between me and Jesus. No, it's a journey with a community of faith, and you're in the process of being transformed to become more and more like Him. In fact, that's why this says we all, that includes you, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord, so the Holy Spirit is doing the work and he's transforming us into the image and likeness of Jesus. And we go from glory to glory. You're on a journey of glory to glory, so my question for you is, how do you get from one glory to the next glory? By dealing with the two. How do you go from one glory to the next glory? By dealing with the two. It's glory to glory. See, we think it's glory, glory, glory, glory. No, glory to glory. This journey with Jesus is a whole lot more like going through a mountain range than it is climbing a singular mountain. And I think we think it's this journey where we just climb this one singular mountain glory. No, glory to glory, to glory, to glory. Strength to strength to strength, to strength. Victory to victory, to victory, to victory, to victory. Fair? You have to be willing to deal with the "to."

What is the "to"? The "to" is when we come off the mountain, and we go into the valley, and we go into the unknown, and we're not in control. And it doesn't make sense, and it requires faith and humility. There are trials and valleys and dark things that we have to work through. To go from glory to glory, you have to deal with everything in your life that is unglorious. That's what's in the "to." All the unglorious things that we carry around within us that Jesus wants to free us from. And if we just camped on the mountain of glory, we would never experience the next glory and the greater glory. How do you go from victory to victory? You have to deal with all the places where you're losing. How do you get from strength to strength? All the places in your life that are weak need to be exposed in Jesus's name. And when we forget that it's glory

to glory, then when the "to" shows up in our life, we panic. We freak out. We think there's something wrong. And all the while, Jesus is like no, I told y'all, this is how we do this. We all together, glory to glory to glory to glory, not gathering to gathering. It's more than a gathering. It's a journey with Him. And this is why he says, I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go, I will counsel you and watch over you. What a promise. Grab this promise for your life right now in this season. He promises to instruct you, teach you, counsel you, and watch over you. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the fire by night. He is the voice behind you, saying this is the way, walk in it. And He invites you in a community of faith to go on a journey with Him, and He says, follow me. And we say, where are we going? And He says, you'll see. And we say, how long will it take to get there? And He says, a while. And we say, will it be easy? And He says, no but I will be with you. And we say, what will it be like when we get there? And He says, better than you can even imagine. This is what church is. This is what disciples do. This is what a community of faith looks like. And part of my job is to simply pay attention and call attention to what God is doing amongst us.

And so, if you were here last week, we started our journey. And we went along on our little path, and a tree fell over into our trail. And we had a choice, to grab some chainsaws, cut it out and just blaze ahead, or to stop and acknowledge and pay attention and call attention, and walk around and look at it, and ask the Lord what He is doing. And as I pay attention and call attention and reflect and pray and process, the only thing I know how to say to you is that I just feel like there is a gravity to this season. There is an urgency to this season. There is a sacredness to this season. God is looking for people whom He can consume. He is looking for people who want His fire. He is looking for people who have been divinely stirred to say Jesus, you are more than enough for me. He is looking for people who are willing to be interrupted in order to pay attention to Him. And so, as we have paid attention and called attention, and we have kind of got all of us around that tree, today we are going to try to get back on the trail and go where we believe God is leading us. And I want to talk about what happens when the fire goes out? What does it look like when you burn out because -- I think this is really, really important. And so, Holy Spirit, thank you for interrupting us. Thank you that you are the fire by night, leading us from glory to glory. We embrace the two because we want to see more of your glory. We embrace the two because we know there is so much more victory. We are okay with the two because we want to be stronger and stronger in Jesus' name. So Holy Spirit point us to Jesus and transform us into His image and His likeness. You see, in Luke Chapter 24, it's one of my favorite stories in the gospels because I feel like it's so authentic and so genuine and so real. There is two disciples, and basically we find them, and they have burned out. Their fire has gone out. For three years, they followed Jesus. For three years, they sat at His fire. For three years, they were warmed by His fire. They saw the light of His fire. They saw the power and the authority of His fire. For three years, they were consumed by His fire. And then one day, seemingly out of nowhere, Jesus is betrayed. He is arrested. He is beaten. He is crucified. He is dead. He is buried, and He is gone. And three days have gone by, and Jesus is nowhere to be found. And when we find these two disciples, we find them with their fire having gone out. They are depressed. They are despondent. They are in despair. And it says they leave the

