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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Third Sunday of Easter (Series A)

April 30, 2017

Text: Luke 24:13–35

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36). That’s the heart and soul of the apostolic church’s preaching. Jesus, crucified under Pontius Pilate, is both Lord and Christ. We Christians embrace this proclamation with great joy and zeal! We join with the apostle Paul in saying, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (I Cor. 2:2). The preaching of Jesus’ death by crucifixion is so profound that the apostle John described the glorified and victorious Jesus at the right hand of the Father almighty as “a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes” (Rev. 5:6). The crucified Jesus, God’s mighty sacrificial Lamb, is Lord and Christ.

But have you noticed that the three examples of apostolic preaching which I have shared are all post-resurrection preaching? What is taken with absolute certainty is that the crucified Jesus is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity. Even when I don’t explicitly state that Jesus is risen from the dead, the fact of His resurrection is always there in the immediately background; it’s understood, maybe even taken for granted.

But this was not the case for the two Emmaus disciples in Luke 24. It’s still that very first Easter day. They’ve heard reports about Jesus’ being alive. But it’s all still so confusing. Who knows what to believe?! One thing is certain, however, Jesus had been crucified unto death three days earlier. These were the things the two Emmaus disciples were discussing when the resurrected Jesus joins them and asks what they are discussing in such sad conversation.

Cleopas, one of the two disciples, said to Jesus, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth...and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and

crucified. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel...Moreover, some women of our company amazed us ... saying that Jesus was alive ” (vs. 19–23).

The very One they are discussing is right in front of them, but their eyes are closed shut. Jesus tells them the cause of their blindness, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” (vs. 25–26). It was foolish of these two men to think that God’s Messiah shouldn’t die and rise again. To limit God’s works and ways is one of the heights of folly. God’s Word is clear as to God’s intentions for the salvation of the World. His heart and desire for the world are revealed in Holy Scripture. It says that the Messiah must suffer before entering into glory. It’s all right there, in your OT Bibles!

And Jesus takes them through the OT, from Genesis to Malachi. Vs. 27, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Jesus preached about Himself from the OT! According to our Lord, it’s all laid out there for every believing heart and mind. That’s why He’s so astonished at their foolishness and their unbelieving hearts. Everything God the Father wanted them to know about Jesus, His works and ways, is revealed in Holy Scripture. Nothing is hidden. There are no divine secrets about the Messiah. The Bible is about Jesus. Later that evening, those two disciples will joyfully tell the apostles that their hearts burned within them as the resurrected Jesus opened to them the Holy Scriptures (vs. 32).

In fact, those two disciples will also describe what happened when they asked Jesus to “stay with us, for it is toward the evening and the day is now far spent” (vs. 29). At this point, they still didn’t recognize Jesus. Their hearts were aflame with Scriptural teaching about the OT witness to the death and resurrection of God’s Messiah. The moment of recognition comes in vs. 30–31, “When Jesus 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.”

The two disciples’ eyes were opened through the means of Scripture and Sacrament; Holy Word and Holy Supper. It was God’s Word and Sacrament that opened their eyes to see Jesus; not their physical senses. Before hearing God’s Word and sitting at table with Jesus, the two disciples were foolish and slow of heart to believe that the Christ should suffer and rise to enter into glory (vs. 26). They knew about and had

possibly even seen our Lord's miracles, heard His teaching – including our Lord's predictions that He would die and rise again – but they didn't believe.

What changed their hearts and minds was the presence of the resurrected Jesus given to them through Word and Sacrament, NOT His visible presence; they didn't recognize Him by sight but by ear. Note that well, dear saints. Mary Magdalene thinks Jesus is the gardener until Jesus speaks her name. “My sheep hear my voice and I call them by name” (John 10:3, 27; 20:16). The Emmaus disciples think Jesus an uninformed pilgrim to Jerusalem until He preaches the OT and breaks bread with them.

There are at least two important implications from today's gospel text. First, we must repent of our own foolishness and slowness of heart. The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus reveal the loving heart of God for all mankind. No situation, no sin, no shame is beyond the love of our crucified and resurrected Jesus. Turn from despondency, complacency, and apathy and receive all the divine gifts God desires to give you.

Second, Jesus desires to reveal Himself to us through His Word and Sacrament. Too often Christians run after whatever new thing that promises to give renewed spirituality, greater access to God. All the while, Jesus promises to give Himself fully and completely through His Word and Supper. Please note: they go together, God's Word of Law and Gospel focused upon the Lord Jesus and His Holy Supper. I urge you dear saints of God, not to be distracted or enamored by any form of spirituality that does not flow directly from Christ-centered preaching and teaching and regular, faithful reception of the Lord's Supper.

Lord Jesus, stay with us. The day is far spent as we long for Your glorious return. Come among us through Your Word and Sacrament. Open our eyes. Kindle our hearts so as to share the good news of Your resurrection to everyone You bring into our lives. And make us zealous for your on-going, eternal presence. Stay with us, Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.