

**Luke 24:13-35 - “God’s at Both Ends”**

Pr. Kurt A. VanFossan - Easter 3A 2023

What have you been discussing this past week as you’ve journey with others along the roads of this life? Much of the time, unfortunately, we are like the two disciples at the beginning of our text whose faces were “*sad/gloomy*.” As we consider the past and look ahead to the future, there are many things that can make us sad and confused. Such a view of things may stop us in our tracks, or, even worse, they can cause us to turn around and head in the wrong direction, away from the only one who can give us everlasting peace and joy.

This reminds me of a young man who had just started working for a trucking company, and was given his first assignment. He was asked to haul a large Caterpillar tractor to a construction sight around Buena Vista. Everything was going fine until he reached Midland Tunnel and looked at the small patch of light at the other end of the tunnel. Not only did he stop, but he decided to turn around, thinking that there was no way he was going to get his oversized load through that small whole at the other end of the tunnel!

Sound too ridiculous to believe? Well, the truth is I did make up this story, since I’ve never heard of anyone (at least anyone old enough to drive) do something so ridiculous. And yet, how often do we as the children of God allow our misguided perception of things, or our worries and fears, to overpower our faith in God’s promises and cause us to do things just as ridiculous?

What we seem to keep forgetting is that our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is at both ends of this tunnel of life, as well as being with us every step of the way through the tunnel. This is what Jesus revealed to the two sad disciples on the road to Emmaus, thus turning their lives around and filling them with confidence, peace, joy and excitement about the future!

What did Jesus use to accomplish this incredible turn around? The same thing He uses among us this morning. His Word and Sacrament. That’s why the early Christians, whom we heard about in our first reading from Acts, after they received God’s word and were baptized, “*devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching* [which is equivalent to Jesus teaching the disciples from the Scriptures] *and the fellowship* [that is, coming together as God’s children whether it’s two, three or more of us], *to the breaking of bread* [which is a phrase taken to mean in this context, the Lord’s Supper] *and the prayers*.”

I can’t stress enough how important it is that we continue to follow this pattern of worship as we journey through this life on our way to heaven. It’s the pattern established by Jesus Himself, who leads us to the very places where He is present, through His Word and Sacraments, to feed and strengthen us (as He did the Emmaus disciples), so that we don’t go through life sad and confused but confident and full of peace and joy.

So, what does it mean, in our Epistle reading from 1 Peter to “*conduct our yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile*”? Peter is referring to the reverent fear of God that comes in knowing that when Jesus took our sins upon Himself, there was no way around the damning death He went through on the cross. Thankfully He paid that price for us with His precious blood, enabling us in referent fear to repent of our sins, and in eternal joy to thank God for setting us free from of our sins and fear of death, and giving us His eternal life.

The more we study God's Word, the more He shows us that He is with us not only at both ends but every step of the way on our journey through this life, and He was been since the beginning of time. We're not told what Jesus said to the two disciples on the road to Emmas when, *"beginning with Moses and all the Prophet, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself,"* but when we study the Bible, Jesus and the Spirit of God enables us to hear and see the same things: how He has been working through all things (both good and bad) since the beginning of time for our eternal salvation. This enables us to trust that He will continue to do so; to work through both good things and bad (like Jesus' damning death and resurrection) to bring about our resurrection to eternal life, now, throughout this life, and into eternity.

Then, after Jesus teaches His disciples through His Word, He has a meal with them. While He was revealing Himself and His plans of salvation through His Word, it's in the meal that *"their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him,"* His physical presence among them. This sets the pattern not only of the church's instruction and teaching of God's Word before the reception of the Lord's Supper, but also in the Divine Services we use during Sunday worship. This part is the Service of God's Word (which includes the reading of Scripture and the Sermon). It's followed by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The words, *"He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them,"* are almost identical to what the Lord did when He instituted the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19). Not only does Jesus' actions turn that meal around from the two disciples being the host of that meal to Jesus being the host, but He choose to reveal His physical presence to them at that point, and then vanished from their sight (their physical sight, but not their spiritual sight—their faith).

This was part of the beginning of a new type of Jesus' presence with His church. He was preparing us to understand that He would be truly present yet unseen—to live by faith not by sight. The main message He brings us this morning through His Word and Sacrament is the Good News that He loves us, and through His death and resurrection He forgives us and is always with us.

Through this Good News God enables us to continue our journey through the dark tunnel of this life, not worrying about the past, or being afraid of the future, but trusting that our crucified and risen Lord is taking us safely through the dark tunnel of this life to the light of paradise at the end of the tunnel.

All glory be to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's Sermon] The stained glass windows in this church tell us not only of how death came into the world through Adam and Eve, but also how God is with us to save us, like He saved Noah and his family when water covered the whole earth. But it wasn't until the birth of Jesus that God showed us how He would save us even from death. That's what this picture of a cross, and the two crosses behind the altar remind us of, not only of Jesus death in payment for our sins (especially clear in the crucifix), but also His resurrection from the dead, which this rising sun is meant to remind us of: the rising of the Son of God, so that He can take us back to the tree of life in paradise, which is pictured on this final window. But all these pictures or images would mean nothing without God's Word in the Bible to explain what they all mean.

The pictures and crosses in the church are "graven images." The word "graven" comes from the word "grave," which reminds us that they are dead; there is no life in them. And the word "images" is another word for "pictures." God tells us not to worship these lifeless windows, the pictures on them, the wooden crosses over the altar, or even the Bible, since these things don't save us. But out of these dead things, God the Father does tell us about His Son, Jesus Christ, who does save us by giving us faith in Him. So keep on coming to church to hear God's Word. And keep reading your Bible here and at home to see what it, like these windows, tell us, about Jesus. Because even though you don't see Him, Jesus and the Holy Spirit use these things to give us faith and eternal life in Him, enabling us to worship Him as our Savior.