city of Jerusalem and start a seven-mile journey towards the city of Emmaus. It's a picture in a sense of turning their back on Jerusalem. Jerusalem literally means the city of peace. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city of peace, the city of God, the city of His presence, the city of His people, the city of His fire. And it's like they turned their backs on that, and they start heading towards the world. And where once there was this bright, burning, raging fire, all that is left is ash, and soot, and dirty, flaky, crumbly charcoal. They are cold. They are dark. They are flaky. And as they walk along with their faces downcast, depressed, and despondent, the resurrected Jesus comes and starts walking alongside of them, but they don't know it's Jesus. And He says hey guys, what are you having a conversation about? And they kind of say like, are you kidding me? Like, where have you been? Have you not heard? Jesus has been crucified. He is dead. He is buried, and He is gone. We put all our hope in Him. We thought He was the answer that He was going to restore all things, and now He is gone, and it's over. And the resurrected Jesus interrupts their conversation by basically saying to them how foolish and slow of heart you are to believe all the Moses and the prophets wrote about. And beginning with Moses and the law, He explains to them all the Scriptures concerning Himself, and they go on this seven-mile journey. And Jesus, the living Word, explains to them the written Word concerning Himself, but they still don't realize it's Jesus. And as they get to Emmaus, Jesus looks like he's going to keep going on. But there is a divine stirring in them. They know something is different. Something is going on. They can't place their finger on it, so they say come in and have a meal with us thinking this is still a stranger. But there is something inside of them that is stirring. And they go in, and they sit down at the table. Jesus takes the bread, He breaks it. And the moment He breaks it gives thanks and hands it towards them, their eyes open. They recognize it's Jesus. He disappears from their sights and they say were not our hearts burning within us as He opened the Scriptures and talked to us on the road. They get up from the table, run seven miles back to Jerusalem because their fire has now been rekindled. They have got energy. They have got life. They have got radiancy. They have got vibrancy. They run back to Jerusalem, and they tell all the other disciples that Jesus is alive. And as they are sharing their fire, the resurrected Jesus shows up in that room and rekindles everyone's fire.

And I love that story because that story is so real. It's so real. I might not know all the details of your life, but I would bet that in some way, shape, or form, your life looks just like that at some time or another. Like you have some measure of fire. There is fire. There is life. There is vibrancy. There is abundance. There is passion. There is hope. There is strength. There is dreams. There is desire. There is energy. You are excited about life and this life that you are living, and you are going after it. And then one day, seemingly out of nowhere, the fire goes out. Fire blows out. The fire is quenched. The fire burns out. And sometimes we are aware of it, and we panic and try to get it back on. Sometimes we are deceived. We don't even realize that it has gone out. Sometimes we sit there, and we just watch it slowly fade out. And sometimes we are the ones that actually put it out because of all the things that are happening. Sometimes it's a storm, a situation, a circumstance, a tragedy, the loss of a loved one. Sometimes it's an extended season of singleness or a really toxic marriage. Sometimes it's the unanswered prayer that we never feel like has come to pass. It's the breakthrough that's never

happened. Sometimes we get everything we want in this world, only to realize that we didn't even really want that thing in the first place, and it didn't deliver on everything it promised. And one day we wake up, and where there was fire, all is left is ash, and soot, and dirty charcoal. And we're cold, and we're dark, and we're flaky. And just like those guys, we turn our back on Jerusalem. We turn our back on the city of God, the city of peace. We turn our back on the people of God, on the fire of God because it's gone out, and we think there's nothing left here for us. And so, we just start heading off into the world. You don't even know where you're going at this point. You just know it's not here, and you're looking for fire somewhere, somehow. And so, you start heading down this road, and we think we're all alone. But what we don't realize is that the resurrected Jesus is always right here. Why? Because there is nowhere you can go to get away from Him. He says, I will never leave you nor forsake you. He says, I will be with you wherever you go. He says that if you go up into the heavens, He is there. You make your bed in the depths, He is there. If you rise on the far side of the sea or you go with the wings of dawn, He is there. Even though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you don't have to fear any evil because He is still with you. There is nowhere you can go to get away from Him, and there is no speech or language where His voice is not heard. Even when your fire is out, he's right there. He's in creation. He's in that friendship. He's in that word. He's in that situation. He's in that circumstance. We just don't see Him. Why? Because we have been conformed to look at logic, reason, and the physical realities that we can taste, see, smell, and touch right in front of us.

