

The Third Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2020

Hope is restored by the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Christ, just as God said in his Word.

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY: O God, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world from the despair of death. By his resurrection to life, grant your faithful people gladness of heart and the hope of eternal joys; through your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

OLD TESTAMENT: **Acts 2:14a, 36-47** *We see God's law and God's gospel work saving faith in the heart of believers. Any wonder they wanted to spend time with God's Word each day?*

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: ... "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

EPISTLE READING: **1 Peter 1:17-21** *Trials and grief try to choke our hope. But our hope is restored when we remember we were bought by the blood of Christ, and one day we will join that glorious Savior in our heavenly home.*

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

VERSE OF THE DAY: *Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. Our hearts were burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us. Alleluia. (Luke 24:32)*

SERMON: Luke 24:13-35

When You Don't See Jesus!

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven 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?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

Were you ever disappointed because someone let you down? A while back I was going to make spaghetti. I got the noodles boiling on the stove. I had the hamburger browning in the frying pan. I went to the cupboard to get the jar of spaghetti sauce and it was not there! I looked in another cupboard, and another, and I checked the pantry downstairs. No sauce. I was frustrated. I was relying on that jar and it let me down. You walk out of the store and you can't find your car. It is not where you left it. Was it stolen? Are you that forgetful and it is parked somewhere else? That is why that little button on your key chain is called a "panic button." Press it and your car beeps its horn. But what if you don't hear it? You are washing the dishes and keeping an eye on your kids playing in the backyard. The next time you look up, they are not there. Where did they go? Did they wander in the street? Did someone grab them?

We know Jesus is with always with us, but sometimes we panic because we don't see him. Don't worry. You are not the only ones to feel that way. The two disciples on the way to Emmaus felt that way. Let's join them because there are times when we think Jesus is not there when we need him. We learn, however, it is only a felling.

I. When you don't see Jesus, you are filled with sad disappointment.

The last time these two disciple saw Jesus, he was dead. Oh, they heard rumors that he had risen from the dead. They hung around Jerusalem for a while in the hopes this was true. But they gave up and left town; there was nothing but misery for for them in Jerusalem.

On the road they met a stranger. But he was no stranger. He was Jesus, but in some way he prevented them from recognizing him. This was no chance meeting. Jesus arranged it because he didn't want these disciples to remain sad for much longer. Notice how Jesus is the perfect teacher. He knows their problem and he knows the solution and he knows the best way to help them. Later that night he will simply appear before his disciples and say, "Here I am." But he didn't do that here. Thank God he knows how to deal with us perfectly. Sometimes he may let us struggle a while. Other times he may simply give us the answer. Just trust he knows what he is doing.

So Jesus hid his identity and with a series of questions he got these disciples to tell him why they were so sad. **"He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him."** And then we get to one of the saddest passages in the Bible: **"...but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."** There is nothing sadder than hope that is gone.

Jesus, they thought, was gone. They thought they will never see him again. They thought they would never hear his awesome sermons or see his wonderful miracles. They understood he was the one to redeem Israel, but how could he if he was dead? It was as if Jesus never came, only worse.

II. But he is always with us through his Word.

But Jesus did redeem Israel! And he didn't leave them. Sure, he was walking along with them, but they didn't know it was him. We are not talking about his physical presence. We are talking how God is with us all the time through his Word.. **"He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."** Jesus rebuked them and rightly so. Those disciples should have known better. They didn't have to be sad. They brought this on themselves because they ignored the Bible which explained all of this. So what does Jesus do? He takes them back to those passages. Wouldn't it have been great to have been a fly on the wall and hear Jesus show them passage after passage, from Genesis through Malachi? Wouldn't it be great to hear? Well, we have already. Every time you listen to a sermon or join in a devotion or spent some time reading the Bible, you have seen those passages whether it was the promise of the seed of the woman in Genesis 3, to the prophet greater than Moses, to the suffering servant in Isaiah to the Sun of Righteousness in Malachi.

The last few days were shocking. They may have been there to see Jesus march into Jerusalem triumphantly on Palm Sunday. But they saw him mistreated, judged, condemned and killed on the cross. What they wanted, a Palm Sunday everyday, they did not get. Instead they got a dead Savior. But this is how the Lord redeemed Israel. This is how he redeems them and us. I remember years ago meeting a lady at the transplant house in Rochester. She was recovering from donating a kidney. I asked if it was for her husband, or family or a friend, and she said no. Someone needed a transplant, she matched and she donated one to a total stranger. Redeem means to buy back. We were dying in our sins. But Jesus wanted us to live so he donated more than a kidney. He donated himself to save us. He donated his life as payment for our sins. He donated his holiness and perfection so we would be a match for heaven. He bought us back from sin, death and the devil.

And how did this affect them? They said their hearts burned inside of them. It wasn't indigestion. They had not eaten yet. It was a warm, wonderful, happy feeling. It was the Word that changed their gloomy day into a day of celebration. If our cat suddenly stood on its hind legs and told me that my wife truly loves me, I would tell people about it. But what would I tell them, that my wife loves me, or that I saw a cat standing up and talking with me? I talk about the cat and not the message. This is why Jesus did it this way. Their hearts burned not because they saw Jesus alive and in the flesh; he hid his identity from them. Their hearts burned because of the message. The miracle of the resurrection did not change their hearts. The miracle of God's Word changed them.

It changed them so much, they had to share it. You know how it went. It was dark and the disciples urged the stranger Jesus to stay, not only for supper, but probably for the night; you don't travel after dark. As he broke the bread, he revealed himself as God and disappeared. Remember, you don't travel at night, but that is what they did. They had to go back the seven miles or so—like from Green Isle to here. They had to share this with others.

Friends, I pray you and I learn from this text because we often are gloomy disciples. These disciples were fine when Jesus walked and talked with them. But after what they had seen, his death and burial, they were scared, frightened and confused. When things are normal and good do we really pay attention to God's Word? We come to church and we think, "Heard that before. Jesus died for me. I know. Tell me something I don't know." So we don't pay that much attention to it. We may even find it boring. Don't be surprised, then, when our world begins to fall apart, we get a little confused and maybe a lot of scared. We may even look and we don't see Jesus. Why didn't he answer my prayer? Why is he letting this happen to me, my family, the world? I thought he was coming back soon? I thought he was suppose to work everything out for our good? See what happens when we shelve the Bible, shelve all of those promises and Words? We get gloomy. We begin to lose hope.

But don't lose hope. God already addressed these and many other things in his Word. And that is the lesson here. Jesus hasn't left us. He is with us as true God and he is always with us through his Word. When he drives us back to that Word, we at first feel shame. I read this before. How stupid of me to forget this passage or that or to act as though God never said this. And then feel your hearts burn. We see how God has redeemed us. We understand that this world will pass, but not his heaven. Why do we struggle? Well, he is treating us like children as he disciplines us. He will work it for good even though we may not see it. It is better to be freed from the curse of sin, the fear of death, and the threat of hell. They do matter more than better health or more money.

Jesus did let those disciples see him. We will see him, too. But not now, not yet. We will see him physically when he comes for us on the Last Day. Until then, remember this. If you think Jesus isn't there or has left, that is a lie. He hasn't left. He is still with us. As God he is physically with us now. He is right here in his Word. Keep going back to it and let your hearts and hope burn bright. Amen.

THE APOSTLES CREED:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.