



Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon for Sunday Jubilate 2017

*Christ Jesus is alive and present with those
who gather around His Word and
Sacrament!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Lk 24, 13-35:

- ¹³ 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.
- ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad.
- ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"
- ¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.
- ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.
- ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.
- ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."
- ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!
- ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
- ²⁸ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.
- ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.
- ³² They said 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?"
- ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found

the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

• *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, give us ears that can hear the risen Lord so that we receive His good gifts and rise with Him in Spirit now and later in body and see Him with our own eyes in the Resurrection. Amen.*

• **Dear Members of Christ's Body!**

• It is the very day of Jesus' Resurrection. Two disciples, not of the Twelve, were going away from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. One name is given, namely Cleopas. It was most probably the uncle of Jesus, the brother of Joseph.

• "*What sort of things?*" the visitor to Jerusalem asked the two disciples, who were discussing the things that had happened. They were referring to Jesus' death and the story of the women telling about their vision of angels who said that He was alive! They had hoped that Jesus, the mighty prophet in word and deed, would be the one to redeem Israel.

• But the chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to be condemned to death and crucified Him.

• Some of the disciples went to the tomb and confirmed what the women had said, but Him they hadn't seen!

• They didn't recognise that it was Jesus, who joined them in their discussion. That is strange! How could they not have recognised Him? Was He looking that different, now in His resurrected Body? That was not the reason. The plot thickens, because Luke reports to us, the hearers, that their eyes were kept from recognising Jesus. Now, this is a divine passive expression. In other words, God was behind restraining them from recognising Jesus. That is strange. We ask, for what good reason would He do that?

• So, let us watch closely what Jesus was doing and what He said on that day. We have to remember that the Gospels were written for the second generation of disciples and all those following them.

• Jesus enters their conversation on the road, from Jerusalem to Emmaus. He will remain with them until the meal in Emmaus. Only at the breaking of the bread will their eyes be opened- again a divine passive- God will open their eyes the moment when Jesus breaks the bread. For what good reason only then?

• This meal is a significant meal, because it is the first meal distributed by the risen Christ. It is a meal where eyes are opened to see in Jesus the seed of the woman promised in Gen 3,15.

• Eve and then Adam fell by listening to satan's deceptive teaching and then they found themselves both devouring the food he made desirable to them. The very fruit God had forbidden them to eat.

• Now, in Emmaus is the first meal after Christ's resurrection. This meal reverses

the fatal meal in paradise! In both cases eyes were opened. In the fatal meal Adam and Eve's eyes were opened and they realised their nakedness, their shame. Now, at the breaking of the bread eyes were opened to realise and see the new creation in Jesus.

- However, the meal came at the end, not at the beginning. There was a Way leading to the meal. First, Jesus had to do something else with them.
- Jesus met them on the Way. They were travelling away from Jerusalem, because something happened with Jesus, which they couldn't fit into their idea of God redeeming Israel. He was a prophet of mighty deeds and words, but then He suffered and died by the hands of those who rejected Him. They couldn't see, that the suffering and dying part was also part of Jesus' Exodus, was part of God's plan of Redemption! It was necessary that He should suffer these things. And, furthermore, the OT Scriptures prophecy this. Its in the Scriptures. So, Jesus interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself!
- So, what was Jesus doing? He was teaching them who He really was and what His Way of redeeming Israel really looked like all along. It was catechesis. He opened the Scriptures to them. They hadn't recognised Him yet. Their eyes were still held. But, this Word of catechesis did something to them. For the first time they could see the golden thread going from the beginning through death and resurrection!
- Now comes a crucial moment. Jesus acted as if He was going farther. What would the disciples do? Would they let Him go, or would they invite Him into their homes. They had just heard the most stunning catechesis ever given to them on Moses and all the prophets. There was a new centre which was revealed to them by this stranger which nobody had ever before revealed to them. A new way of interpreting the Scriptures. Jesus, as Christ, the redeemer of Israel, the death of Jesus, the one sacrifice necessary to redeem the whole of Israel. Never, ever had anyone revealed to them this Truth which binds and holds the whole of the holy Scriptures together. Never, ever before, had anyone opened their understanding so that they could come to realise, their own idea of the Saviour was not complete. It lacked the depth of realising the ultimate significance of the suffering and Death of Jesus. That was the way in which God loved the world. God saves by means of death and resurrection.
- And so, when the crucial moment came, it says, [29] *"they urged Him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent."* Jesus' catechesis bore fruit. Afterwards they would describe this moment as [32] *"did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road" ...*
- Then the exceptional good news, they urged Him to stay, and [29c] *"He went in to stay with them."* The good news carries on. They had received the Word of Christ, His catechesis, which had created faith in them, which urged them to invite Him in. That was their confession of faith in His catechesis. And now He came in to them, to stay with them. He had one last gift to give to them. He had opened the Scriptures to them. He had opened their hearts, their minds and understanding to who Jesus truly

was and how His powerful Deeds and Words and His Death and His Resurrection were all prophesied in the OT Scriptures to redeem Israël.

- Now he had one last gift for them, to open their eyes so that they could recognise, it is Him.
- It happened as Jesus was reclining with them, while taking the bread He blessed it and while breaking it He gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened. They recognised Him.
- It was Him, all the way. Then God opened their eyes to see the crucified and resurrected Saviour.
- Then, very important, it says, and He vanished from *their sight!!* He did not leave them. He never left them again. He vanished from their sight. He was still with them.
- So, we can summarise, the teaching of Jesus, the right understanding of who He really is and what the right interpretation of His Death and resurrection are is the necessary preparation for the meal. The Divine Service of the Word leads to the Divine Service of the Sacrament. Catechesis is necessary before receiving table fellowship with Jesus. Then our eyes of faith will understand the OT Scriptures and we will realise that He is amongst us, amongst all those who gather around His teaching and those who invite Him to come and stay with them. This is what happens in the Liturgy as we call on the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They come. Jesus comes and visits our gathering and it is He who lets our heart burn when we hear the truth of the Gospel and He lets us realise, through the Holy Spirit, that He is the host of the ultimate meal on earth, the Lord's Supper.
- This meal prepares us for the ongoing feast of eternal Life, where we will see the glorified Jesus with our own eyes face to face. As we invite Him, He comes and takes over our gathering. He washes us clean, He teaches us and He serves His food which will give us forgiveness of sins and eternal Life. And He lets us realise, that He is bodily present amongst us although we cannot see Him.
- And this basically settles all questions of reverence, most questions of order of service. It settles the issues surrounding the proper communion practice and above all it gives us certainty of the fact that Jesus is truly alive and amongst us to give us, a new mind, a new urge and desire for Him, and the certain promise that we will see Him in the eternal banquet that He has prepared for us. The Lord has risen. He has risen indeed!
- *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. The God of peace be with you all. Amen.*