This is why Paul has to rebuke us and say fix your eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. He says, you need to renew your mind. You need to repent. You need to think differently. You need to stop looking at the seen, the temporary, the physical, and the inferior. And you need to start looking at the unseen, the eternal, the spiritual, and the superior. We need to start looking through the physical things. We need to look around them. We need to look over them. And we need to start looking into the cross, into the open heaven, into the Kingdom of God. This is why Jesus says repent for the kingdom is at? It's always right there. The kingdom is always within reach. And if the kingdom is always within reach, then Jesus is always within reach, which means the consuming fire of God, no matter how ashy or sooty you may be, is always within reach. We just need to learn to renew our minds and look at things differently than we've been looking at them. And what I love is that at some point on this journey that resurrected Jesus, that you're unaware of, eventually will interrupt your conversation. He will interrupt the conversation you shouldn't be having with the conversation you should be having. Because if we're honest like those guys, most of our conversations are the conversations we shouldn't be having. Conversations full of complaining, criticizing, condemning, judging, gossiping, slandering. Conversations full of skepticism, and doubt, and fear and anger and rage, and cursing. Conversations about everyone else and what's wrong with this world and why doesn't anyone else do … when all the while the conversations the people of God should be having are conversations about Jesus and His Word, and His spirit, and His presence, and His mission, and His fire. And so, He will come in His graciousness and interrupt the conversation you shouldn't be having with the conversation

you should be having. My whole hope for this spring is that in some way, shape, or form, this whole thing is interrupting your conversation. Interrupting your conversation about politics and social media things, and passion points, and worldly stuff, and why this and why not that, with a conversation that is actually worth having. A conversation about Jesus. I mean, this is why it says watch the way you talk. In other words, hey be real careful the conversations you have. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Well, when your fire goes out, the only thing that can come out of your mouth is ash, soot, and dirt. Why? Because the mouth speaks out of the overflow of the heart, so you want to know if you got a fire or not, just look at your words. Your mouth betrays your heart. You can say you got a fire all day long. Ask the people in your life, what do I talk about? That will reveal what's actually inside of you because fire releases fire, soot releases dirt. Say only what helps. Make sure your conversation is fueling the fire, not quenching it. Because each word is a gift. Don't grieve God, don't quench the fire. Don't break His heart. His Holy Spirit moving and breathing in you is the most intimate part of your life, this flame that's consuming, dancing, flickering, flashing, moving around, and He is making you fit for Himself. He's taking you from glory to glory. Don't take such a gift for granted. Don't take the fire of God in your life for granted. So, here's the question: are the things that you're talking about fueling the fire or quenching the fire? Faith comes by. So, whatever you're hearing, your faith in that thing is growing. Are you hearing things that are growing your fire, or are you hearing things that are putting out your fire? Jesus will interrupt our conversation. And then what He will do is He will say to us what He says to them, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all. We're foolish because we're slow of heart.

Now this is profound to me. It doesn't say evil heart, bad heart, wicked heart. It says slow of heart. What does that mean? It means that we often have a slow heart, a hard heart, a resistant heart, a stubborn heart, a stony heart, a skeptical heart, an unbelieving heart, a defiant heart, a questioning heart. We are slow in heart to believe. What does it mean to believe? It literally just means to act as if it were so. To act as if who Jesus is and what He says and what He has done were so. And the problem with us is we believe some, not all. Oh, we believe. We act as if some were true, but we're called to act as if all were true. We're not supposed to have a slow heart. We're supposed to be quick to repent. You say, what does that mean? That means when God speaks, we move. When God commands, we obey. When God gives, we receive. When God asks, we give. When God speaks, we respond. That's what it means to be quick to repent. This is why the Israelites, God says, they are stubborn and stiff-necked people, stubborn, slow in heart, stiff-necked. Their neck is not quick to repent to say, I've heard from God, let's go. See, slow of heart would be an example, would be Thomas. Remember Thomas? They've all seen the resurrected Jesus, and Thomas says, unless I see the nail scars in His hands and put my hand in His side, I will not believe. That's slow of heart. And we'd be like that's logical. No, that's slow of heart. And the resurrected Jesus shows up and says, Thomas, look, blessed are those who believe even though they don't see. Or how about when Jesus goes to His own hometown, and it says He could not do any miracles there. Why? Because they were slow of heart. They're like, wait a second, isn't this Joseph's boy? And isn't this Mary's son? And don't we know His sisters? Who is this guy to think He can do these kinds of things? How many times

