

May God’s grace, mercy, and peace be yours this day in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord, Saviour, and King! The title for today’s sermon is “Walking with the Lord”, and is from the Gospel reading, Luke chapter 24. Let us pray..., Amen.

Today is the third Sunday in Easter, and today’s Gospel reading continues to record the events from the first Easter day, when Jesus’ disciples and followers did not understand what had happened or was in the process of happening. This is evident on the first Easter day when two of Jesus’ disciples were already leaving Jerusalem despite hearing the most amazing and befuddling report, how Jesus who was buried, was no longer in the tomb and a report of angels proclaiming Jesus risen from the dead.

Now the Bible doesn’t tell us exactly why the two disciples were leaving town, and there is no reason to speculate. Besides one’s name being Cleopas, Scripture tells us very little about these two men besides they were disciples. Possibly they were of the 70, or 72, commissioned by Jesus in Luke chapter 10. Despite what we don’t know, what we do know is they truly believed their Messiah, teacher, and friend was dead. Death is the end, so Jesus’ death ended their hopes for the future.

Today’s Gospel begins with two sad men, men who had lost all hope, walking down the road away from the city. They had hoped in Jesus, they trusted He was the Christ, but His death made all appear to be lost. You can hear their pain in their words. The two disciples were talking about Jesus and His crucifixion: Jesus death on the cross at the hands of Pilate. Likely everyone in the Jerusalem and the area heard the news about Jesus’ crucifixion. The result was these two were heartbroken. Jesus’ death on Good Friday did not appear to be good for those who believed in Him.

Still, the risen Lord joined them that Easter day and asked the disciples concerning what had happened in Jerusalem. Now, Jesus did not appear to them in full glory and their eyes were blinded to who He was. Still, Jesus came to them, to walk with them, to talk to them, and to open their eyes and hearts.

And as they walked with Jesus they shared the sorry news “**Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,²⁰ and how *their* chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.**” They told Him “²¹ *they* had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” But now it was “**the third day since these things happened.²² Moreover, some women of *their* company amazed *them*. They were at the tomb early in the morning,²³ and when they did not find *Jesus* body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that *Jesus* was alive.²⁴ Some of those who were with *them* went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”(Luke 24:21-24)**

Here is the thing, they knew what happened to Jesus, well at least some of it. They had hoped in Jesus, how He would redeem Israel, but they were blinded to the accomplished fact of their redemption on the cross. But, because they did not know all of it they decided to not stick around and ask anyone for help to find out more.

It is a little strange for us who live 2000 years after the fact to look back on the first followers of Christ. After everything they had heard Jesus say, after everything they had seen Jesus do, how could they have lost all hope so quickly? They had the physical redemption of Israel with them. How did they miss the magnitude of what was happening around them? How could they not have recognized who Jesus was during His earthly ministry and remember His statement on the necessity for Him to be arrested and executed and then on the 3rd Day He would be raised from the dead? But the reality is they were blind to who He was and they did not understand the WHY's of Jesus' ministry just as many continue to be today. Why did Jesus come? Who did He come for? Why did He have to die? Jesus answered most of these questions while He walked with His disciples for the three years of His earthly ministry. Jesus told them why He came. He explained the divine necessity of His death and also promised His resurrection. Despite this, those following Jesus didn't fully understand or trust Jesus at His Word. This leads to the question why didn't they trust Jesus' Word?

Now, a similar problems continues happen today when things do not go the way people expect, mainly when things go wrong. Many people do struggle in life and some think there are no answers for their struggles in life from God. Many people have asked questions and didn't get an answer from the one they asked. Because they did not get an answer they determined for themselves God has no answer for their question, that even God can't help them, that God has abandoned them, that God has left them to walk alone.

For the Emmaus disciples, as for us, Jesus reveals the answer through His Word. As the two disciples were blinded by this world and slow to believe, so are we at times blinded and slow to believe. Yet despite their unbelief and questions, Jesus still came to them and for them. **“And Jesus said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”**(Luke 24:25-27)

So Jesus walked with His two followers, carrying them along while explaining why it was necessary for the Christ to die and to rise from the dead.

God provides answers through His Word; through the Bible, revealed in Jesus Christ. The Bible is not a rule book to be followed; rather the Bible is as St. John writes in the 20th chapter, it is **“written so 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) God's Word does answer the most important questions: Who is Jesus, Who did He come for, and why? Jesus is God in the flesh, come for you, and who has redeemed your life.

There are answers; some are found, others find you, and sometimes you just need to keep asking. Some do not want to ask for fear of not getting answer, or out of fear they may not like the answer they get. Regarding them, I heard a person say this past week “the sooner you convince yourself that nobody has the answers, the faster you can start making up your own. And the great allure of inventing your own theological conclusions, conclusions about God is that, just as it's easier to pass a math test if you can make up the answers, it's easier to be an awesome Christian if you get to determine what it means to be a Christian.”(Hans Fiene, The

Federalist, 2014/04/28) The problem with this approach is you end up walking away from God by rejecting and ignoring Scripture. In the end you don't get closer to God; rather it is quite the opposite, you end up alone, walking by yourself and responsible for your own salvation.

