**4/23/23**

**Emmaus, Doubt, and Breaking Bread**

**Luke 24:13-35**

Another Easter Day is upon us folks! May continued Easter Blessings be granted to each and every one of you through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! For we are forever thankful and mindful that he has Risen, and he has Risen Indeed! Amen!

Last week we got reintroduced to our all too familiar friend, “Doubting Thomas.” Now, Thomas was not listening to what others had seen or heard. Everyone’s stories were great, but he needed to see and even feeling Jesus’ scars as his own personal experience to even be able to extinguish his own doubt. Today I feel we get to explore doubt in a different kind of way. Our Gospel Reading offers us a story of two disciples, as they are walking along their own personal roads of doubt. Now, despite knowing the story, and what was going to happen on the third day according to the scriptures, they were still walking along with their heads hanging down while sulking. Unfortunately, they thought they lost out on their victory, and that Israel was not going to be redeemed. They were traveling on the road to Emmaus, and for that fact it might have been called the road to Doubt!

We all too often are on our own personal roads to Emmaus at times aren’t we? I mean let’s consider how many times things seemed so simple or so ordinary, and we just don’t see it right away. Looking at things in the context of today’s Gospel Reading we see how the two disciples were blinded by their personal fear and grief. They were blinded so much so that they did not even see that Jesus was right there walking alongside of them the entire time! Distractions and misguided thoughts can lead us away, or temporarily throw us off track, from the end result way too often. We do not want to take two or three times as long to focus or accomplish things, and we definitely do not want to miss out on the victory. However, that happens all too often because the world and our focus are not always aligned.

Now, we are called as Easter people to keep the resurrected Christ at the center of our daily lives, as he is in our hearts. Many people seem to tend to believe that we have to ask him in. However, if we truly remember all that is written in the scriptures we come to the full understanding and knowledge of the fact that he has been there all along. He has been there since the very beginning, whether we ask him or not. I mean after all he did create us, and for that simple fact we should come to realize that he is with us, for us, and in us all the time. We do not need to ask him to be there, but we need to remind ourselves of his constant presence and love while he walks along with us. We need to ask for his help often, just like the disciples needed reminded of this very fact during their trek. Unfortunately, they got caught up in all the worldly stuff that they were so focused on what they perceived as all of the negative that happened over those few days that they forgot what was going to occur. They forgot about the glory in the resurrection, and the all-important victory over death and the grave. Their fear and grief, their distractions, were unfortunately leading them along that misguided path for a little bit. Thankfully, we have an awesome and all-knowing God that manages to step in at these times of our personal struggle and conflict. He reminds us that he is with us all along. It is amazing that even despite the questions and discourse they were having along their journey that they were so distracted. He was teaching them from the scriptures, and they were still missing the point. They were so distracted or misguided to the point that that practically had blinders on for goodness sakes! Then, we learn that it isn’t until the very breaking of the bread that they come to realize that Jesus had been with them all along. They then realize that their hearts were actually burning during the journey as he was teaching them. However, it was the coupling of Word and Sacrament that made things right.

We are forever reminded to not allow simple distractions in our daily lives to permit us to forget that our Lord and Savior is always right there along with us. He is with us no matter when the times are good or bad. Yes, things can be so bad that we kind of question how in the world he is even there, or how he could allow something so bad to happen. However, this is when we need to rise up and call on him even more. We are forever reminded that no matter what he is in our hearts, and he is alongside of us on each and every journey.

Don’t be silly like these two disciples and only look with your eyes! For you will come to several different intersections in your life where you might find several different arrows leading you in several directions. Unfortunately, you will learn all too often that your vision will lead you into being blinded in several instances. Yes, you may indeed see that which is in front of you, but maybe you should slow down a bit and take things into perspective a little bit more. Ask yourself if you really do see what is there? We need to remind ourselves, and even allow ourselves to remind others that our hearts need to to be our guidepost and our vision, and we are always to focus on God.

