

Acts 2:14a, 36-41, Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19, 1 Peter 1:17-23, Luke 24:13-35

## **INTRO**

Well thank you for clicking in to this message for the third Sunday of the season of Easter. I hope and trust that you've had a good week, and whether or not you did have a good week my prayer is that you'll hear a word of grace & of comfort as you open God's Word today & listen to this message.

One of the things that we're missing in the church throughout this time of social distancing is the gift of meeting together for worship & for sharing in communion — the gift of Jesus' body & blood broken & shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. I know that I miss receiving communion, and miss sharing in communion with our church family. And there's a subplot to some of the lessons today that revolve around communion, which makes it even more difficult because as we read them we're reminded of what we're missing out on right now.

But regardless, I'll invite you to take the time to pause this recording, to read the lessons for today, and then to resume this message. The first lesson is Acts 2:14a, 36-41 — this is Peter's Pentecost Day sermon, after the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter gets up and begins to preach boldly the story of Jesus' death & resurrection to those around them. We started reading this story last week, and today is the next part of Peter's sermon. Incidentally, this is one of the passages that we understand to encourage us to baptize babies & kids as well as adults — not every church practices infant baptism, but Lutheran churches and many other churches do.

*“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’” —Acts 2:38-39*

Regardless, this passage is a great call to repentance & baptism, and we read that thousands of people were cut to the heart by Peter's preaching, and were baptized that very day.

Then our Psalm today is Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19. It's a psalm of rejoicing & thanksgiving for God's salvation — his deliverance — and the psalmist writes,

*"What shall I render to the Lord  
for all his benefits to me?  
I will lift up the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the Lord" —Psalm 116:12-13*

So there's an allusion to communion in this Psalm, in which we gather together to lift up the cup of salvation (even though at the moment we can't do so).

The next lesson is 1 Peter 1:17-23. Here, Peter is instructing the church on what it looks like to live in exile — as a minority people & living out of their element — which should resonate with us today who as Christians are living as a minority within our culture, and in the present moment are living out of our element, when "normal" has been thrown to the wind.

And then finally, our gospel text today is Luke 24:13-35, the story of the two disciples walking the road to Emmaus, in which they encounter the risen Jesus. There's a communion sub theme in this story too, as it's when Jesus breaks the bread with the disciples that their eyes are opened & they recognize him. In fact, Luke is a clever storyteller — he drops hints that you might miss if you're not paying attention. He uses here the same four verbs that are used at the Last Supper, when Jesus institutes communion with his disciples:

*"When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them." —vs. 30*

Luke is intentionally making us think of communion when we read of Jesus hosting this meal.

So go ahead & hit pause, & read these texts. They are full of Easter themes — Jesus resurrected, repentance, baptism, Christian living, & promise. And then feel free to resume when you're ready.

### ***INCOGNITO MOSQUITO***

When I was a kid in elementary school, I remember coming across a series of books in our school library called *Incognito Mosquito* about — you guessed it — a mosquito private detective (like Dick Tracy) who would go undercover to solve a variety of mysteries. It was thrilling stuff, and I loved taking these books out of the library to take home & to read. They were some of my favourite books as a kid, and they evidently went down in the annals of history as some of the truly great volumes of children's literature because I looked them up on Amazon this week, and paperback editions of *Incognito Mosquito Makes History* for example are selling for \$114, while the hardcover copies are selling for \$186.26. These are real collector's items! If you've got copies at home buried away in your attic somewhere, don't get rid of them — they're worth a mint!

Well, Luke the Evangelist was a great storyteller too — even better than the author of *Incognito Mosquito* (if you can believe it...). When Luke tells the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, he tells of the time when Jesus appeared incognito, walking with them. And all the while they had no idea who it was who had joined them on the road. The readers of the story meanwhile know that it's Jesus, and there's this tension in the narrative as we wait to see whether or not the disciples will ever clue in as to who it is who's walking with them.

## **ON THE ROAD AGAIN**

Road trips are great times to chat & talk with people if you're not travelling alone (I suppose you could talk to yourself if you're travelling alone...). We know that when we're on a road trip with someone, it's often the time in the car talking that deepens the friendship on the trip. Like Willie Nelson singing,

*"On the road again  
I just can't wait to get on the road again  
The life I love is makin' music with my friends  
And I can't wait to get on the road again"*

The two followers of Jesus were taking the time on their journey to Emmaus to talk about the weekend's events, to process it — of Jesus' crucifixion & death, and of the report from some of the women that he was alive again. They were disappointed because they had hoped that Jesus would prove to be the Messiah, and when Jesus shows up he plays dumb, leading them on — almost like he's in a playful mood & this is all a joke to him. And all the while, they have no idea that the report of Jesus' resurrection was really true, and that he himself was walking with them through all of their disappointment, their confusion, and their disorientation.

## **SEEING**

Now some have read this story and in an effort at minimizing the miraculous have said, "Well, the reason that they didn't recognize Jesus was that it was late in the day, and the sun must have been in their eyes." This is just silly — how do you walk 7 miles with a man, invite him into your house, and only as you sit down at the table together & he breaks the bread to you finally get the sun out of your eyes to recognize him? The sun's not in their eyes, Jesus isn't in a costume, he's not wearing Groucho Marx glasses with the moustache and the eyebrows & the big nose — he's not even incognito like

Incognito Mosquito. They're being prevented from recognizing him — their eyes are spiritually closed.

We know that spiritually their eyes were closed because when they talk about Jesus they say that he was a prophet. They're flat out wrong in their understanding of who Jesus is. And so he interprets the OT scriptures to them — he shows them how it's all pointing to him. Jesus was God's plan of salvation all along — the Messiah whom the OT pointed to everywhere. Peter says in our 3rd lesson today,

*“He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.” —1 Peter 1:20-21*

Jesus was God's plan for our salvation all along, from before the foundation of the world. And it's when we open scripture that we hear the truth of this gospel — this good news. It's when we share in communion that our eyes are opened to him because it's in communion that we hear the gospel & receive the promise of the gospel — the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus' death & resurrection, his broken body & shed blood — in an embodied, tangible, & physical way. Communion is like a physical re-enactment of the truth of the gospel.

### **STAY WITH US...**

Have your hearts burned within you like the disciples on the road when encountering Jesus? Have you been cut to the heart like the crowds of Pentecost hearing the message of Jesus' death & resurrection for you? Have we recognized that all along Jesus has been with us through our hurts & our confusion & our disappointments? That he's with us even now waiting to open our eyes to see him as our risen Lord and Saviour? He's here, and we come to recognize him as we open up the scriptures & see him in them, as we

partake in the sacrament of communion — the gospel message acted out in physical, tangible ways (bread & wine, forgiveness & eternity).

Some churches, including the Lutheran church, have a habit of praying what's called the Daily Offices — set prayers at set times of the day — morning prayer, noon-time prayer, evening prayer, night-time prayer. The prayers are all taken from various parts of scripture, so that as you pray the Daily Offices, you're praying the Bible. I want to read to you the opening lines of the evening prayer service — called Vespers. It starts like this:

*“Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,  
the light no darkness can overcome.  
Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening,  
and the day is almost over.  
Let your light scatter the darkness,  
and illumine your Church.”*

The line, “Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening, and the day is almost over” comes from the Emmaus story — it's the invitation of the disciples to Jesus to spend the evening with them. “Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening, and the day is almost over.” Christianity really boils down to praying that prayer — of inviting Jesus into your house — to dwell with you. May that be the prayer of all our hearts.