can God not do what He wants to do in our life? Not because we have a bad heart, a wicked heart, an evil heart, but because we're slow of heart. Or how about when He goes up into the upper room where this little girl has died, and He has come to raise her from the dead. And He looks at the crowd, and He says, she's not dead, she's just asleep. And they laugh at Him. So, He says, thank you, you may go now, and He sends them out of the room and closes the door, and raises her from the grave. How many times do we laugh at the Word of God, and then get ushered out of the room, and the door is closed, so He can do what He wants to do, and we miss out? Not because you are bad, or wicked, or evil, but because you are slow. Slow, slow. Oh, this is a great burden I carry for us, slow of heart versus quick to repent. You say it, God, let's do it. You command it, I'm gonna follow it. You want this, let's do it right now. Okay, you're speaking to me today, I'm gonna come. You say come down to the front, I'm coming to the front. You say get in a circle, I'm gonna get in a circle. You say forget that person, I'm gonna forget that person. We're like, hmm, that was good, I'll think about it this week, 99.9 out of 100 times when you say I'll think about it this week, you don't think about it that week. This is why proverbs tells us above all else, guard your heart for it's the wellspring of life. You have to be careful. You are the gatekeeper of your heart. You're responsible for it. You have authority over it. You're the owner of it. No one else has the authority for the reality of your heart. You must tender it, tend it. You must steward it. You must cultivate it. You must take care of it and you must be very, very careful what you let into it and what you allow to remain in it. Why? Because the condition of your heart determines the reality of your life. Guard your heart for it's the wellspring of your life. Whatever is in here is gonna flow out into every area of your life. So when your heart has fire, the fire of God that you've tended that fire flows into your marriage, and it flows into your children, and it flows into your parents, and it flows into your job, and your calling, and your career, and your life, and your ministry and your hope carrying. But when your heart is full of ash, and soot, and dirty charcoal, you know what flows out of you into your wife? Ash. And you know what flows out of you into your husband? Soot. And you know what flows into your children? Dirty, crumbly, flaky charcoal. Guard your heart. Here's a question for you: Is what you're looking at, listening to, ruminating on, and meditating fueling the fire or quenching it? That's guarding your heart. Guard your heart. Remember what we've been saying in that passage in Leviticus: keep the fire burning. Where does the fire burn? On the altar of the human heart. Above all else, guard your heart. Keep the fire burning in your heart because it determines everything else in your life, so it matters, so it matters.

So maybe put the phone down. Maybe break up with that person. Maybe stop hanging around those people. Maybe confess this thing that you're ruminating on all the time that you shouldn't even be thinking about. Maybe renew your mind and fill it with Scripture because what you're meditating on is literally quenching the fire of God, the little that may be left within you. I mean, look at what it says in Hebrews. So, the Holy Spirit says today, today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, today. Like right now, how many times do we have a today moment together as a people, and we harden our hearts because we're not quick to repent? Consider carefully what you hear Jesus says. Do not be mere hearers of the Word, be doers of the Word. He who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, to Him, it's sin.

