

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

"So they drew near to the village to which they were going. [A third Man] acted as if He were going father, but they said to Him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.' So He went in to stay with them. When He was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him. And He vanished from their sight" (Luke 24:28-31).

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

On the road to Emmaus, Jesus walks with two of His many disciples, but they are kept from recognizing Him – at first. We, on the other hand, are in on the secret identity of this third person. They think it is truly strange that someone visiting Jerusalem could be unaware of the happenings of the last week concerning Jesus of Nazareth: His triumphal entry, the shouts of hosanna, the shouts of "crucify Him," and Him being condemned to death.

So, who were these disciples? We don't know much about these two men. Could they have been among the 72? Maybe.

But there is something that we do know. We know that for these disciples their hope was shattered. They were heart broken. They had hoped that Jesus would redeem Israel, but those hopes were dashed. It's been three days. He was dead. It was over.

So, these disciples decide to leave Jerusalem. They expected to celebrate on that third day, but now they head to Emmaus. Sure, rumors were around about the empty tomb. But rumors are just rumors. They haven't seen any proof.

Then all of a sudden, as these men were talking and discussing those disastrous events that turned their whole world upside down, a Man joins these two disciples on their way to Emmaus. This was not too uncommon. Most people traveling on foot would meet many people. To them, this Man was just another stranger. But for us, we know the Man.

Understanding the shattered hearts of these men, this third Man begins inserting Himself into their conversation.

In their grief, Jesus says to them: ***“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?”*** (Luke 24:25-26).

You see, it had to be this way. The prophets foretold it. The Christ came to bring unity between God and man. Sin had to be dealt with. The Christ had to suffer, die, be buried, and rise again!

As these disciples were enamored by the interpretation of this third Man, time just flew by. The Word opened their hearts! They realized that they drew near to where they were staying and then urged this third Man to continue His interpretation of the Scriptures, saying, ***“Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent”*** (Luke 24:29).

Then as they reclined at table, this third Man ***“took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them”*** (Luke 24:30). Normally, it was the host’s place to break the bread and initiate the meal, not the guest’s. Evidently, these two disciples were caught up in the teachings and forgot all about eating. But as this third Man performed this act, their eyes were opened. It was Jesus!

Immediately, He vanishes from their sight!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Instead of marveling over their Lord’s remarkable disappearance, they say to one another, ***“Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the Scriptures?”*** (Luke 24:32).

Although they needed rest, they were filled with energy! They went out in the pitch-black night and headed back to Jerusalem to share with others that God’s plan – *as revealed in the Old Testament* – has been fulfilled in Jesus’ suffering and resurrection!

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From disunity to unity! ***“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”*** (Psalm 133:1)

For everyone who clings with the crucified and risen Christ, we not only have eternal life, but also have perfect love for and fellowship with all other believers. Sadly, this is often invisible.

Our Old Adam – *our old sinful nature* – often makes a shambles of brotherly unity. Our eyes see discord, jealousy, broken relationships. Our eyes so often focus on the negatives as we miss the positives. Our eyes all too often miss Jesus.

Despite the disunity, God’s Word tells us the opposite. He says there is unity. This unity is called the Church. And we believe, teach and confess this to be true week in and week out as we say: *“I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.”*

In the Church, the Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith through Word and Sacrament. Despite our Lord being hidden, we hear His voice. His Law condemns what needs to be condemned and His Law guides our lives. His Gospel brings His forgiveness, comfort, and peace.

God’s Word is precious. So, as we study the Bible, the Holy Spirit continues to teach. We notice connections as Scripture interprets Scripture. We grow in insight as the Holy Spirit applies God’s Word to our lives. He reveals Himself every time we read and hear His Word even if we are only reminded what Jesus has done, which is always an awesome message!

Through His Word and His Sacrament, we are reminded how good and pleasant it is to be in Christ. How good and pleasant it is to have our sins forgiven by the blood and merit of Jesus’ cross and bodily resurrection! How good and pleasant it is when we receive Christ’s body and blood at this altar as we receive Christ Himself! How good and pleasant it is that we receive the gift of eternity together with Christ and with one another!

As we come to receive the Sacrament of the Altar this morning, we also confess that the Lord’s Supper expresses unity in belief. We believe that before Christians commune together in unity, we should also resolve our differences. This means confessing our sins and forgiving each other just as Christ has forgiven us. This means resolving differences in what God’s Word says, because to be united in Christ is to be united in what His Word teaches. Agreeing on what Jesus says is true Christian unity. Agreeing on a common confession of faith is Christian unity. ***“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”*** (Psalm 133:1)

And in this Christian unity, as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes saying, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"

Through all the uncertainties of this fallen, sinful world, Christ is always found where He promises to be – *His Word and Sacrament* – as He assures us of the comfort of forgiveness and reconciliation. So, as the sinful world changes as the wind blows, Christ promises to be where He always is: His Means of Grace: Word and Sacrament, that gives us forgiveness of sins, which begets eternal life and salvation.

What the Lord did for the Emmaus disciples, He does for you. Today, your eyes are kept from seeing Him. Now, there will come a day when you will see Him in all of His glory. But until that day of Christ's full appearing – *that great and magnificent day* – Jesus is concealed from our view.

This morning, Jesus is hidden under the words of Scripture and under the bread and wine. But when He speaks through His Word and Sacraments, our hearts are enflamed with faith. Through His Word and Sacrament, the Holy Spirit leads us to dwell with God and with one another in true unity!

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Amen!

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +