

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday After Easter, April 18, 2021

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

Hymns: 192, 200: 5-8, 195, 193, 207: 1-2.

Lessons: Isaiah 40: 6-11, Romans 4:23 – 5:11, John 12: 37-45.

Text: Luke 24: 25-27.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We find today again the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Last Sunday they asked a man who had joined them on the walk, which Scripture says was about a seven mile walk, ***“Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”*** The stranger then asked them ***“What things?”*** Luke 24:18-19 (NIV) wondering why they were so sad. They told him what they had expected Jesus of Nazareth to do, and they were disappointed. Then the man, who was Jesus himself, ***“said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”***

Most people have no difficulty walking about four miles in an hour, so we can guess that this sermon was possibly no shorter than one hour. At the beginning of Jesus’ talk, we know who is talking. These men didn’t.

When you read that ***“beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself”*** you may think that you would have loved to hear that sermon. This was Jesus himself, after the Resurrection, telling them exactly what the Old Testament had to say about him. In fact, you would like to have it written down, or recorded, or video-recorded and even placed on the internet, right? And then what? Well, if you are like me, I have a nice file box for filing printed sermons. And I have a nice drawer for recordings and another nice drawer for videos and I have a computer on my desk and a smart-phone available so that I can access the internet. And what happens when you have such nice places to put things like that? Well, it is really easy to leave them there, and never look at them again, or maybe look at them just once in a great while. Of course, reading about something, or seeing a rerun on television is nothing like being there when it happens. (You know, like “the big game”?) When you get to see and hear something important, you don’t forget it, and you talk about it again and again.

Next week we will talk about what these men did after they realized it was Jesus himself talking to them, and that he really, truly was risen from the dead. Of course you know what they did. They turned right around and rushed back to Jerusalem to share the exciting news.

In a sense these men were strangers to the meaning, the real meaning of what the Old Testament said about the Christ. And so we speak today of

QUESTIONS FOR STRANGERS, PART 2.

1. ***“Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”***
2. ***“Do you realize he did this for YOU?”***

Jesus explained to them that things had to be this way. Man sinned and couldn’t redeem himself. God knew from eternity what was going to happen and had a plan. Do you remember what Genesis said about all of God’s creation? ***“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was***

morning--the sixth day." Genesis 1:31 (NIV) Genesis, remember, is the first book of Moses, and Jesus started with Moses and **"explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself!"** We don't really know what it means when everything is **"very good"**. We have known nothing but sin. We could say that it was all Adam and Eve's fault that sin came into the world. Well, yes, it was their fault. But that doesn't get us off the hook. We inherited that fault, that sin, in the same way that you inherited the color of your eyes and hair, and other physical characteristics from your mother and your father and your grandparents and other ancestors. God's Word tells us **"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."** Psalm 51:5 (NIV) **"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."** Psalm 51:5 (KJV) We were conceived and born into sin and we don't improve on that. There are some philosophers who have thought that mankind is getting better as time goes on, and a whole lot of people who hope that mankind is getting better each day. But you only need to look in the daily news, and even in your own mirror daily to realize that is a lie. You aren't getting any better by yourself. Every day you are closer to death. When we look around us, we realize that mankind is becoming more wicked all the time, and the terrible violence and crime and wickedness of mankind, all part of sin, remember, are coming closer and closer to our own lives.

So, make no mistake, mankind had to be redeemed, that is, bought back from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.

And it had to be done God's way. Man couldn't do it himself. Man couldn't satisfy God's demand for a sinless life. All the sacrifices of animals which God demanded in the Old Testament didn't redeem men. All of those were foreshadowings, symbols, pictures that represented the true sacrifice that had to be made to purchase and win eternal life for mankind.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one of God. He is the one appointed and anointed by God from eternity to be sacrificed to redeem all mankind from their sins. He is the one appointed by God to redeem all mankind from the slavery of Satan, the prince of darkness. He is the one appointed by God to redeem all mankind from the fear of death and give eternal life to everyone who believes this fact, this truth.