This concerns me so greatly in our context that we hear all these things and think I'll get around to them, but you know you don't. So what happens? Your heart gets a little harder because unused revelation hardens the heart. Every time I hear from God, and I don't do what He asks me to do, my heart gets a little harder. Why? Because it has to be to protect myself. Why do you get calluses on your hands? To protect your hands from whatever you're doing. Your heart gets calloused to protect your heart from God. Isn't that a paradox in and of itself? See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. When I don't believe or act as if all that God will say is so, I turn away from the living God, I turn from Jerusalem towards Emmaus, a picture of this world, towards sinful worldly things, but encourage one another daily. As long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. See, sin deceives you, and then it hardens you. And you say why does all this matter with fire? It matters in every way, shape, and form because hard things don't burn, because hard things can't burn. Stones won't burn because stones can't burn. I've tried to paint this picture of a big, beautiful fire for you as we've been having this conversation. When you have this raging fire, what do you put around it? Stones. Why? Because fire is contagious and stones are a retardant. Stones are a barrier. Stones are a stopper. The fire of God is so contagious that it is meant to go from you to your wife, to your husband, to your children, to your parents, to your co-workers, to your schoolmates. But when your heart is hard, not only are you not burning, you actually become a barrier from the contagious fire of God flowing through you to the people you love the most; this matters, this matters. And here's what happens: when you get hard, you are heavy, and you're cold, and you're numb. And if you've ever just dropped a rock, you know what a rock does? It takes the path of least resistance. It has no momentum. It has no initiative. It has no vision. It's just the path of least resistance. And there are so many ways that you can harden your heart ongoing unrepentant sin, engaging in the things of the world, unbelief. But the one I just want to say to you today is bitterness. I've been like feeling this for you for months and months and months, bitterness. I think bitterness is one of the things that is hardening the hearts of people in this season. What you think that person or what that person did to you, or what you think they did to you, because sometimes you need to think about that side of it. And we get offended, and we intentionally choose unforgiveness, and then we become bitter. Then our heart becomes stony and hard. Then it won't burn because it can't burn. And then, the fire of God doesn't spread into the lives of the people that we love. So, what do we need to do? Forgive. Forgive as He has forgiven you. He who has been forgiven much loves much. And you say, but I can't. My heart is too hard. You just start by being honest. God, I have a hard heart, and I know there's no fire in it, and I know there's no fire spreading through it because it's been hardened. So, I'm going to be honest and tell you that I have a stony heart. And He says, then I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you, and I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh that will burn. That will burn. And so, He goes on, how foolish and slow of heart you are to believe. We need to be wise and be quick to repent. Soft heart, responsive heart, receptive heart, childlike heart, to believe all the prophets have spoken. Then our Christ have to suffer these things, and then enter His glory, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets ready, ready, ready He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures

concerning Himself. Okay, this is an interpretive key of the entire Bible. The entire Scriptures are not about you. They are about Him. He explains the Scriptures concerning Himself. The Bible is not so small that it is about you and what you have to do. It is so big that it is about Jesus and who He is and what He has done. The Scriptures are not this small little to-do chore list left by a mom for her student or an instruction manual for an appliance you don't even really want, that's what we look at it as. No, it is an explanation of who Jesus is, what He has done, and what He is like. The Scriptures are not about you. And our great problem is we read them as if it's a bunch of commands, decrees, and laws that we must align our life with. No, it is about Jesus and who He is and what He has done. And when you see that, your life naturally aligns with these things. Why? Because I'm so fixated and focused on Him. Like faith comes by [hearing] and hearing by the [Word of God] okay, it doesn't say faith comes by hearing a whole lot more about you. It says faith comes by hearing a whole lot more about Him. You are not Moses. I hate to break it to you. Jesus is the Old Testament Moses. You are the slave that He set free. You are not David taking out Goliath, your competition in business. No, Jesus is David taking out the king of darkness so that you might be free. You are not Daniel shutting the mouths of the lions so that every. No, no, Jesus is the one who shut the mouth of the devourer so the kingdom can be free. We have to understand that the entire conversation in Scripture is not about us. It's about Him. And so, when He talks to us about anything, He talks to us about anything, it's going to be an explanation about Him.

So why does this matter? Because here's what happens. When our fire goes out and we're journeying towards Emmaus, all we want is an explanation of what happened. We have questions and we expect answers. I need to know. I expect understanding. I expect you to show it to me. I expect acceptable answers to my degree of expectation. We have an entitled, dignified, prideful, arrogant attitude as if we question Him. Just so you know, He will never put your fire back on by explaining things about your life. He will put your fire back on by explaining to you more about Him. Think of Job. Job's fire went out. He was a great man. His entire life fell apart. His fire went out for 38 chapters. There's questions and why and I don't understand and this isn't fair. And then in chapter 38, God speaks to Job. The Lord answered Job out of the storm and He says who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge. Brace yourself like a man, I will question you and you will answer me. Darkens my counsel. You know what that means? Job had no fire, and God was a consuming fire. So, Job brought his ash, his soot, and his dirty charcoal into the presence of God, which God invites but not with an attitude that demands answers. David could pour out his heart to the Lord, but he never had an entitled, arrogant, prideful you owe me answers attitude. Words without knowledge, I'm just going to speak and expect and demand. And God says Job, you don't want to do this. Brace yourself because I'm about to question you. Hey Job, where were you when I created the earth? Hey Job, are you the one that makes the sun rise and makes the sun set? Hey Job, do you know how to control the flood waters of this earth? Can you make it snow? Do you know where the mountain goat has her babies? Can you catch the Leviathan? And after God goes on a nice little let me just go ahead and not answer your question but humble you, Job hits the ground, and he says, surely, I spoke about things I do not understand.