Now, I invite you to hang on with me a little bit longer here this morning as we explore a few other things during this sermon. I do not want to leave out or forget a few other important aspects that need to be reviewed. We are forever reminded that “Each Sunday our hearts burn within us as the scriptures are proclaimed and Christ appears to us as bread is broken and wine is poured. The story of Emmaus becomes the pattern of our worship each Lord’s day.” (1) “As Lutherans, we believe that it is no small thing that Christ’s identity was finally revealed to these two disciples in the breaking of the bread. Communion gave the disciples a palpable experience of Christ. His words had stirred them, but sharing a meal opened their eyes. Two thousand years later, if we asked people what part of worship makes them feel closest to Christ, many will say that it’s Communion because we hear the words, “for you” as we touch and taste the bread and wine.” (2)

We fought for many months to get back to the table each and every week didn’t we? We had some confusion following Pastor Leah’s retirement as to why we could not come back to the table and have communion if she was still worshipping with us. However, we needed to follow the rules and standards of the ELCA. So, we lived uncomfortably for a time being as we traveled on our road to Emmaus, and we were finally able to break bread and share wine and juice with one another regularly again.

Now, let me remind you of this, many Lutheran churches do not actually have communion weekly. However, I am glad that it was very important to this congregation to get back to that. I actually understand that all too well. As many of you know that I grew up Catholic. Now, if you know anything about the Catholic traditions and faith then you know that if I did not go to confession every so often I could not actually partake in the meal. Talk about feeling as if you are being punished! As I respected and understood the practice of confession I always felt something else was missing. Well, that is where the blessing of being Lutheran comes in. I truly believe that having our confession together at the beginning of each worship service strengthens us in our community of faith. We come together and acknowledge our faults and wrongdoings, and identify that we all want to be better as we follow along in God’s footsteps. And, for the last few weeks we have been reminding ourselves of our baptism at this particular point of the worship service as well. If you remember we said these words together earlier… “Wash away our sin and all that separates us from you. Empower our witness to your resurrection. Strengthen our resolve in seeking justice for all.” (Thanksgiving for Baptism) Pretty strong words, and a pretty strong way for all of us to speak together and strengthen one another in community!

On Tuesday evening at Church Council Bonnie grabbed my arm. Here I had thought I had done something wrong, and mom was ready to tell me about it. However, she was just making a simple request. She asked if I could change something during our Worship Service, and more importantly during our time at the table for communion. Now some of you may wonder what that is, and some of you may have wanted that change yourselves. I am thankful God stirred up in her heart and her mind and gave her the courage to make this simple request of me. She said to me when you give the bread can you please make sure that you not only say “This is the Body of Christ,” but please make sure you add back in, “that is given for you.” “In our worship service, we experience Christ through the broken bread and poured wine. But we also experience Christ through the interaction with a community of faith. Communion is not a solo event. The Communion meal brings us closer to God, but it also brings us into deeper community with one another. Thanks be to God that Jesus is still being made known to us in the breaking of the bread.” (4) Thanks be to God that Bonnie chose to help me grow and change for the betterment of all in this community!

So, as we wrap things up here, let’s revisit the key points I am hopeful that I hit and helped you out with a bit today. “On the road of life there are many times we do not see God. We do not recognize Him or what He is doing, if anything! We may even ask, “Where are you, God?” But “where are you,” is the wrong question. God is there, He is here. It is not a question of His absence, it is a question of our recognizing Him.” (3) If we continue to let our doubt creep in, and if we are letting our fear and grief get in the way of our blessings then we are limiting our experience. He is and always will be in our hearts! Secondly, we are reminded that “On Sundays, at His table, it happens. You know the liturgy. He takes the bread and blesses it. He breaks it and gives it to you and to me. At that moment, His presence is revealed to us. We know it is Jesus. He is here. He is alive! And just as quickly, He is gone.” (3) Let us make sure that we share that love and presence with everyone else, so that he is not really ever gone. Let our hearts and minds be in tune to him and the strengthening and building up of this community within these doors, and out there in the world.

Amen.

**References**

(1) Sundays and Seasons

Preaching

Year A 2023

April 23, 2023

Third Sunday of Easter

(2) SermonCentral.com

Resurrection Adrenaline

Contributed by Mari Larson on Apr 23, 2014

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

Denomination: Lutheran

(3) SermonCentral.com

Where Is He?

Contributed by David Roth on Apr 25, 2020

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

Denomination: Lutheran

(4) SermonCentral.com

Made Known In The Breaking Of The Bread

Contributed by Carla Powell on Apr 20, 2002

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

Denomination: Lutheran

**Luke 24:13-35**

The colorful story of Jesus’ appearance to two disciples on the road to Emmaus answers the question of how Jesus is to be recognized among us. Here, he is revealed through the scriptures and in the breaking of bread.

13Now on that same day [when Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene,] two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. 18Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” 19He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21But 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 took place. 22Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” 25Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” 27Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

28As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. 30When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. 32They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” 33That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” 35Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.