

SERMON – EASTER 3A – APRIL 26, 2020

Text: Luke 24:13-35

I. Introduction

-The Bible readings for today are unusually coordinated around a single theme

-The lesson from I Peter summarizes the theme: "The grass withers and the flower fails but the word of the Lord remains forever. "AND THIS WORD IS THE GOOD NEWS THAT WAS PREACHED TO YOU.

-In the first lesson from Acts, Peter preaches the GOOD NEWS in His Pentecost sermon. His sermon was the first articulation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the Christian church.

-Peter says, "Let the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified."

-What follows is the great natural progression from the preached word to one of the two great sacraments of the church...

II. -Peter's audience was cut to the heart. Shocked and desperately they cry, "What shall we do?" Peter's answer... repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for everyone whom the Lord calls to Himself. And so, the good news about the resurrected Savior Jesus Christ begins its transforming journey, carried by the earliest church to the ends of the known world of the time.

III. -The main gospel lesson for this day... the Gospel lesson tells the wonderful story of Jesus walking and talking with two apostles on the way to their home in Emmaus.

-It is a story about how word and sacrament blessed by the Lord Jesus open eyes and open minds.

-Near the beginning of the story, we are told that the eyes of the apostles were "kept from recognizing Him"

-The reader of the story knows that the “stranger” the two apostles are talking to is the Lord Jesus.

-Jesus reprimands them, O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe”. To remedy their closed minds and hearts, Jesus interprets for them all that the Old Testament scriptures taught about Him. He explained that God’s word had foretold that the promised Messiah (savior) was to suffer and die and then rise again.

-The apostles began to understand that their fondest hope... the redemption of God’s people was accomplished in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

-This redemption brings not only the forgiveness of sins for all who believe but also a transformed and eternal life sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit.

-Now their minds were opened.

-In the next part of Luke chapter 24, Jesus delivers a similar lesson to the company of the 11 disciples together with those who believed with them. The text there says that Jesus “opened their minds to understand the scriptures. His concluding sentence is: “This it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.”

IV. So much for the opening of minds, but the eyes of the two on the way to Emmaus still needed their eyes opened.

-This opportunity is the Segway to the reference to the other great sacrament of the church – Holy Communion.

-When Jesus sat at their table, He assumed the role of host... took the bread and broke it... then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. To make the occasion as a divine revelation, Jesus suddenly vanished.

-In a similar way, Christians even today recognize Christ in the breaking of the communion bread and in the pouring of the wine.

- V. In the eighth chapter of Romans, the great Apostle Paul tells us that the carnal mind (that is the natural undisciplined impulses of the flesh) is enmity to God. It's another way of saying that from birth our minds and eyes need to be opened.
- Every parent knows that the carnal mind is even enmity to the neighbor. Children arrive undisciplined and self-centered without compassion and empathy. They need to be taught not just to scream for food but to ask politely. They need to be taught not to hit and grab. They need to be taught to carefully choose what they say so as not to hurt or antagonize others.
 - In a similar way, all people need to be taught that Jesus is both Christ (that is promised savior) and Lord (that is our ultimate authority and mentor)
- VI. The disciples on the Emmaus road had the wonderful privilege of having their eyes and minds spiritually opened by Jesus Himself.
- It is clear that the Holy Christian and Apostolic church on earth is called and enlightened to continue the work of opening eyes and minds so that succeeding generations understand the scriptures and see Jesus in the Word and Sacraments
 - My mind and eyes were opened by the various Christian congregations and teachers that ministered to me over seventy years.
 - My earliest memories of this teaching were closely associated with Christian community and accepting love.
 - I remember being taken to church on Sunday mornings. I remember the pleasant smells of wooden pews and the wine on communion Sundays. Friends and relatives were in every pew.
 - After the service the men congregated in groups and smoked and visited on the steps of the church and in groups sitting on the grass.
 - Children played together and the women congregated in the cars, visiting and moving from car to car to interact with as many as they could.
 - In that context, it was easy to have an open mind to the scriptures and to have eyes that see Jesus' forgiveness and salvation in the words and sacrament.

-It was and still is easy to believe in that holy company.

Rise, shine, you people! Christ the Lord has entered
Our human story; God in Him is centered.
He comes to us by death and sin surrounded
With grace unbounded!

Tell how the Father sent His Son to save us.
Tell of the Son who life and freedom gave us.
Tell how the Spirit calls from every nation
His new creation. (LSB 825)