

Devotions – April 30 – May 6, 2017

By Members of

Faith Lutheran Church, Sault Ste. Marie, MI

Sunday, April 30, 2017

The Road to Emmaus by Heather and Joseph Lautenbach

Text: Luke 24:13-35

“Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

In Luke 24:13-35, we read about two men walking along the road to Emmaus when they encounter Jesus, crucified three days earlier and now risen from the dead. The two men walk with Jesus for miles, talking about everything they had seen and heard in Jerusalem. The two men are still bewildered to think that Jesus, the one they had believed to be the Messiah could have been put to death. But then a stranger comes alongside them and explains how the Scriptures foretold the Messiah’s death. When the men sit down for dinner, Jesus blesses and breaks the bread and their eyes are suddenly opened - for the first time they recognize Jesus and realize they’ve been walking and talking with their risen Lord!

Have you ever wondered what those two un-named disciples said when they got back to Jerusalem? What would it have been like to try to explain not recognizing the man they had spent hours talking about?

“We were there, walking and talking with him the whole time! I looked but I didn’t see Him!”

"I should have known it was Jesus - no one else explains the Scripture like He does."

"He just broke the bread and it wasn't until that moment that I could see it really was Him!"

Sometimes in our walk with Jesus we too fail to recognize His presence with us. Like the disciples grieving Jesus' death it can be so easy to look at disheartening events and not know what God is doing in the midst of them. When our lives take an apparent turn for the worse or when our hopes are dashed, we too feel confused, cynical, or perhaps even abandoned by God. But the road to Emmaus points us to the mysteries of God's providence and faithfulness. Even when we too can't see what God is doing in our lives and our world, Christ goes with us and is always at work bringing the Scriptures to fulfillment.

Let us pray that the Holy Spirit would open our eyes to see Jesus in our midst and know His presence as our risen Lord and Savior.

Resources Used:

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=54



Monday, May 1, 2017

By William Karr

Text: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

"But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.'

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, 'Brothers, what should we do?' Peter said to them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.' And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added."

In today's unforgiving world, when something goes wrong we try and shift the blame to something or someone other than ourselves. In these verses, Peter calls for our attention. He is telling us that, even though we were not there, we assuredly helped place Christ upon the cross.

...whom you crucified...

Often times I'll read something in the Bible and it's easy enough to try and ignore. It's something we all do. After all, it happened thousands of years ago, surely Peter isn't talking to *me* in this passage.

*...whom **you** crucified...*

Christ would not have been on that cross, but for you and I. And that realization hurts. It hurt those in Judea to whom Peter was preaching, and it hurts us today. It leaves us, like those so long ago, wondering just what we should do. Peter answers that as well, calling us back to Christ and the promise symbolized by the cross:

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.”
“The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

...*The promise is for you...*

The promise spurred those in Judea into action. Nearly 3,000 people were brought to Christ and baptized that day.

...*The promise is for **you**...*

What will the promise spur you to do? Will you answer God’s call? What has asked you to do today?

Let us pray: Lord, help me to remember the message of love and sacrifice you showed us on the cross. Help me to remember the promise and to answer when you call. In a world that sometimes seems unforgiving and cruel, help me to be a light in the darkness and to tell the Good News, that He is risen!



Tuesday, May 2, 2017

By Kristin Flickinger

Text: I Peter 1:17-23

“If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.”

I am a busy woman. Some days I consider myself a semi-professional volunteer. I have been blessed with a loving family, a comfortable home, and financial stability due to my hard-working husband.

Recently, I began working part-time in a vision clinic. Many of our patients have no or limited insurance. An acquaintance recently asked me, “Why did you feel the need to go to work”? The short answer is that I wanted to help out a member of my congregation. And in my mind, I thought that if I was working, then I would be forced to delegate some of my volunteer responsibilities.

Well yes, I am happy to say that has happened to some degree. But as I have been reflecting on my life these past four months, I have discovered that I have been needed at my work to be a friend, and to be an accepting face to ALL of our clients. Jesus did so much for me. I can strive daily to be worthy of the gift he has given me through his death and resurrection. Even when I am crazy busy, and required to work with difficult people from all walks of life, and especially with children. There have been times when I was so tired or frustrated that I didn't think I was going to make it much longer without losing my temper. But all I had to do was to say a short prayer and be reminded of the enduring blessings of God. My soul was quickly restored to calm and my faith gave me hope for another day.



Wednesday, May 3

By Kathy Flickinger

Text: Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

The 23rd Psalm to me is very similar to the song Amazing Grace. You know you know the words, well maybe not all of them, as in my case, but you do know that they are powerful. Even though you often hear them in sad circumstances such as a funeral of a friend, loved one, or just an acquaintance, they provide comfort and hope.

