

All around the Christian world, there was the annual slaying of Thomas, last Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter. How would you like to be remembered throughout all history as one with misgivings, uncertainties and yes, doubts about the resurrection of Jesus, despite that fact, he cries out **my Lord and my God**. Many places Thomas doubts were pointed out and many people implicitly felt better about themselves because they're not like -the Doubter. Why is it the guys on the Emmaus road get a pass? They're called the Emmaus disciples when they acted the same, uncertain as Thomas. We don't call them the Emmaus skeptics or worse Clumsy Cleopas and his bumbling unnamed sidekick. Perhaps we should. Look how they spoke. **Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who has not seen these things?** Jesus ever so patience replies **what things**. Then they start telling Jesus about Jesus. And its all in the past tense. **A man who was a prophet...we had hoped He was the One to redeem all Israel, and now it is now the third day since these things happened**. There hope is dead because Jesus has died. Even as reports of the resurrection, like Thomas, they hadn't seen it, they didn't believe it. I would like to think I would be different. But not. Bottom line, the Word of Jesus applies to you and me and all Christian disciples, with doubts and uncertainties about God and understanding so many things we don't see with our eyes or can reason. **O foolish ones, slow of heart to believe all the Prophets have spoken. And beginning with Moses and the Prophets He open the Scripture to reveal. And in the breaking of the Bread. Did not our hearts burn within us. While He talked on the road as He open the Scripture**. Unable to contain themselves they ran back to the Disciples; told them what happened; how He was revealed.

This dear friends is exactly what Jesus does for you. **O foolish ones**. We're no different. Slow to believe His Word, His promises, too often living live hour by hour relying on what we see and understand.

Through Moses and the Prophets and Supper, Jesus opens the Scriptures regarding Himself; has opened our eyes, enables us to cry Alleluias. Still today, Jesus is known, revealed in His Word being taught and at His Table.

There's something else here that's interesting. Something that shouldn't come as a shock to you, but it will shock, scandalize your other Christian friends, maybe some Lutheran friends too, but: Christianity is not about a personal relationship with Jesus. Christianity is not about a personal relationship with Jesus. That idea is never found in the Bible. You don't see it with the disciples, with the Emmaus disciples, anywhere in Scripture. The whole biblical witness runs contrary to it.

Of course each person has individual intimacy with Christ, but our life in Christ is communal, not personal or private or individual. When Scripture speaks, Old

and New, of believers, they're part of community, fellowship of believers. Christianity is about a church relationship with Jesus. I know, this runs contrary to what many modern, post-modern believers think.

We're baptized into one body, the body of Jesus. Our so-called personal relationship with Jesus is indeed united with His *person*—His body of which all believers are part. Even when we pray, we pray communally. The only prayer Jesus taught, "Our Father," not "My Father." No one ever prays alone. We pray in Jesus, thru the Spirit, to the Father, in vast concert with all other believers. Me-and-Jesus prayers are impossible. There's only us-and-Jesus prayers—"us"—that innumerable throng of saints from the foundation of the world until now, whose unheard voices join ours in ongoing prayer to our Father. When we read the Bible, we read communally, not "what this means to me." Which may, may not be right.

Above all, Jesus calls you into a living, active, worshiping community that regularly gathers around His gifts. We eat the communal meal of His body and blood. We sing together, pray together, confess together, grieve and heal and eventually die -together. He gives pastors. He gives brothers and sisters in the faith. He gives children to teach, elders to emulate, and even less-than-likable people -to love as those for whom Christ died.

This is the faith, how Christ is revealed, like to those Emmaus disciples. Yet, not everything in life is revealed to you. 100 yrs. ago, this Easter, was the turning point of the Great War, America had entered, your brothers and sister here were praying for a quick end. In a letter written then, a soldier writes of his arm severely injured by a shell and fast bleeding to death. A private physician traveling through that area got caught up in the battle. The doctor bound up the soldier's wound. As the doctor was leaving, the soldier called out, "Doctor, what's your name?" The doctor said "My name's not important," "But, Doctor, I want to tell my wife and children who saved me." The doctor replied, "I only bound up your wounds using skills God gave me. It is Jesus Christ who saves you."

Notice how our risen Lord reveals Himself. He doesn't say to Thomas, "Give your heart to me. Do you feel the Spirit?" Nor does He perform miracles. He points to His crucifixion, touch my flesh. His Words and those holy wounds convert Thomas from doubting to confessing -reuniting Thomas to the Apostolic fellowship.

Our Lord reveals showed Himself to Emmaus disciples, again proof not in trumpets and angels and loud praise, but the Scriptures. Notice too His Words and flesh in the supper, breaking of the bread, the revelation of Jesus crucified alive, sent them back -to the fellowship of the Apostles.

While you wait for your coming resurrection and the consummation of all things,

He joins you now to the Emmaus disciples, to Thomas, and to all the saints, that is, He joins you with His Word and gifts to the Apostolic fellowship. Most importantly, in the breaking of the bread, He joins you, personally, intimately to Himself.