My ears have heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. The Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord, though He slay me, I trust Him still. He will never turn your fire back on by explaining things concerning you. If you need that explanation, you will walk way past Emmaus. He will turn your fire back on by explaining things about Him and drawing your attention to Him. And when you discover who created you and why you were created and who redeemed you and why you were redeemed and who empowered you and why you were empowered, all of a sudden your questions don't really matter much anymore because now your eyes have seen Him. In His goodness, in His graciousness, I just feel like for some of you, the Lord wants to draw attention to that today that you're just like if I just need, you're probably not going to get it. Glory to glory. Can you leave the questions in the two? That's how you get to the next glory by letting Him explain Himself who He is and what He is like to you. Not why, not how, not this, not what should have been, and there's so much compassion in it. You're the compassion in it. But there is also a fear of the Lord. He is the consuming fire. And when I am ash, and soot, and flaky charcoal, I don't question Him; He questions me. And sometimes I think the question is, do you want to actually know who I am, because that's what I would like to tell you. Are you interested in that answer? We get to decide what we say, and so then it goes on. Go to the next one. When He was at the table, they get to the place there's a divine stirring. They say, stay. At the table, He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. They go inside. They sit down. Jesus breaks the bread. And the moment He breaks the bread, their eyes open and they see Him. Why? Because they saw Him on the cross, and the broken bread is a picture of the broken body of Jesus. And in that moment, Jesus didn't change. Their eyes were opened, and they see Christ and Him crucified, now resurrected. And all of a sudden, it all clicks and it all makes sense.

See, what I want you to understand is when your fire goes out, one of the primary things Jesus will do is He will point you to the cross. He will show you Christ and Him crucified. He will lift your eyes and lift your head and draw your attention to Him on the cross. Why? Because it's on the cross where Jesus is most clearly seen. We are told in Scripture that the face of Jesus is the knowledge of God. When we look at the face of Jesus, we know who God is and what He is like, and Jesus is most clearly seen on the cross. That means that's where we most clearly know who God is, is when we look at the cross, that's where life happens, that's where all things are possible, that's where the fire of God burns brightest. So, He will draw our attention to the cross where we will see the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love and faithfulness to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. It's on the cross where we see He is the glorious one, the only one, the worthy one, the holy one, the self-sufficient one, the one who is above all. Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith, the one who will turn your fire back on. Get your eyes off the world because the world is the deleter and the destroyer of your faith; in other words, the quencher of your faith. And what I want you to see if you can catch this is, I believe, this is the first time they looked at His face. The seven-mile journey says their faces were downcast. When you walk with people you don't know, you don't stare at them, do you? I

think they walked shoulder to shoulder for seven miles. I think we walk with Jesus shoulder to shoulder for much of our life. And I think even more than that, I think we walk face to back. Only we're not looking at the back of His head. He's looking at the back of ours. And we're going where we want to go, and goodness and mercy are still following us all the days of our lives. And He is constantly trying to interrupt our conversation to get us to just turn around face-to-face. My heart says if you seek His face, your face, oh lord I will seek. Moses spoke to god face to face, the way a man speaks to His friend. The Aaronic blessing may His face what shine upon. Do you ever just think that's not an LED light? What is shining on you? The blaze of the consuming fire of His eyes. It's the glow of fire, the heat of fire that is shining upon you. Why? Because His face shines brighter than the sun, the Scripture says. If we will just stop, look at Him face to face, look into the eyes of fire. You can't help but eventually have your fire turned back on. When the eyes, the blaze look into the ash, and the soot, and the dirtiness, it will all be dealt with. And He will cultivate and rekindle that which you could never do on your own. And they say were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? Our hearts were cold, and flaky, and sooty, and now they're consumed by fire. How? Because He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us. The living Word of God shared with them the written Word of God. And what I want you to understand is that the mouth Jesus tells us speaks of the overflow of the heart. If Jesus is the consuming fire, then the only thing He can speak are words of [fire]. Why? Because He has a burning heart so He can only speak words of fire. So, His Word is how He takes the coal of His heart and puts it into your heart. His Word is how He takes the fire of heaven and releases it into your life on this earth. His fire, His Word, is how He takes the consuming fire of who He is and releases it into your life. The Bible is not a book. It is a voice. And it is a voice of burning words that can rekindle even the coldest, most diminished heart.

