

Easter
Luke 24:13-16 (17-27) 28-32
April 4, 2010

God has given us this event in quite some detail. So, we can be sure there is much here for the good of our Christian faith. We see Jesus in action with His followers the day He had raised Himself from the dead. You and I are living in exactly the same era except a little further along in that New Testament era. The very same Jesus, resurrected and gloriously alive, is right here, today, with us in action with and for the benefit of His disciples, you and me. In fact, every time we schedule a gathering together around God's Word and Sacraments, Jesus has made an appointment to be present with us to teach us His Word, just the same as He did with these two. Whenever we are tempted – by the sinfulness in us, by unbelievers, or maybe by the devil himself – not to worship, not to gather in His name around His Word in church, or Bible study, with fellow believers, even if only 2 or 3 in number, it is the same as Jesus passing by and us believers not inviting Him in.

Jesus of Nazareth Is Passing by: Say – Abide with Us, Lord.

These were two sad men, disheartened, quite broken. Their sadness, their burden, was connected to the events surrounding Jesus in the last few days. It was the terrible trials, the awful abuse, and finally, the crucifixion of Jesus to death. Their own failures these days only made them feel worse.

But now their sadness was being prolonged by unbelief. For these men who had believed Jesus was a prophet, more than that, Israel's Redeemer, more than that – but they couldn't even bring themselves to use such terms now – the Christ, the Son of the living God, for these men now, unbelief had set in.

Jesus' death had just shattered their faith. Even though several faithful women had excitedly told the group that the tomb was empty, that angels told them Jesus was alive and reminded them that Jesus had said He was going to be put to death by crucifixion but would rise from the dead on the third day, and that now they had seen Jesus, talked with Him and even felt Him – in fact, Jesus had told them to go immediately to tell the apostles. The apostles and the others like Cleopas and this other unnamed disciple, had not believed it.

Notice that these two men never even managed to mention to this "Stranger" that the women had said they had seen Jesus. They almost imply it when they told the "Stranger" that some of their companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had described it, "but Him they did not see!"

Unbelief eventually causes sorrow and almost always prolongs it.

The prophets had often predicted and assumed the resurrection of the Savior/Redeemer, the LORD in the flesh. Jesus had repeatedly and clearly told His followers not only that He would suffer and die at the hands of Israel's religious leaders and the secular Roman court, but also that He would rise from the dead on the third day.

But human reason reigned over God in these men. That is always a big tragedy! Do not ever judge God and What He Says by human reason. Use your reason only to take in God's Word, to grasp the meaning of the words as they stand in their context. Beyond that, whatever God says.

A stranger showed up. He wasn't a stranger at all. But Jesus made Himself a stranger to these two men for a little while. Jesus took direct, divine action in order to keep these men from recognizing Him for a little while.

Why? Because Jesus wanted to teach them by means of His written Word for a while, without distractions, while they were still downcast in unbelief. This would show them, and it shows us, that God's Word has what it takes to break unbelief and to restore the joy of salvation.

How long, how much do you think these two persons would have concentrated and focused on the Bible study had they at once recognized Jesus that day? We note that in every case of recorded conversation between Jesus and anyone else on that day, it was a very short conversation, when they knew it was Jesus.

So why did Jesus hide Himself for a little while, allowing these men to go on in their sorrow without being able to recognize Him? Because Jesus wanted to direct them to and into His Word, the Scriptures, Moses and all the prophets.

When we cannot recognize Jesus as being with us in some or other sorrow, hardship, trouble, disappointment, failure or other difficult situation, He is with us. He is always with His followers because He said He is always with us. But He does not allow us to recognize Him as being with us, walking with us, in such times, sometimes, for a little while, because He wants to go to His Word, the Holy Bible, where He teacher us.

So, when you feel under assault, broken, helpless, fearful, go to God's Word. Read it, study it, learn it, think about it, apply it to yourself, believe it, love it, follow it no matter what. When it is announced that we are going to gather here at church, in Bible class, in Sunday school, if at all possible, get yourself here. When Jesus' Word is read, preached and taught, Jesus is the Reader, Preacher and Teacher.

They said later as Jesus taught them God's Word, even scolded them for their slowness to believe the prophets (His prophets, by the way) that their hearts started burning. They warmed up. They got set on fire with faith, love, joy. They were excited. Jesus did that through His Word! Jesus always does this kind of thing through His Word! Read it. Hear it. Learn it.

And, so, they wanted this “Stranger” to stay with them. They joyfully prepared a meal to share with Him and ended up having Jesus serve them as if He were the Host. We should likewise want Jesus to stay with us for all of our ordinary daily living. We want Him when we eat and work and play and sleep. Why? Because He will bless us in all these things. Nothing will be really ordinary anymore, if Jesus is with us. We want Jesus with us all the time. He is our resurrected, living forever Lord and Savior.

They said, “Stay with us.” “Abide with us.” And when He did, He let Himself be recognized in merely breaking bread with them. And, unafraid, joyful, exalted, they went all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the others and got there just in time to hear Peter tell how Jesus had appeared to him that afternoon and then, after they told what happened, Jesus appeared to the whole room full of people, again.

Jesus is active. He's on the move. Don't let Him just pass by. Want Him to stay with you all the time in and through His Word. Amen!