

Sermon Text – Sunday, April 19, 2026 – Pastor Paula Kraus

**1st Reading: Acts 2:14, 36-41; 2nd Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-23
Scripture for the Message: Luke 24:13-35 “Be Known to Us”**

This story often reminds me of the phrase “You can’t see the forest for the trees.” The phrase often applies when someone is so “bogged down” in particulars that they lose their sense of perspective. Reading this I feel as if these two disciples were so focused on “the things that have taken place” in the last few days that they failed to “see” the big picture that included the risen Christ. N. T. Wright would say that before these two travelers could begin to understand and perceive the implications of what had happened, they needed to be prepared.

Think about what these disciples experienced in the week leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion, his death, his burial, and his resurrection. They probably felt the leaders of their synagogues who turned Jesus over to the political authorities had betrayed them. I am sure they were confused and conflicted when the “one who walked on water and raised the dead” was himself subject to cruel torture and death. Now they hear an unbelievable tale from the women who claimed to have “seen” the risen Lord. Furthermore, when the other disciples ran to the tomb, they discovered it was indeed empty. Shock and fear were with them on that walk and maybe that is all they were capable of experiencing – not yet prepared to receive the risen Christ.

Nevertheless, when this stranger came near and walked with them, they welcomed him into their discussion. They could not yet recognize this stranger as the man they had followed and who they now mourned but they welcomed him into their discussion. The trouble is although they were able to accurately relay the “things” that had taken place and they recounted the fact that when the disciple men went to the tomb, they found it empty, but these two travelers did not see that Jesus was there with them. These two travelers were not able to see because they could not yet understand. Jesus entered their lives at that moment to help them understand everything the scriptures teach. “They couldn’t recognize the events that had just happened as the story of God’s

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redemption.”¹ Even though they admitted their hope that Jesus was the “one to redeem Israel.” Their idea of redemption was different from God’s plan.

So, Jesus walked with them and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted for them the things about himself written in all the scriptures – still they could not see him. Their hearts, however, burned as Jesus opened the scriptures to them, maybe that was the beginning of understanding. It is important to note though that knowledge of God is possible only by an act of God – we need grace to see.

What was it then that enabled these two travelers to “see” and “recognize” Jesus? In the scripture reading Luke tells us their eyes were opened and they recognized him when he “took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.” It seems that only when they invite him in and accept what he had to offer do they recognize him. Even though their hearts were “burning” within them while he was talking to them – they didn’t recognize him. It took Jesus preparing their hearts and minds through the “opening of the scriptures” for them to finally recognize the “risen” Lord.

He was right there; he walked the seven-mile journey with them. He opened up the scriptures for them, but trauma and confusion blinded their ability to “see” him. First-hand evidence of Jesus’ presence does not necessarily lead to faith in Jesus. These two travelers needed God’s grace to know God’s presence with them. Grace was given when Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it in their presence -something that is usually the host’s privilege. Jesus became known to them through hospitality at the table, as the meal was shared.

When they recognized Jesus, he vanished from their sight – according to Luke. Was he just a “vision” something they so desired to see that they manifested his presence in their imaginations? I doubt a “vision” would compel them to make the seven-mile trek back to Jerusalem in the evening hours when safety would be a concern. They had news too compelling not to share – they had seen the risen Lord made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

¹ Wright, N. T. *Luke for Everyone*. WJK. 2001. Print. 295.

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Jesus did for them what was needed so they could see and recognize him. He entered their lives at just the right moment, and he helped them understand everything the scriptures teach. In our day we don't need any help to read scripture, but we can only understand what is written through the guidance of Jesus and God's Holy Spirit. Jesus tells his followers to love God, not only with our heart but with our minds as well – we do that by seeking to understand. Jesus helped these travelers understand what was happening, he made himself know to them in the breaking of bread.

What do we need to “see” Jesus? We live in a society that is generationally fractured, culturally diverse, and politically polarized. It is, however, the job of the church to “show” people Jesus – and to help them understand, through interpretation of scripture, the promises of God. We read in Acts this morning that the promise of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all of us; everyone whom the Lord our God calls. Who God calls and who seeks to hear the good news is not up to us; we are given the unique opportunity as followers of Christ to help the people God sends to understand the promises.

Grasping the resurrection is not easy, it wasn't then and it isn't now. It is, however, essential to the Christian experience of faith that we piece the story together. Only through Jesus' presence and guidance will that happen. Through the hospitality of the church and at the table of remembrance Jesus' presence is manifest fully. That is the blessing we can read from this story – although Jesus was with the travelers fully, they “saw” him only as they were able to offer hospitality and accept his offer of the bread broken – symbolizing his body given up for the forgiveness of sins.

They thought they were the ones who offered hospitality by inviting this stranger to their table. Jesus however took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them in a symbolic act that opened their eyes to his presence. We, in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) put the service of our Lord's Supper first in our worship service – making it the center of what we do. Breaking bread is an important part of all of our gatherings in Jesus' name. We acknowledge that Jesus meets and welcomes us at the table.

Notice, in Luke's Gospel, that the role of Jesus changes from stranger to host when he sits at the table and breaks the bread.

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Jesus shows up whenever the body of Christ gathers. He is with us when we feed the hungry and welcome outcasts – as Jesus did throughout his ministry on earth. Not only does Jesus host the meal, but he is also present in the form of people who need food, drink, and a warm welcome. When we welcome strangers, foreigners, wanderers, and people not like us we welcome Jesus who then in turn welcomes us to his banquet table.

Therefore, for the church to help others see Christ we must be prepared to recognize him. At the table, where we gather each week, we meet Jesus face to face. Jesus moves from stranger to guest to host of the banquet. We must recognize Jesus in the faces of those who come to us seeking his presence. We must recognize Jesus in the bread that is broken. We must piece together the story to help others understand the promises – we do that as a community of believers. Bottom line is that we must prepare ourselves so others can be prepared. Jesus, in his life on earth, prepared his followers through preaching, teaching, walking with them, and living according to God's will. Jesus has prepared the church in that same manner so that we, the church – the body of Christ, can show others the way. That is one function of the church to prepare the world for Jesus' presence, now and on that day when heaven shall be revealed. May it be so.