"The Divine Service at Emmaus" - Luke 24:25-31

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Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Emmett, Idaho
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The Gospel Reading takes us back to that first Easter Sunday. The early morning events are now over. Most of Jesus' disciples are back in Jerusalem in a house with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. The afternoon sun is approaching the horizon as two disciples are walking on the earthen road out of Jerusalem. As they leave the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent by the Lord God, they speak to one another about the latest Victim.

Emmaus is where their house is located and as they plod along Cloepas and the other disciple talk about all that has happened, both the historical facts about the betrayal, trials, condemnation, crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus, and the word of mouth reports concerning angels and the empty tomb. Their hopes for the redemption they sought had centered in this Jesus, a prophet of Nazareth Who was mighty in deed and word before both God and man. Thus these two spoke as they trudged away from the cross and away from the tomb.

Somewhere along the way, a stranger comes to them and joins them in their lonely, sad, hopeless, confusing, grief-stricken, death march. [Now we know that this was Jesus, but they didn't.] The stranger asks them what they were talking about and the two Emmaus disciples answer by stopping their walk and looking sad. Cloepas asks the stranger if he is the only one who doesn't know what's going on with all these things happening. This Stranger, Who indeed, is really the only One Who does know what is going on, responds with a catechism-type question, "What things?" The Emmaus disciples relay their hopes and fears -- hopes that have been dashed by the humiliation of Jesus -- fears that have risen in their hearts and minds. Then it was that the Lord spoke to them and led them to ...

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And He (the Stranger) said to them, "O foolish men, 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 beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So He went in to stay with them. When He 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 out of their sight.

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

This text surprises us in several ways because things seem backwards. For example, these two disciples are down, sad, confused, disappointed and rather hopeless. So, what sort of Word would we expect Jesus to say to them? Would it be a Word of understanding, encouragement that builds up, or a Word of Law that condemns, points out sin, exposes unbelief and confronts them?

Listen to what He says, *"O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"* In the midst of this world in which you see tragedy, when you hear of hurts, where you experience grief and, as a result, question the plan of God and doubt His ability to carry it, I say you are acting like foolish men. You have hearkened your ears to the voices within you and within the world which beckon you to believe in and trust a theology of glory. You seek the high road of making God in your image and according to your likeness, and in doing so, you have rejected the theology of the cross and all the Scriptures that have pointed to it. You love to hear the silver-tongued words of television evangelists who entertain and fleece, and you place yourself under the burden of yourself as you attempt to abide by the rantings of motivational speakers and church growth advocates who tell you to have more faith and bear more fruit. In doing so, you cast aside all that the Holy Writ declares concerning the Good News. *"O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"*

The second surprise is that, after such an exposing declaration of the truth by Jesus, we are not sent into the outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth. Well, dear disciples on the road of life, Jesus didn't do that. The children now sit up in their pews and with their eyes and ears ask the question, "Well, what happened next?" Permit me to tell you. The Stranger catechizes the two Emmaus disciples. He asks them a question just like we do in catechism class. *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?* Now that is an easy question because it is either a "yes" or a "no" answer and you have a 50-50 chance of getting it right. But just to make sure you don't get a wrong answer, let's let the kid in class who always has the right answer speak first and then we can agree. But the Stranger makes the catechetical question even easier because He asked it in such a way as to get the correct answer of "yes." "Surely it was necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory, wasn't it?" Do you want to answer it now?

Well, the Bible does not record any response from Cloepas and the other disciple. So maybe it was one of those questions that was asked that the pastor did not want anyone in catechism class to answer. Perhaps it is best to wait. Maybe it was a rhetorical question and the Stranger was going to use it as a springboard for the answer He was looking for.

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Wow, dear people, do you realize what Jesus has just said? [... silent for a moment ...] Right, it's a rhetorical question! The Stranger was telling them that the Old Testament is a Christ book and that the plan of salvation was to be accomplished by the Suffering Servant Who would be Immanuel ... conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin, suffered, crucified, died and buried. *Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?* Yes, it was.