I mean, look at this, look at what Jeremiah says. His Word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in. Indeed, I cannot. His Word is literally a fire. When you put it inside of you, it burns so hot and so bright that you can't keep it in there even if you wanted to. Jeremiah says it again. He says is not my word, like fire declares the Lord, like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces, a fire that is so hot that it can even melt stone that doesn't burn. What's lava? What's lava? Come on, people, stay with me. What's lava? Lava is rock on fire. So, He will break up the hard parts of your heart and light it on fire. That's what His Word can do. Listen to me, your fire will never be hotter than your consumption of God's Word, never. The Word of God is the coal base of the fire of your life. There are a lot of flash fires you can have. Throw something, it burns quick, piece of cardboard, can of gas, whatever. The Word of God is the coal base. And when you get that going, then you can put on community and spiritual practices and sacrifices, all these logs. And they will burn, and they will burn, and they will burn. But without the coal base of the Word of God, all you will ever have is a flash fire. That's why you will go from gathering to gathering, event to event, experience to experience, conference to conference. And there's no fire that's outside of that conference or that gathering. Why? Because you have no coal base to keep the fire burning. Did you ever notice how people who have a burning heart are consumed with God's Word, and people who

have a cold heart want nothing to do with God's Word? Question: Is it because their heart is burning that they consume His Word, or because they consume His Word that their heart is burning? Is it because their heart is cold that they want nothing to do with His Word, or because they want nothing to do with His Word that their heart is cold? Your fire will never be greater than your consumption of the Word of God, which is why we love God's Word around here. Which is why I put like 9000 Scriptures up for you every single week, which is why we have a reading plan, which is why we memorize Scripture in all of our discipleship experiences. Why? Because we need to consume it, meditate on it, memorize it, fill our heart with it. And then look what happens. They got up, they returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the 11, and those with Him assembled together and saying it is true, the Lord has risen. While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them peace be with you. Their heart was rekindled. Everyone else's heart got rekindled. And in this moment, they just went from glory to glory. Oh, they had glory when Jesus was alive, and they had the fire. And then He was gone to seven miles to, He breaks the bread, opens their eyes, glory. This is the Christian experience. Fire goes out. We walk towards the world. Resurrected Jesus gets involved, has a conversation with us. We walk with the resurrected Jesus. He does the things only He can do. He burns our hearts, sets them ablaze on fire. And then we turn back around, and we head back towards the Jerusalem, the city of God, to live on mission, to share our fire with other people. In fact, that's what I would say to you, the Christian life is. You walk with the Resurrected Christ through life. Your heart burns within you, and you share your fire with everyone else around you. Radiant faces, burning hearts, holy lives, and He takes us from being slow of heart to hearts burning within us. That's the whole point. That's the whole point. And here's what I would say, I would bet a bunch of us sitting here today, we're slow in heart today, and we know it. You wouldn't even deny it. Well, maybe you would. But if it was you and me, maybe I could get it out of you. You're like, you know. I don't come in here expecting God to speak. And when He does, I'm not quick to respond. And when I go out there, if I'm honest, everything I say is very ashy, it's very sooty, it's very dirty. Can I just give some of you just some freedom for a second? If you are really foul-mouthed, like dirty, like everything you're saying, you'd be like embarrassed if your mom heard it, kind of stuff, it's not that there's something wrong with you. It's just that there's no fire within you. Why? Your mouth speaks the overflow of the heart. So, all you have in here is dirt. All that can come out is dirt. Like it's not like, as I walked my kids through like sports, and they started getting around, and they're like dad, these people say. And I'm like, that's what's in them. That's all they can say. I mean, you're going to have to figure out. That's like humanity, so like don't be shocked, don't be bothered. That's what's in them. That's all they can come out of them. So, if that's what comes out of you, it should bother you and be like don't worry about it. Don't fix your words, fix your heart. Don't worry about your words; fix your heart. If your heart is burning, the only thing that's left is the pure presence and power of God coming out of your words slowly over time. And if you're like I'm, in process, that's the whole glory. You're like I haven't got it all. Yeah, welcome to the club Bro. I'm not sure which part of the mountain pass you're in, but I know where I am. Like we're going on. We're going on. We refuse to be slow of heart. We want to be burning in heart. But we also have a humility and an honesty and a compassionate Jesus who says it's okay if you

find yourself slow of heart. Don't deny it. Don't deceive others about it. Don't pretend like it's not real. Be honest and watch what I can do.

