

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
First Sunday After Easter, April 11, 2021

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 191, 200:1-4, 210, 199, 206:1-2.

Lessons: Job 19:25-27, 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, Matthew 16: 21-23.

Sermon Text: Luke 24: 13-35.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Today we meet up with the two disciples Saint Luke records walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the evening of the third day, the day Jesus' tomb was found empty. As the two walk along the road talking about the recent events in Jerusalem, they are joined by a third person who is at first a stranger to them. The reader of Luke's Gospel knows the secret about the identity of this person, but these two disciples remain in the dark. They think it strange that anyone living in Jerusalem or even a person visiting in Jerusalem could be unaware of the happenings of the last few days. Today let's look at

QUESTIONS FOR STRANGERS, PART 1

1. ***“Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”***
2. ***“Are you a stranger to Christianity and do you not know what Jesus Christ has done for you?”***

These are important questions which lead us to examine our faith and to examine our sharing of that faith.

The stranger ***“asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’ They stood still, their faces downcast.”*** Responding to Jesus' question they relate to him their bitter disappointment over what they had hoped would happen. It seemed that they thought that the mighty prophet from Nazareth would bring redemption to Israel. But his death by crucifixion plunged his followers into deep despair. And even the report of the women about the empty tomb and the angels' message had failed to lift their spirits. The risen Jesus was not in the empty tomb. These two had obviously heard what you heard last Sunday when we celebrated the resurrection: Saint Luke records that the angels had asked ***“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’”*** Luke 24:5-7 (NIV)

The women at the tomb had failed to remember the prophetic words of Jesus about his death and resurrection. These Emmaus disciples, too, had failed to believe the prophetic Scriptures. Jesus admonishes the two for their foolishness in not believing what was written in the scriptures. Jesus asks them the rhetorical question: ***“Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”*** That is the question we will talk about next Sunday. But today I want to start with the question they asked this man whom they didn't recognize until later:

1.

“Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

They unfortunately didn't know why or didn't remember why Jesus had done what he had done. That is why they asked this question of the man whom they would later only find out was Jesus himself.

“What things?” he asked. ‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.’”

They had some of their facts straight, but as you will hear next week in more detail, Jesus had to explain to them what the scriptures said about him.

But did you notice how open they were to tell this stranger about what they believed and hoped for? Are we that open to talk about what we believe when opportunity arises? Do we ever think about asking

2.

“Are you a stranger to Christianity and do you not know what Jesus Christ has done for you?”

Maybe people don't come right out and ask you about your religious convictions, but they observe you and listen to what you say. Jesus picked up on these two disciples and observed that they were sad. In the same way, people can sense that you are excited about something. But, life and the devil and world and our sinful flesh being what they are, others often see that you're more excited about the big game or the concert, or the play, or the weekend and what you are going to do (apart from church and the Word of God) than you are about what happened to Jesus Christ.

Not so these two. What a marvelous example!

We don't always have to ask the question in just this blunt way: “Are you a stranger to Christianity and do you not know what Jesus Christ has done for you?” but we should surely be aware of people who seem to be ignorant or really are ignorant of the truths of the Word of God, especially about what Jesus Christ did for mankind, and about what that means for this life, for death, and for what happens after death.

But by the grace of the God who has instructed us, we can ask the following questions: Don't you know what Jesus Christ did for you? Do you know what that means for you? Do you know what the Bible is? Do you know that the Bible IS God speaking to you? All of scripture is God's inspired Word. Don't you know what the Bible says? The Bible is the whole history of mankind and the history of how God deals with mankind and gives them the hope of life after death because of what Jesus Christ did for you. Don't you know the facts of Creation as God recorded them in the Bible and still believe in evolution? Many people have been conditioned to believe and accept as “fact” and “truth” the theories of evolution.

It is a fact that many people who are members of churches which claim to be Christian do not know God's answers to these kinds of questions.

It is a fact that many churches which claim to be Christian, or have the word “Christian” in their name do not believe that the Bible IS the inspired Word of God. They take many parts of the Bible “with a grain of salt”, particularly the miracles of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Churches and the teachers and pastors in those churches set aside, or ignore the plain clear words of scripture, or they talk using “weasel words” that don't really mean what they say. It is popular and “politically correct” to not hurt people's feelings, and to tolerate anything. One Mankato church that considers itself Christian a number of years ago hired a Jewish musician as its director of music. Don't they realize that this man does not believe in the Jesus Christ that some of their music surely sings about? Doesn't that make any music he chooses or leads them in a mockery both of what they claim to believe and what he claims to believe? The same church has publicly welcomed homosexuals as members. Surely, they are not believing and accepting the whole word of God in the Bible, but are picking and choosing what they want to believe, and what they want to accept from the Bible.

People don't understand the words of scripture: The word “Redeem” is a good example. Who knows what the disciples on the road to Emmaus had in mind, or hoped Jesus would do when they said they had hoped Jesus would “redeem” Israel? We learn from the Word of God, the Bible, what “redeem” really means. It

means to ransom, to buy back, to pay a price in order to free from slavery and captivity. You know what that really means when you confess “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy , precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.”

When it comes to religion, people have many different ideas and yet want to use the same kinds of words as others do. In so doing, they deceive anyone who listens to them. Surely we must remember God’s Words in Romans chapter 16: ***“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.”*** Romans 16:17-18 (NIV) Perhaps you memorized the words in this way: ***“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”*** (KJV)

And then, of course, we hear the argument “That’s just your interpretation” of the Bible. How must we “interpret” Scripture? We must let Scripture interpret Scripture. Let God in his Word explain what his Word means. That is what Jesus did. Jesus opened their minds to Holy Scripture. He told them what Holy Scripture says and what it means. We read ***“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”***

There are and will be many opportunities for you to tell others what you believe. Your job on earth is to say “This is what God says in his Word” and let the power of that Word convert people. May God grant you the gift each day to recognize those opportunities.

People see what you do, and hear what you say, and often sense what is in your heart. May God give you the gift, each day, to be ready, willing, and able to tell others “This is what God says to you.” Amen.

(Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for April 15, 2007.)