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He (the Stranger) *interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.* From Genesis 3:15 where the promised Savior would be the Seed of the woman, to Malachi 4:2 when the Sun of Righteousness comes, -- from Moses through all the prophets in the Old Testament, the Stranger told them that these Holy Words of God

testified to and bore witness to the Christ of God. There is no doubt that Jesus related Psalm 22 with its "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and Isaiah 53 with its "and the Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." The Old Testament leds us to behold the Son of David, to see the Savior of the world, to hear of Job's Redeemer and to walk the road to Bethlehem. Here, on the road to Emmaus, was the Divine Service of the Written Word given by the Incarnate Word. As they journeyed with Jesus, He led His small catechism or confirmation class by teaching them about Himself. The Word has been proclaimed and thus far the Divine Service of the Word.

The shadows of the day lengthened as the distance to Emmaus shortened. *So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, but they constrained Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent."* Having had their eyes opened by this Stranger that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament, that the firstborn Son of Mary is the Christ of God written of by Moses and all the prophets, the Emmaus disciples urged Him to stay. "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide." *So He went in to stay with them.*

Then something happens that surprises us. It is not surprising that either the disciples invited the Visitor to an evening meal and a night's sleep, or that the Visitor would accept the invitation. Those are completely normal and very much expected. It is something else that surprises us. And the children sit up in their pews and ask, "What is it that is so surprising?"

Just this, dear children of God: Jesus enters the house as the guest of the people and suddenly, the guest becomes the host. He takes upon Himself the responsibility as the host by taking the bread and saying the blessing. Jesus is the Head of the household and is now serving them. The world of Christendom has gotten this all backwards. Far too many pastors and parishioners think that they go to church built with hands in order to just serve the Lord, to just praise Him, to just let Him know just how much we love Him, to just be a congregation of the Law. In the real Church, we come in to hear the Word of Law and Gospel, to be catechized in the faith, to hear everything that He has done, and if we are thus prepared, we are invited to partake of the Holy Supper.

Order is important. The teaching of the Word must come first. After that, the sharing of the Meal takes place. The order is Word and Sacrament, not Sacrament and Word. The order is Scripture and Supper. It is catechesis and Eucharist. To be prepared for the Lord's Supper, a person must learn of the Word and, in order to be ready to eat of the Body and Blood of the Lord, declare publicly, "This is what I belief." That is why children go to catechism class before coming to the Lord's Supper. That is why we offer confirmation classes for our visitors before they come to Communion. We want everyone to come to the Holy Supper and in order that they may do so, knowing why they are coming and what they hope to receive, it is necessary to teach the Word. We do have confirmation classes for adults and if you would like to begin this instruction for membership in the congregation and attendance at the Lord's Supper, please let me know.

Within the house of God at Emmaus, the guest named Jesus, the One Who came not to be served but to serve and to give His Life as a Ransom for many, has become the Host. Having heard the Word the disciples are ready for the Meal. Therefore, when Jesus *was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them.*

At that moment God granted a special revelation to them. Up until that point the eyes of faith had been prevented from recognizing Jesus. Then it was, 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. He Who taught them that Christ is risen, opens their eyes to the truth that He is risen indeed! As Jesus is recognized in the breaking of break, the certainty of God with us is given. The Lord Jesus reveals Himself in the breaking of bread and the faith of His disciples responds with, "This is most certainly true!"

Then we are surprised once again when we hear that *their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished out of their sight.* The moment He is recognized, He vanishes. Then the children in the pew sit up and ask, "What does this mean?" This blessed truth: With His sin-atoning death on Good Friday and with His death-defying Resurrection on Easter, the Old Passover is over and the day of the New Testament has commenced. At the Divine Service at Emmaus, the disciples behold the real presence and visible disappearance of Jesus and this signals the advent of the continuing celebrations of the Lord's Supper where and when Jesus is present and yet unseen. The disciples at the Divine Service at Our Redeemer are called and privileged to recognize, with their eyes of faith opened and seeing Jesus, that He is truly present whenever we break this bread and drink this cup. Amen.