One last verse for you. This is a prophecy in Isaiah that gets declared again in Matthew, talking about Jesus. Look at my servant Jesus, whom I have chosen. He is my beloved who pleases me. I will put my Spirit upon Him, and He will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not fight, or shout, or raise His voice in public. A bruised reed, He will not break. A smoldering, dimly burning wick, He will not quench till He brings justice and a just cause to victory, and His name will be the hope of all the world. You may be here, and you might be like I am a bruised reed. I am a reed. Think of a reed. And it's bruised, it's bent, it's broken. And when Jesus shows up, He doesn't show up and see a broken, bruised reed and just think, let me just cut it all down and start over, no. He compassionately and graciously will heal and restore until you are strong, and true, and straight, and good and righteous. What is a reed end up used for? A reed is used in musical instruments to make music. He will restore you until there is once again a song in your heart that you will sing or a dimly burning wick where your life is full of ash, and soot, and dirty charcoal, and there's maybe a little, just a little, a little nothing. There's nothing wrong with you. The compassionate and gracious Jesus will come to that, and He will start removing the ash and removing the soot so it can breathe. And He will put a little bit of tinder and a little bit of kindling, and as that gets going, a little bit larger kindling and a little bit more. And then eventually, He will put on a very small log that will get burnt. It will get hot. And then He will put on another log and another one. He's gonna build a coal base for you, and then He can start putting on big old logs, big old stumps eventually, where you will become blazing. And all you have to do is what? Look at Him. You're like, there's got to be more to that than this whole thing than that. You keep telling us, and you keep looking at somewhere weird in the ceiling. But what are you doing? He says look at Him. Just look at Him. So what does that mean? Behold Him. Fix your eyes on Him, gaze at Him, pay attention to Him, become aware of Him, think about Him. Ask Him questions about Himself. Look at His names in Scripture, read His Word, and say Jesus show, just look, just look. Some of us have spent so much time trying to fix our own bruised reed and restart the fire that's gone out, and it ain't working. And the reason it ain't working is because we can't just look. Just look. Because He doesn't fight or shout or yell in the streets. He's so gentle and gracious and compassionate. And He will walk with, He will walk with you for seven miles if that's what it takes. What does seven in the Bible represent? The number of completion. He will walk with you as far as it takes until you are ready for the broken body of Jesus to see Him for who He is, to rekindle the fire in your heart so that you can turn around and get back to the life that He has created and called you for. Maybe you're here today, and you're the bruised reed or the dimly burning wick, and you're on this long seven-mile Journey to Emmaus, which is a picture of the world, a picture of there's nothing there for you, a picture of the goodness and the compassionate and gracious God walking with you as long as it takes. Some of you are there. That's okay. He's right here with you. And some of you, you are literally at the table in the town, in the tavern, in Emmaus, and Jesus right now is literally break like. That's what you've been feeling for the last of couple weeks. You're like I am, I am my gosh, I am starting to see. The fire is coming back on. And some of you you're like

Jerusalem, let's go. He's gracious and with you wherever you are. Wherever your glory to glory may be right now, He is right there with you, fueling the fire in Jesus's name.

So, you close your eyes with me. Come on, what does the Holy Spirit want to say to you? I feel like this was so important for some of you because you feel unseen and you feel left out, and you feel like maybe other people are excited, but your reed is broken, and your fire is all burnt out. There's nothing wrong with you. Jesus isn't mad at you. He is compassionately, graciously walking with you. Just be honest with Him about where you are and don't look for the answers in the world solutions. Let Him explain things about Himself. And let Him give you His Word that will become that coal base, and let Him nurse you back to health, and let Him, let Him, let Him tend the fire of your heart. Give Him the authority. Jesus, I am a bad gatekeeper of my heart right now. I can't guard my heart well right now. I can't keep the fire on the altar going hot right now, but You can. And so, I give You the keys to my heart. I give You the authority to this altar. I give You permission to come in and help me by Your grace and Your spirit fuel that which I don't have the strength to fuel, and you'd be amazed at what He would do. Jesus, thank You that You are the all-consuming fire and You have come to meet us right where we are to take us where we could never go on our own. So I pray for every bruised reed, every ashy, sooty heart, every dimly burning wick, may you be the one spirit to do what only You can do, in the way that only You can do it, to bring back the fire of God in Jesus's name. Jesus, we look to You. May we have eyes to see, ears to hear, and may we become a people that are not slow of heart but that have a burning heart with energy and quickness to repent and respond. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.