

April 30, 2017
Third Sunday of Easter
Luke 24:13-35

This is going to be a somewhat strange sermon simply because the main thrust of this is not for you...because you're here. You're here because you know God is giving great gifts here in Word and Sacrament. You are here because here God gives you the crucifixion and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ for your salvation. You're here to get it.

These two disciples don't get it. None of the disciples are getting it. Mind you, in Luke's writing of that first Easter day, nobody has yet seen the risen Christ. Luke hasn't even written that the women who went to the tomb and were told by the angels "He is not here, but has risen," actually believe what they've heard and seen. In Luke's telling these two guys are the first ones who will declare, "The Lord has risen indeed."

But how do they get there? How do they get it?

Well, first off it's important to note that Jesus comes to them. He's covert about it, keeping them from recognizing Him as they talk to each other about Jesus and the crucifixion. Jesus kind of horns in on the conversation and "*they stood still, looking sad.*" They don't get it. They tell Jesus about Jesus, about His death and even about the women at the tomb, but they don't get it. They say, "*But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.*" They don't get it; that Jesus has redeemed Israel.

It takes Jesus coming to them, explaining from God's Word—Moses and the Prophets—what has happened. Their hearts burned within them as they begin to understand, to get it. They hunger for more. They ask Jesus to stay. And then, "*He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.*"

They get it. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ promised in Holy Scripture. It was necessary that this Son of God take on our human flesh, be perfect in human life as God is perfect, then die as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind, then rise in victory—the firstfruit of the same resurrection for all who believe.

You're here because you get it. You're here to keep on getting it. Now I don't think that Jesus celebrated the Lord's Supper with these two disciples, but I do believe Jesus was drawing a clear connection in opening their eyes at the breaking of the bread. You are here today to get it. To get Him—Jesus Christ—His body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

But I'm pretty sure we all know people who don't get it. They might think they do, but they don't.

I'm talking about the many, many folks out there who might self-identify as Christians but they really don't get it. Modern evangelicalism has so influenced our Christian culture with the idea that it's all about a personal relationship with Jesus, that they've built a belief system that is only their idea of a personal relationship with Jesus. Pastor Chad Bird wrote in a blog recently, "Heaven forbid that I should have a personal relationship with Jesus. For I know what would happen: I would end up, in my mind, reshaping my personal Jesus into a strikingly familiar image: the image of me."

And this is the practice of many. They've taken the Word of God, both His Law and Gospel, and fit it into their lives in a way they can comfortably live with. It's a private thing, personal thing that can't be challenged. They know how the world is and how God is. But they just don't get it.

These two disciples on the road to Emmaus knew how things were. Jesus was a prophet and they killed Him. The body was missing and the women were acting kind of loopy. We

thought He was Messiah, but now I guess we'll just go back home and do the feast days and sacrifices at the temple like we always have.

But Jesus opened their eyes. He revealed His resurrection and victory! He called them to a faith that wasn't personal and private, but one that was public and in the community of all believers—His body, the church! They spread the news of how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread!

So I would like to suggest to all of us that we hold onto today's bulletin, maybe make a special effort to familiarize ourselves with Luke's Emmaus Road resurrection story. Remember it and use it some time when you find yourself engaged in conversation with a Christian who no longer goes to church. And at some point in that dialog find a way to say in all Christian love, "You don't get it."

You don't get that God has always directed His faithful people to live as a community of believers in commonality of faith. The words of Jesus, *"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."*

You don't get that God gave us to one another for our common good, *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."*

You don't get that God's Word is to be preached, learned and discussed, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom..."*

You don't get that a private faith cherry picking spiritual ideas is a road to disaster, *"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will*

accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”

When these and other truths might fail to sink in, there is a simple, simple truth that can't be argued.

You don't get it: *“This is my body, which is given for you. This is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sin. DO THIS in remembrance of me.”* You can say, “You're not getting it. You're not getting Him.”

Jesus, the very bodily flesh and blood of Jesus, is made known in the breaking of the bread; the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of sins. This meal is now and has always been shared in the community of Christ's church. It is one way the risen Christ ordained His blood-bought forgiveness be given to His people, not His person...and you're not getting it.

The long and short of this weird sermon is this: be sure that you know yourself, and let others know as you can, that a personal relationship with Jesus where you're good with Him and He's good with you isn't salvation. Salvation is recognizing the risen Christ, crucified for your sins and receiving the forgiveness He offers to be received in the ways He ordained: water, Word, supper—the things He does in His church.

It's not always convenient or comfortable, but it's the place where God's people gather to break the bread...and Jesus is made known to His people in the breaking of the bread.

Get it? Get it.

Amen.