

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Easter 3A
April 23, 2023
Luke 24:13-35

Walking with Jesus

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. . . . (Luke 24:13-16 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

Last week, we heard about Jesus appearing to His disciples on the evening following His resurrection from the dead. They were behind locked doors in fear. Jesus appeared to them, gave them peace, and ordained them into the apostolic office. Today, we hear something that happened a few hours earlier.

Two disciples were walking on the road toward Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They had been in Jerusalem for the Passover festival, which is supposed to be a joyous occasion. But for them it turned out to be a huge disappointment. More than that, it was a heart-crushing blow! You see, their master, Jesus, had been betrayed and arrested and put to death on a cross, like a common criminal. And He was the one they had been pinning their hopes on! Jesus was the one they thought was going to make Israel great again! They thought He would be the Messiah who would deliver Israel from the hands of the Romans. Restore the nation to its long-ago glory. A new David! The Messiah sent from heaven! But now He's dead. And all their hopes have died with him.

Suddenly, they're joined by a stranger who asks them what they're talking about. They don't recognize Him, and are surprised

that He didn't know what had happened in Jerusalem in the last few days concerning Jesus of Nazareth. After all, didn't everybody who was there hear about it? It was the talk of the town.

So they fill Him in: "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." And then they tell him about the wild talk from the women, that nonsense about Jesus rising from the dead.

Well, at that the stranger tells them, "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?" And they're thinking, "Who is this guy? How can He speak with such authority? Calling us 'foolish' and 'slow of heart to believe'? And what's this strange interpretation He has, that the Messiah must suffer first? We were expecting a glory Messiah! This suffering and death business—a Messiah who is rejected and killed?—this doesn't fit our paradigm!"

But the stranger starts explaining all this as they walk along to Emmaus: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

That must have been some Bible study! Wouldn't you love to have been there? Yet, it wasn't just some interesting tidbits from here and there, but Jesus led them through the entire Old Testament to teach them that it all spoke of Him.

So, what did it say? Right away in Genesis, right after the fall into sin, there is the first promise of a Savior. He's called the "woman's seed," who will stomp on the head of the devil. But what will happen to Him as He does that? The serpent will strike Him in the heel. Think of how Jesus would be nailed to the cross. Already we have a suffering Christ, right out of the box. But that's how He will win the victory and reverse the curse of death, through suffering.

Or think of how Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame with fig leaves. That didn't work. So God covered them with the skins of animals. Meaning, someone had to die in their place. Adam and Eve should have died that day, but God provided a substitute. Likewise when God provided a substitute for Abraham in place of his son, Isaac.

Or think of the exodus from Egypt. Death should have struck the homes of the Israelites that night, but God provided the Passover lamb, whose blood on the doorposts spared them from death. Or think of all the sacrifices at the tabernacle and temple. Blood was shed, animal sacrifices were made, to cover the sins of the Israelites. These all pointed ahead to Christ the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Yes, a suffering Messiah, whose perfect sacrifice atones for your sins and mine. As St. Peter writes in today's Epistle: "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." (1 Pet. 1:18-19). God has set you free, He has redeemed you from sin and death, how? By the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God.

A suffering Christ. A righteous sufferer. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1). Psalm 22 vividly portrays the crucifixion of Christ. It was right there all along, but these and the other disciples hadn't understood it.

Or consider the most direct prophecy of a suffering Messiah, Isaiah 53, the Suffering Servant: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed." (Is. 53:4-5). What could be clearer? Yet no one had put it all together as Jesus was doing. He was the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, suffering and dying for the sins of the people, for their—for our—iniquities. By His stripes, with His holy wounds, we are healed. This is the Savior we need, the righteous one who suffers and dies for us, to take our place and suffer the judgment we all deserve, so that God's judgment will not fall on us.

Well, Jesus could have gone on and on, explaining all these things. But the road to Emmaus is only seven miles long. But these disciples wished it was seventy times seven! They don't want the stranger to leave. They want to hear more. So they invite him into the house. "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." And when they sit down at table to eat, the guest starts acting like the host! "He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them." Now their eyes are opened! Now they recognize that it's Jesus who has been teaching them. It's Jesus who is breaking bread with them. It's Jesus, risen from the dead! He really is alive! Now it's all starting to come together for them. And with that, Jesus vanishes from their sight. And they say to each other: "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Beloved, here on the road to Emmaus, and in the breaking of the bread at the table, our risen Lord Jesus Christ sets the pattern for His church for all ages to come. It's Sunday, the first day of the week, the day on which our Lord rose from the dead. And so every Sunday becomes another Easter, because on this day Jesus meets with His church. He opens up the Scriptures to us. He opens our minds to understand the Bible, that it's all about a Savior who loves us and suffers and dies for our sins, so that now we are forgiven, so that now, baptized in His name, we will share in His resurrection. This is what it's all about. Every Sunday, Jesus joins us on our journey through life, on our own Emmaus road. And when we reach our final destination, there we will see our Lord face to face. You will see Him, and He will call you by name. And there He will be our host at His heavenly banquet, the wedding feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which will have no end. We receive a foretaste of that feast to come in the Lord's Supper as Jesus is our host in the breaking of the bread.

God grant that Jesus continue to walk with us on our journey, and that He abides with us forever. For when Jesus is with us, on the road, in the Word, and at the table, it is something to celebrate. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener