

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Third Sunday After Easter, April 25, 2021

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 199, 57: 1&5, 292, 552: 1-4, 409:1.
Lessons: Psalm 100, First John 2: 18-26, John 15: 4-17.
Text: Luke 24: 27-34.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Easter is what now – three weeks ago – and we’ve put it behind us. We’re already thinking about the next important event in our lives, aren’t we? Something like Mother’s Day or graduation or confirmation or the end of school or even a summer vacation. Does Easter have any impact on our lives yet?

Well, certainly, we know that it does. We know that the facts of that first Easter have an eternal impact on our lives.

In last Sunday’s sermon we talked to you about these men walking to Emmaus from Jerusalem, talking along the way about the things that had happened in Jerusalem around the time of the Passover. We told you how they were talking *“About Jesus of Nazareth.”* These men had thought that *“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.”* They told a stranger who had joined them that *“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 couldn’t make sense of it all. They were serious-minded men, but they couldn’t understand or believe what they had heard.

By nature, most humans must grasp and understand what we are to believe. If we can’t see and understand, then we don’t want to believe. We usually want proof before we believe something. Show Me! Prove It! And then I might believe it. When it comes to what God says in the Bible, that’s our sinful human nature talking. These two men walking and talking were the same way.

But they heard a great Bible lesson from this stranger who was walking and talking with them. They were so impressed that they wanted to hear more. They thought he had something important to say to them and so they urged, constrained, encouraged, and almost demanded that this stranger abide with them for the evening. They wanted him to stay. Scripture says *“But they urged him strongly, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’”* Another translation reads *“But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”*

Today let’s look at that invitation:

LORD JESUS, STAY WITH US, ABIDE WITH US

- 1. The disciples who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus urged him to stay with them,**
- 2. But Jesus didn’t stay in person as they hoped he would.**
- 3. What about our invitation to Jesus and urging him to abide with us?**

It is only when Jesus abides with us that we remember his words. These men didn’t remember Jesus’ prophecies or the Old Testament prophecies about him. The women at the tomb had failed to remember the

prophetic words of Jesus about his death and resurrection. And now these men had Jesus himself telling them – in person – what it all meant.

Night was coming on and these disciples didn't want Jesus to leave them. Hasn't that kind of thing happened to us, that we just didn't want an evening of discussion to end? We didn't want our guests to go home or we didn't want the gathering to end, but various reasons and pressures like having to get up for work tomorrow led the evening to end all too soon.

Scripture says they urged him strongly ***“Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.”*** So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized that this man was Jesus, and he disappeared from their sight.

Until that moment, they hadn't recognized who he really was. It was only when he permitted it that their eyes were opened and they knew who was talking to them. In some ways this may be like conversion for some people who come to know Jesus later in life. All of a sudden they realize that Jesus is talking to them through the Bible, his holy Word. And even those of us who were given faith at our baptism as infants, by the working of the Holy Ghost, may have moments when we are especially stirred, even emotionally, by the Word of God and we realize that it is Jesus, the Christ, the very Son of God who is talking to us. Oh, that we could have such excitement every day! However, the emotional feeling is not the important thing. But we can have such a revelation, every day!

These two men, by the gift of God, finally realized who had been talking to them: ***“They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’”*** Yes, they had had some emotional moments. But don't we all, particularly when we can speak of eternal life and about a Christian brother or sister fallen asleep? Or particularly when we realize what marvelous things God has done and is doing for us? Of course, he does things for us through others, too, particularly through our fellow believers. We do sometimes have emotional moments when we can remember, or confess, or talk about or worship Jesus Christ.

Jesus had been explaining the scriptures to them. When they got to where they were going, he made as though he wanted to or had to go on further. But they invited him ***“Abide with us.”*** So he went in to stay. And it was in the breaking of bread for the meal that they realized who he was and what had been happening. This was the very Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Redeemer of all sinners who had been talking to them.

