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

Third Sunday of Easter (Series A)

May 4, 2014

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.

During last Sunday's sermon, I stated that we needed at least 2 Sundays to consider the glory and significance of that very first Easter, the day of our Lord's resurrection. I must confess that I didn't speak as accurately as I would have liked. For today's gospel reading from Luke 24 also takes place on that first Easter Sunday. The cycle of readings for this year devotes 3 weeks to Easter Sunday!! What glory and victory and rejoicing are found in Jesus' resurrection. Peter writes, "God...raised (Jesus) from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (I Peter 1:21). Because of Jesus' resurrection, our faith and hope for present and future glory are established in God. I suppose that's worth an extra Sunday or two!!

But the two disciples in today's reading from Luke 24 didn't quite see things that way, at least at first. For them, the experience of Jesus' crucifixion and the various reports of the Lord's resurrection were anything but comforting. On that first Easter Sunday, these two bewildered disciples "were talking with each other about all these things that had happened" (vs. 14). It was a somber conversation. How could things have gone so wrong so quickly? Just a week ago, Jesus entered into Jerusalem to the song and praises of the crowds. Hosanna, Hosanna to the Son of David was shouted while Palm Branches were thrown on the way. In just 5 short days, Jesus went from being the most popular man in Israel to the most despised. Flogging! Spitting! Mocking! Crucifixion! It shouldn't have happened. And now Jesus' tomb is empty. Where's the body?

Try to put yourself into their shoes. All of their hopes were centered on Jesus. Look at vs. 21. Cleopas, one of the two disciples, said, "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." But now He's dead. And we can't make heads or tails of these reports about Jesus being alive. Crucified men don't come back to life. Crucifixion just doesn't kill you; it destroys and breaks the one being crucified in body and spirit. Resurrections just don't happen. All our hopes died three days ago.

That's the mindset of the two disciples as they walked back home the 7 miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

During this somber conversation, the Lord Jesus appears to the 2 disciples though they do not recognize Him. The Lord asks the 2 disciples what they're talking about. With a bit of incredulous astonishment, they bring Jesus up to speed on the events of Holy Week, Good Friday, and the rumors swirling about an empty tomb, angels, and an impossible resurrection from the dead. Luke records their last, sad statement, "but him (referring to Jesus) they did not see" (vs. 24). Just rumors! As far as the 2 disciples knew, no one had actually seen Jesus.

Dear saints, don't miss the comic irony in all this. The 2 disciples, unwittingly, are telling the resurrected Jesus that no one has seen Him risen from the dead. He's standing right in front of Him but they don't recognize Jesus. And don't miss the tragedy in this too. Jesus is right in front of them and they don't recognize Him.

Jesus tells them the cause of their blindness: foolishness and an inability to believe. Look at vs. 25–26: Jesus said, "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?" It was foolish of these 2 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. And the tragedy of unbelief is staggering. 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, Jesus is proclaimed with clarity. Vs. 27, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Jesus preaches 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 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 Lord Jesus taught them the true interpretation of Scripture while they walked to Emmaus. Later, they joyfully confessed, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scripture?" Once they reached the

village, Jesus acted as if He would continue on. Noticing this, the 2 disciples strongly urge (vs. 29) Jesus to “stay with us, for it is toward the evening and the day is now far spent.” Jesus joins them. Supper is prepared and the Lord acts rather strangely. Jesus, the guest, takes charge, acting like He’s the master over house and table. Vs. 30, “When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.” Sound familiar? You’ll hear the same pattern of action in the Words of Institution which I will speak over the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper.

What’s most astounding is what Luke records in the next verse (vs. 31) and how the 2 disciples describe their Easter experience in vs. 35. Look at vs. 31, “And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him (i.e. Jesus). And he vanished from their sight.” Vs. 35 describes what the 2 disciples said to the apostles about their experience with Jesus, “Then they told what had happened on the road (remember Jesus’ OT teaching from Moses and the prophets (vs. 27), and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

The 2 disciples’ eyes were opened through the means of Scripture and Sacrament; Holy Word and divine Meal. 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 2 disciples were foolish and slow of heart to believe that the Christ should suffer and rise to enter into glory (vs. 26). They had seen His miracles, heard His teaching 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. Note that well, dear saints.

What happened to the 2 disciples on the Emmaus road has at least 2 implications. 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. He loves to the extreme, even to the point of giving up Himself to pay for the sin and death of His creation. And His desire to live for all eternity with His people is exemplified in His bursting death and grave wide open. 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 and fabulous trend that promises to give

renewed spirituality, greater access to God. All the while, Jesus desire to reveal Himself through His Word and Supper. I urge you dear saints of God, by the mercies of our resurrected Lord, not to be distracted 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. If a devotional book, a movie, a particular worship style, a preacher, or whatever, does not encourage you to find Christ in His Word and Sacrament, avoid it. That's not how Jesus promises to reveal Himself to you.

The very structure of our worship service is patterned after the events of Luke 24. The first half of our service is planned so as to support the reading, preaching, and teaching of God's Word. Following the sermon and prayer, the service moves immediately toward the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Word and Supper intimately and closely linked to each other for the purpose of revealing the resurrected Jesus in all His grace, mercy, and love. Following the example of the apostolic church (as found in Acts 2:42, 20:7; I Cor. 11:20, 33) we celebrate Word and Supper together on Sundays so that we might receive Jesus as He wishes to give Himself for our eternal good.

Stay with us Jesus. 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.