So it had to be the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth who did it.

But it had to be done God's way. God knows that no man can perfectly obey any laws. Even if there would be outward obedience to any law, there is still the sinful heart within that grudgingly goes along doing what it wants to do, thinking evil no matter how hard we wish for something different. We have to admit that **"what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing."** Romans 7:19 (NIV)

And what was God's way? Well, we must recognize that everyone who sins will die. Temporal death is certain for everyone, and there is also the certainty of eternal death unless and except ... (Pause here)

God tells us in the book of Ezekiel: **"For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die."** Ezekiel 18:4 (NIV) And we read in Genesis chapter 6: **"The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."** Genesis 6:5 (NIV)

And we read about sin – and eternal life in Romans chapter 6: **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."** Romans 6:23 (NIV)

God knew that man had to live a perfect life to be saved. But God knew that no human could do that.

And here is God's response to the unless and except:

He sent his son, his only-begotten Son. **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** John 3:16 (NIV)

And we also read in Galatians: **"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."** Galatians 4:4-7 (NIV)

God's way was a way of blood. Someone had to die for sin, and God heaped all that on his only son, his beloved son, and took his life. God the Father heaped upon his Son Jesus Christ all the sins of all mankind and sacrificed his Son on the cross so that you don't have to suffer eternally for your sins.

That was all foretold in the Old Testament, and in Jesus' sermon that day scripture tells us that ***“beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”***

I have a printed bible in my library in which the publisher has marked certain passages in certain ways. One of the things they have done is mark the Old Testament passages that some editor thinks are all the passages which point forward to the Messiah, to Jesus, with a particular symbol in the margin. That may be kind of nice, but I know that they haven't marked all of them. So isn't it better to let the Bible speak for itself? Why let someone else do that reading and marking for you? Search the scriptures yourself. Find Jesus. As you read passages in the Old Testament, look for Jesus Christ and passages which point forward to Jesus Christ. And then read the New Testament to learn of Jesus from his life and teachings and what God's inspired writers recorded about him.

I think these men Jesus was walking with on that first Resurrection day evening wanted a Jesus who would “redeem” their nation from the oppression of the Romans. But when they heard from the scriptures what Jesus – the Christ – came to earth for and that it had to be that way, they saw the light. He came to earth to redeem them and to redeem you from sin and death.

People today don't want a redeemer from their sins. It isn't popular to speak of sin, and if you don't speak of sin, why would you need a redeemer from sin? People want a Jesus who never speaks about sin. They want a Jesus who is good and kind and “loving” and gives them everything they want for this life on earth. They want a Jesus who will improve conditions on earth, and end poverty on earth, and end oppression on earth. People want a Jesus who will tell them that it is perfectly right and good for them to do whatever they want to do on earth.

But Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament scriptures. He came to redeem all humankind. You know that. By the grace of God you have come to believe that. Jesus Christ did exactly what he was supposed to do on earth so that you have the assurance of eternal life because of what he did for you.

As you reread and meditate upon the scriptures, you have questions you can ask friends or strangers and give the answers to. These include questions such as:

1. “Are you a stranger to Christianity and do you not know what Jesus Christ has done for you?”
2. “Do you realize he did this for you?”

So as much as we might want to have Jesus' entire sermon on that afternoon recorded or printed, it isn't recorded in exactly the way he gave it. But wouldn't it be one of those sermons you would like to be able to read? And read again and again? Well, you have something sort of like that: You have the entire Bible. No matter how many times you read the Bible you will always find something new for you for the day, for the day's problems, for hope, for comfort, because you know it is God's Word for you and that it was written, as Saint John writes ***“that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”*** John 20:31 (NIV)

And that's what Jesus tells us in the scriptures about himself. Search the scriptures daily and see and learn for yourself! Amen.

(Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for April 22, 2007.)