

April 30, 2017
Easter 3
Road to Emmaus -
Acts 2:14a, 36-41; Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35
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Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

Close your eyes for a moment . . . Picture someone you care about. What is that person doing right now? Can you see him in his house? Can you see her at her desk? Can you see him watching TV? Can you see her driving her car?

In the first weeks after my mother died I would go walking around in my head looking for her in familiar places.

I would look for her in her favorite recliner . . . NOPE! Not there!

I would look for her in bedroom . . . NOPE! Not there!

I even looked for her in the hospital bed where she lay dying . . .NOPE! Not there, either!

Then I would realize she was gone from my sight, forever. A great sadness would wash over me. I would sigh, my pace would slow, and tears would come.

I imagine this might be the way these two travelers felt as they plodded along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus? Talking about all the things that had happened. Jesus died and now his body is missing! I wonder if these two had been among those who stood at the cross. Were they among the crowd that demanded the release of Jesus Barrabas and the death of Jesus of Nazareth? I wonder if they are sad for the death of the master AND sad for their part in it.

50 days later, the day of Pentecost, Peter preaches the sermon of all sermons! He reminds the gathered crowd, especially the people of Israel, the Jews, that they played a huge role in the death of Jesus. And he declares with certainty that God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah!

Something in Peter's words resonated with the crowd. Many in this crowd had experienced the events in Jerusalem 50 days earlier. Some among this crowd had been among the crowd shouting to Pilate, "give us Jesus Barrabas" "crucify Jesus of Nazareth". And Peter calls them out on it. Cut to the core, they plead with Peter: "What should we do?" "How can we make it right?" Easy, Peter says: Repent! Turn around and go a different way. Be baptized in the name of Jesus. In this baptism, your sins are forgiven and you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing else to do . . . no good works, no clean living, no payment to be made. Just repent and be baptized!

And, it gets better! the promise of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit is not just for you, it is for your children and everyone who is far away . . . physically and spiritually. 3000 people were baptized! 3000! Imagine this, if you can: The 120 disciples who experienced the rushing wind, the tongues of fire, the speaking in different languages . . .those 120 women and men touched 3000 people that day with the good news of Jesus who God made to be Lord and Messiah.

3000 people are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a power that changes those who are desperately seeking an alternative message to the crooked generation in which they live. The same power that invades its recipients today changing the lives of people seeking restoration in this age of brokenness.

We are the apostles of Jesus Christ! That's right!
WE are the apostles of Jesus Christ.
Baptized, forgiven, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, we often find ourselves plodding along the Road to Emmaus, wondering about all we have seen and heard, looking for Jesus, for a sign of what we should do.

That pair of disciples on the road invited a stranger into their home because it was late and time for a meal. In the inviting the guest becomes the host. It was in the breaking of the bread that they recognized Jesus. Not in the teaching on the road, not in his physical visage . . . no, it was in the breaking of the bread. At this table we meet Jesus. As this bread is broken and this wine is poured God reveals to us all that we need to know: Jesus the Christ lived, died and was raised so that we may have life.

Thanksgiving rituals are as ancient as humanity. The thanksgiving table is set with the finest linens; the host is exalted and praised; the guests recount the faithfulness and generosity of the host and they are offered the finest food and wine.

It is to this feast that we are invited again and again.

Here we set the table with the finest linens, recite the great Eucharistic Prayer . . .that long prayer of thanksgiving before communion in which we recount the faithfulness and generosity of our host and partake of the extravagant meal . . . the very body and blood of Jesus Christ.

It really is that simple.

Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus. Peter's sermon is as relevant today as it was then, Jesus is alive. There is no magic formula in Peter's words for living a more fulfilling life, no worthy projects to work on, no empty platitudes. No promise of immunity from sorrow and pain. Only this: Repent and be baptized!
Not just once and move on . . .

Martin Luther tells us that baptism is daily conversion, daily repentance. Daily remembering God's faithfulness. Daily opening ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who empowers us to proclaim the good news:

Christ is Risen! Alleluia!