No doubt he had pointed out the reason for his coming to earth, for his sufferings, for his death, and finally for his resurrection. Surely he talked about sin, and I have to believe that he talked about their sins, too. We know from the Law of God, recorded in his Holy Word that we are sinners. We deserve nothing but eternal death and damnation because of our sins.

These two disciples wanted Jesus to abide, to stay with them, for he had opened their understanding of the Bible. Don't you remember some Bible class situations, for example, that you really just didn't want to end? Or perhaps even a sermon that you wish didn't end?

It was a question that these two men asked that led to Jesus explaining the Word of God to them. Through a question Jesus led these disciples to pour out their thoughts to him, revealing the cause of their sorrow, enabling him to have better opportunity to help them. To this day and for the same purpose our Lord confronts us with difficult situations and knotty problems. Often with such problems he is urging us to talk to him so that he may have opportunity to reveal his help to us for our desperate needs. And he reveals that help in his Word, his presence that is with us when we know his Word.

The disappearance of our Lord did not make the disciples sad, but rather they were filled with joy remembering the words that their Savior had spoken to them along the way. ***“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”***

Their hearts were lifted and were joyful through the risen Lord's spoken word and now they believed firmly that our Savior was alive, and that it was he who was to redeem all men.

We haven't met Jesus face-to-face. He doesn't speak to us like he spoke to these two men. But we have all of Jesus' words that we need to know recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures, and we can extend the same invitation to our Savior:

"Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the eventide;
Nor let Thy Word, that heavenly light,
For us be ever veiled in night." (The Lutheran Hymnal 292, v. 1)

Jesus Christ is the only spiritual teacher whom we, his children, really want to abide with us. We need his Words. And we need to be reminded of his Words more than we think.

How often haven't you been surprised at what you have forgotten – even words that you memorized from the Scriptures and Luther's Small Catechism?

And how often does our sinful flesh tell us "you already know God's Words"? How often does the devil tell us "Why do you need to hear or read God's Words again?" The people in the world around us tell us "Why are you bothering to go to church or to Bible Class again?" The unholy three: devil, world, and our own sinful flesh keep telling us: You don't need that. You already know that stuff. Besides you have much more important stuff to do. You can't take time for God's Word.

These men in our sermon this morning had a miraculous revealing, a great personal revelation of Jesus Christ to them. But we have his miraculous revealing, his glorious revelation in all of the Word of God. The important thing is not that we physically see him or touch him. Jesus emphasized that when he told Thomas: ***"Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*** John 20:29 (NIV) We have not seen Jesus face-to-face, yet we have believed in him because of the work of the Holy Ghost through the Word of God, both in our baptism and every time since then that we have heard God's Word preached and read.

Do we want Jesus to abide with us? Yes. We want to invite him. We want him to stay, because we know that without him, we will die, like a branch that is separated from the vine.

How do we want Jesus to abide with us? As an impressive antique family Bible resting in a prominent place in our homes? Or as a living, working, used book that shows that it has been read and is being used regularly? Like an impressive antique piece of furniture on which no one dare sit in our living rooms? Or like a worn old couch which shows that that is where we rest our weary bodies and souls?

Christ, the risen Lord is found in his Word, the Bible. He is the one who impresses upon our hearts the Word of Scripture, sometimes through the words of the sermon, sometimes through the words of Bible study, sometimes through a Scripture quotation from a fellow Christian, sometimes through our own personal reading. In these ways he again gives us the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. When we read and hear the Word of God, Jesus comes to us again. From the Word of God we again hear of the comfort of our redemption.

And so we pray to the Lord without ceasing – today using the words of the hymn writer:

"Help me to mend my ways, O Lord,
And gladly to obey Thy Word.
While here I live, abide with me;
And when I die, take me to Thee." (The Lutheran Hymnal 328, v 4)

And again:

"Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the eventide;
Nor let Thy Word, that heavenly light,
For us be ever veiled in night."
(The Lutheran Hymnal, 292, v. 1) Amen.

(Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for April 28, 2002.)