Jesus walked with the disciples for about 7 miles. While physically walking with them, spiritually Jesus was carrying them every step of the way. Jesus brought them from His crucifixion, back to the beginning in Genesis, through Moses, the prophets, and all through what we now call the Old Testament. While walking, Jesus began to open their eyes to Scripture and to see the divine necessity of the Christ's death and resurrection and how He was the promised redemption of all people. Christ came to fulfill the demands of the Old Covenant and to establish a New Covenant in His own blood. This new covenant is not like the old one. In this new covenant you have redemption, the forgiveness of all your sins, peace with God, and eternal salvation just as God promises in Christ!

Yet, even after everything Jesus taught and did, the two still didn't recognize Jesus.

In Emmaus, the disciples compelled Jesus to stay with them. Jesus sat down at the table with them. **“He took bread and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.”** Jesus had done the same on the night before His death when He established the New Covenant in His blood. In so doing **“their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him”**(24:30-31), they recognized their risen Redeemer. There in the breaking of bread, the resurrected Christ was fully revealed and in their midst. Their doubt gone and their hope restored. Then Jesus vanished. It didn't matter, Christ their Redeemer, Lord, and Saviour was risen from the dead. They weren't abandoned, they weren't lost. Jesus is alive, He rose just as He said He would!

The two discussed how when Jesus opened the Scripture for them on the road to Emmaus and it caused their hearts to burn within them. The topic of conversation on the road was Jesus Passion—His death on the cross and why—along with the facts around Christ's resurrection. They recalled their conversation, how while Jesus spoke and opened up Scripture to them, they still did not believe: their eyes were not yet opened. His teaching and catechesis on the road by itself did not enable them to recognize the presence of their risen Lord. Now, the instruction in the Word was an absolutely necessary precursor for recognizing Jesus in the breaking of the bread. The teaching on the road in and of itself was not enough; rather it was complemented by the meal. In the same way the meal alone would not have been enough. The meal requires the prior catechesis—the prior instruction—which provide the proper understanding of the passion and resurrection facts according to Scripture.(Just; Luke 2, 984)

For the Emmaus disciples, the answer for their doubt and questions were in the risen Christ who Himself found them. There in Jesus' Word and Sacrament is redemption, there in the risen Lord is salvation. The journey Jesus took these two on was catechetical: a teaching and equipping one. The two disciples are transformed from students to believers with understanding through the teaching of Jesus on the road—literally, “in the way”—where their hearts burned and their eyes opened. Instead of being in sorrow the two are overjoyed by the concrete fact that Jesus is risen just as He said He would.

Your salvation is also based on Christ's completed work of salvation on the cross and is proclaimed from the empty tomb. You are given that resurrected hope in Baptism where God makes you His own, where you share in the redemption of Christ's death and Resurrection (Romans 6/ Colossians 2)

Jesus death and resurrection were absolutely necessary to save you from sin, and to deliver you from death, and the devil. Jesus death was absolutely necessary to reconcile you back to God and His resurrection proclaims your redemption. Jesus stood in your place and took upon Himself the punishment you rightly deserve. Scripture clearly says are a sinner who has fallen short of the glory of God, that you are guilty for Original Sin, and that the wages of sin, what you have earned for each and any sin, is death, the eternal kind, the kind you could not save yourself from. What you deserve is for God to walk away from you eternally and leave you in the hands of Satan.

But that is not the kind of God we have. Because we were lost God sent His Son to find us and to bring us back. It was not their effort which brought them to faith, it was not their searching out God, it was not their choice; it was the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and through His resurrection which chose them, it was the risen Lord who searched them out, and it was the Word of God and Sacrament which brought them back and restored their faith. This faith and salvation is given to you through the working of the Holy Spirit through God's Word and Sacrament. This Word and Sacrament brought these men to faith and trust in God as it is with all Christians.

Many people want a relationship with God, they want a personal relationship with Jesus, but exactly what does that look like and how does it happen? It starts in Baptism and continues and is strengthened as you hear His Word and receive His Sacrament. "If you want a 'personal relationship' with Jesus you should probably eat His body and drink His blood as He encourages us to do in His final will and testament. It doesn't get much more personal than that."(Hans Fiene) In this life Christ is walking with you, not just beside you, and carrying you every step of your life from Baptism to life everlasting.

You have a God who really loves you, one who has come, one who has redeemed you, one who continues to walk and carry you every single step of the way. You are called. Rejoice, you are found.

This is that peace which surpasses all understanding which is in Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

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