

## **“The Miracle Comes in the Breaking”**

Date: April 12, 2015

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Occasion: Easter 2, Year B

Theme: communion, vulnerability, resurrection

Go back a few years in time, and in the opening scenes of *Superman the Movie*, our hero reveals his power to the world with a dramatic rescue of Lois Lane. Lois is dangling from a cable high above the Daily Planet office building, screaming at the top of her lungs. Just as she begins her long fall to earth, Superman changes into his power suit and swoops in to catch her, mid-air.

“Don’t worry, Miss,” he says, “I’ve got you.” “Thanks,” says Lois, “But who’s got you?” Just then, a helicopter that has been parked on the edge of the building starts to fall straight toward them and the crowd below.

But Superman simply grabs it with his free arm and gently sets both it and Lois Lane safely back on the landing pad. When he turns to leave, Lois stammers out the words, “Who are you?” Superman humbly says, “A friend,” and flies off before Lois faints into a heap.

Let’s be honest. That’s how most of us would like Christ to come to us, isn’t it, by dropping into our lives in some really dramatic way that gets our attention. And that’s why most of us aren’t paying attention when He comes in less spectacular ways.

For reasons that we don’t fully understand, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus *don’t* recognize Jesus while he walks beside them. Some have attributed the lack of recognition to the fact they were still overcome with grief. Some have suggested they were walking into the sunset and the sun blinded their eyes. We really

don't *why* they didn't recognize Jesus. But it didn't happen there. Jesus was revealed in the simple act of breaking bread.

Why there? Was it because it reminded the disciples of Jesus breaking bread in the Upper Room at the Last Supper? But these two men were not even included in the original twelve who were with him that night. Was it because it reminded them of the time Jesus fed the 5,000? Maybe; they very well could have been in that crowd.

Most of all, I think it was because this was so characteristic of Jesus. Over the years they had seen him bless bread, break it and then distribute it to his friends, often. Many times they had seen the hands of this strong carpenter wrench a piece of tough, middle-eastern bread and tear it apart for their enjoyment.

It was not simply the physical act of tearing the bread. It was some quality of Jesus that went into that act of breaking. Somehow Jesus was invested in the breaking. While the loaves and the fish remained whole in his hands, no one was being fed. It was when he broke them that the multitudes were nourished.

The bread is symbolic of Jesus and his person. Magnificent as he was, his value was small if he held himself aloof from others in majestic splendor. It was when he himself was broken: giving himself away, showing compassion, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, listening to others – that is when Jesus was revealed in his glory.

Christ is made known in the breaking, his body broken daily in his compassion and in the untiring way he gave of himself to their needs. Finally, Christ is broken on Calvary, in the final act of self-sacrifice. It is the very essence of who our Lord is, and of how he works. He came to our world to be broken.

His body comes to us, not in sublime and delicate beauty, but broken. He makes us whole by himself being broken.

As it is with the Master, so it is with his servants. We are invited to meet the Lord in our own broken condition. We don't come to the Lord's Table as perfect people. We come as broken people, full of faults and hurts and wounds. We don't come to the Lord's Table as perfect people, but as broken people, seeking healing.

The classic invitation to communion begins "ye that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins..." It does not say, "ye that are perfect," or "you who have been sanctified." As a matter of fact, it doesn't even say, "you that are saved." The invitation comes to those who know they are sinners, and who want healing for their souls.

But there is beauty in the brokenness, too. The late Roman Catholic mystic, Henri Nouwen, has given us a phrase which sums it up. He calls it the *wounded healer*. He reminds us that we cannot really heal others until we recognize our own wounded-ness.

If we stand off at a safe and antiseptic distance, we are little use to others. But when we recognize within ourselves our own brokenness, we can come alongside others in their broken condition and offer help.

The wounded healer is not the person who has their act completely together, but who shares hope from their own sense of wounded-ness and healing. We share our vulnerability.

We don't pretend to have all the answers. We don't pretend to be perfect, holy people. We simply share our story of what Christ has done in our own lives to bring us hope and healing and strength.

Surely this table to which we come today is for broken people. In a sense, there is a sign over this table which reads, "For sinners only." Now in truth, that includes everyone, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

But only those who know they fall short realize that Christ came for them. When you think you're perfect and without sin, well, who needs a Savior? But for those who recognize they are broken, they are hurting, they have fallen short, they see in Christ the Savior of the world. This bread and this cup is for them the body and blood of Christ, for the forgiveness of sin and the redemption of their souls.

The miracle comes in the breaking. Long ago it came in the breaking of the bread in the Upper Room; then the disciples recognized Jesus.

Today it comes when we recognize our own broken-ness and our need for Jesus. Now, the breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup become for us the healing of souls.

Come, dear friends, whatever your broken-ness, and experience the miracle which is in the breaking. Amen.