The psalm reminds us that Jesus is all we need. He guides us through turbulent and confusing times, and helps us notice the beauty of our surroundings when we feel all is lost. So true when we question why someone suffered, or was taken so soon.

As Christians, we are His. Our faith in Him and following his ways will lead us to everlasting peace in Heaven.

I found myself at peace once I read the psalm several times in preparing to write this devotion. I think I will write down the entire psalm (so that I can know it completely), and read it daily as a reminder that no matter what is going on in my life, Jesus is the guide; I just need to follow.



Thursday, May 4, 2017

By Linda Carrick

Text: Acts 2:42-47

“That day about three thousand took him (Peter) at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers. Everyone around was in awe – all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.” The Message

WOW! Can you imagine 3,000 people being baptized in one day? That's a lot of new Christians, and possibly a few pot-lucks to welcome all of these new members. What would your congregation, or synod, do with 3,000 more members?

It seems that in the early days of The Way, a lot of the same things were happening. The newbies committed themselves to learning more about their new-found faith from the old-timers. They also shared meals and their possessions, and lived harmoniously. Everyone's needs were met as well. The daily routine was worship in the Temple, a celebratory meal at home, and exuberant, joyous praise of God. And their numbers kept growing because people wanted what they had.

This summer I will make my fourth mission trip to share the Gospel in a remote First Nation community in northern Canada. For a week, the team lives much like the early apostles. We have morning and evening devotions which include scripture, prayer, and singing. During the day and into the evening, we teach, pray, and play with the children, eat meals together sharing in preparation and clean-up, travel in the community in pairs or small groups, welcome children and adults into our home to share meals or snacks, and hold evening devotions with all who are there at the time. Although we haven't baptized anyone, we have heard testimonies of faith and seen the love of God reflected on the faces of many. We are a community of believers who are committed to the teachings of Jesus which we freely share with those of the community around us.

Not everyone can preach like Peter or go on a mission trip, but can buy something at a fund-raising bake sale? Cook something for a pot-luck? Tuck a dollar or two in the pocket of a missionary? Praying for the mission and those actually going before, during and after, is an immense contribution.

Let's pray: *Heavenly Father, you have given us awesome opportunities to share your Word with those around us. Help us to answer those calls to do your work with our hands. We rely on the Holy Spirit to make the way clear for us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*



Friday, May 5, 2017

By Alan Hewitt

Text: 1 Peter 2:19-25

"For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls."

My Lord, you have said and showed that suffering is the very part of you, Lord Jesus. You have given me a conscious choice as to what to do about it when the suffering comes from living in a fallen world. Lord, you have told me that if I innocently suffer following in your righteous steps then I am not left without great commendable value in your aware eyes. Jesus you are my inspiring example for myself as your servant to copy when the suffering comes. Lord you say that no matter the Master over my earth life is

no longer in first place; instead my hope is fixed in heaven's glorious privilege as Jesus' suffering servant. Your sufferings, Lord Jesus, give me a vast motivation and a must long endurance perseverance to keep going on which is pleasant to you. Lord, I know now that my innocent clean heart is now suffering to your Glory which is not wasted but takes us your way to follow and not knowing but trusting in faith. Lord Jesus our unjust suffering is your way of coming back for us when we are strayed and lost to be the Good Shepherd. Amen.

Let us pray: *Dear Lord we thank you for teaching us Servants the joy and privileges which will be ours as we follow you and suffer innocently to do so. Lord Jesus you have left a blessing in my now understanding heart that my unjust sufferings are really your entrance to come and work for us if we wait on you. Amen*



Saturday, May 6, 2017

By Jean Mannesto

Text: John 10:1-10

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.’”

Are you part of the flock?

Have you ever had a telemarketer call stating you are the winner of the big prize? All you have to do is send in a monetary check to receive the winnings. And you must do this within a deadline or you'll miss out on the grand gift! Or maybe a friend promises to help with a project, but then never shows up at the agreed upon time. Perhaps you have been lucky enough not to be so deceived.

In John 10:7, Jesus' analogy says, "I tell you the truth. I am the gate for the sheep." In that day, the shepherd opened the gate to allow the flock to enter into the sheep pen. Here the flock was safe from thieves, weather or wild animals. The animals recognized the voice of this caregiver thus freely entered into the safe haven. The shepherd cared for each and every member of the flock. He knew them by name. They respond to the caregiver's voice for he has proven to be trustworthy and kind.

So we too can hear and accept Jesus' offer of salvation, through him alone, and enter into this sheepfold. There is no deception. Christ is our protection. He is the caretaker who comes to give life in abundance now and eternally. No longer do we need to walk through the darkness of the night alone. We can listen to the calm voice, follow it, and reside in a safe place with him by our side. What a welcoming portal he is!



Let us pray: *God, please enfold us into your flock. Amen.*