

Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 374, 04-26-2020 † Easter 3

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

¹³Now, on that same day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴They were talking with each other about all of these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing this, Jesus himself approached and began to walk along with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷He said to them, “What are you talking about as you walk along?” Saddened, they stopped.

¹⁸One of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹“What things?” he asked them.

They replied, “The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. ²⁰The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be condemned to death. And they crucified him. ²¹But we were hoping that he was going to redeem Israel. Not only that, but besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²²Also some women of our group amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning. ²³When they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb. They found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.”

²⁵He said to them, “How foolish you are and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and to enter his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

²⁸As they approached the village where they were going, he acted as if he were going to travel farther. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, since it is almost evening, and the day is almost over.”

So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he reclined at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and began giving it to them. ³¹Suddenly their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. Then he vanished from their sight.

³²They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us along the road and while he was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

³³They got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and those who were with them assembled together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord really has been raised! He has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵They themselves described what had happened along the road, and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.



What do we do when our plans fall through ... for instance, when all we can do is go for a walk?

There we were, my wife, baby in a stroller, dog, and I, walking the neighborhood on a sunny day. Who should approach us but another family – mother, baby in a stroller, bigger dog, father? Moment of truth: What were we to do? We could not come close to the other family; so we could not try to stay on the same sidewalk; and we certainly could not pass through one another. Someone was going to have to cut through the grass and pass by on the street. But which family would move to the street? My family of 3 + dog? Or this strangely symmetrical family of 3 + dog?

Maybe you have encountered strangers on your walks. You couldn't possibly come close to them, due to the reality of our present circumstances.

Did you ever...

WALK WITH A STRANGER REDEEMER

1. He wants to hide Himself

Jesus' heart rose with Him. He brought forth His heart along with Him out of the grave. So He still had a heart for sinners. Normally, a holy God would wash His hands of dwelling on the earth. But this holy God is a God of love. He wanted to take a walk with two disciples. He wanted to show that, even if He is not recognized, "*wherever two or three are gathered*" in His name, there He is with them.

But Jesus also wanted to be a Stranger and thus hide Himself. He did this in three ways: First, He clouded their vision, and He kept these regular listeners of His from recognizing Him. The excitement of stumbling into Jesus would have suppressed the facts Jesus wanted to get across. Jesus wanted to hide Himself in the normal walk and conversation. What was on their hearts?

Second, He hid what He knew of Himself. Jesus Christ pretended not to know about ... Jesus Christ! He wanted these men to express their feelings and get all their doubts out on the table. He wanted all their foolishness and sadness to surface. He wanted them to expose their hearts to Him. He wanted them to hear it from their own mouths. Then He wanted to apply the Law to their foolish and slow hearts. This is the Lord's "strange work." He is a God of love, so He does not like to call His followers foolish and slow-hearted to believe. But Jesus of Nazareth needs to expose our faithlessness and doubt before we really recognize how loving He is.

Third, Jesus hid Himself in the Old Testament Scriptures. He wanted to proclaim the Gospel in its truth and purity by matching what had just happened to the prophecies of long ago. The prophecies about Him were there in Moses, in David, in Job, in Isaiah. The Lord Jesus was hidden in types and intermediates, in the words of friends as well as foes. He was Abraham's Blessing for all nations; the Passover Lamb of Exodus; the Great Prophet of Deuteronomy; the living Redeemer of Job; the promised King of David's line; the suffering Servant of Isaiah; and the righteous Branch of Jeremiah. The Lord Jesus was hidden in whispers and utterances of the Gospel long before He came on the Christmas scene, but why?

You are Israel's hope, its Savior in times of trouble. Why are you like a stranger in the land, like a traveler who stays only for the night? Why are you like a man taken by surprise, like a strong warrior who cannot save? You are among us, LORD, and we are called by your name. Do not forsake us! (Jer. 14:8-9)
Here's the thing ... in all of these Scriptures, and on the walk to Emmaus, Jesus Christ was hidden in plain sight.

2. He wants to reveal Himself

As a Stranger, Jesus wanted to open the Scriptures to them. They thought Jesus was "*mighty in word and deed before God and all the people*" before death; how much more after death!

So Jesus does not invite you to search for Him where He cannot be found. He doesn't suggest you go to the cosmic reaches of space or the depths of your own soul. He does not require you to read palms or crystal balls. He does not expect you to solve a great scientific equation or cure the deadliest virus.

Raised from the dead, He has promised to be in His means of grace. He meets you in Word and sacrament.

He wanted to hide Himself in plain sight in the means of grace. In so doing, Jesus revealed His true nature. He brought a heart for souls out of the empty tomb with Him.

What the Lord did for those Emmaus disciples He does for you. Your eyes are kept from seeing Him. But there will come a day when we will see Him. On the Last Day, the Lord Jesus Christ will no longer be concealed from our view. Then all eyes will be on Him, either to their everlasting joy, or everlasting shame. Then we will behold Him, and not another. Then we will see our Redeemer in the flesh, as Job confessed. Then we will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living, as the psalmist confessed. Then the knee will bend and the mouth will cry, "*My Lord and my God!*"

But not yet. Now He teaches us to hear Him, to trust in Him, for faith comes by hearing, reading, and pondering the Word of Christ. He speaks His Words to you even now. He reveals Himself in the broken bread of thanksgiving and the cup of His true blood, given and poured out for you. I know you hunger and thirst for it. I know you ponder His gospel as you wander out in the nice weather. I know there is a promise as you walk along, that you walk with your Stranger Savior, who is with you always to the end of the age. Don't begin to doubt now! Don't begin to question why He is absent now! He has always hidden Himself this way, from human expectation and the kind of ransom that people demanded of Him. Invite Him to your day. Invite Him to your walks. Invite Him to your meals.

For a split second, the two disciples discovered with delight and recognized with whom they had walked, who had pretended to walk farther off, whom they had invited in, with whom they broke bread. They were suddenly self-aware, and felt their hearts, once foolish and slow to believe, now alight and flickering with hope. Their Lord is risen! It had to be this way.

May you find the same thing with this risen God of forgiveness. He forgives even slow hearts and foolish doubts. May your hearts light up and flicker with hope. Your Lord is risen! Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.