

The Living Christ

Jesus sometimes does things that just leave us scratching our heads. Here we are in our text for today – on Easter day itself – and Jesus is hiding Himself from these two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

I thought the resurrection was all about showing that Jesus is not dead, that He's not in the tomb – that He is risen. The prophets of old spoke of His resurrection. Jesus Himself told His disciples repeatedly that on the third day He would be raised to life.

That very morning the women had gone to the tomb – and the messengers of the Lord had told them in no uncertain terms – “He is not here, but has arisen.” The women told the apostles – and Peter verified the report himself.

Dr. Luther would speak of the resurrection as a mighty sermon – a necessary sermon. Jesus Christ has atoned for the sin of the world with His Good Friday death – but if He remains in the tomb – then the message is that sin and death has won. The resurrection of Jesus shows forth that our sin is forgiven, and death is defeated.

So, why is resurrected and living Jesus, hiding Himself from the Emmaus disciples? Let's walk with Him and see.

These two disciples were talking about all that had happened in Jerusalem the past few days. The massive crowds that shouted their “hosannas” – rumors of the beginning of the Messianic reign – and ultimately, the crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus. They walk with faces downcast, and hopes dashed.

In the midst of their conversation – Jesus comes to them. He comes to them, “but their eyes were kept from recognizing Him.” God purposely hides Himself – He makes it so that they cannot see the resurrected Christ. What is going on?

And that's the question Jesus asks these two men. What are you talking about? I always imagine them giving Jesus a funny look – maybe rolling their eyes. Have you been living under a rock? Don't you read the papers. Are you the only one who doesn't know what has happened?

And then they begin to fill Jesus in – with a very accurate recounting of all that has happened until they get to the resurrection. Without the resurrection, everything else falls apart for them. It's all useless. Hopeless.

“And beginning with Moses and the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted for them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

And then, “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.”

Again, we are left scratching our heads. When they finally recognize the resurrected Jesus – why does He vanish from their sight?

Do you see what Jesus is doing? He directs His disciples to the Word of God and to the Lord's Supper – in order that they might recognize the resurrected Christ.

The day will come when He will be taken away from their sight. After His ascension into heaven – His disciples will not be able to see Him with their eyes – BUT He will be with them always, just as He promised. He directs them to where He will be found!

WITH the Scriptures they will hear the voice of the resurrected and living Christ. And WITH the Lord's Supper, they will receive the very resurrected and living Body and Blood of Christ.

Dearly beloved, what Jesus does for these disciples on the road to Emmaus on the first Easter Day – He does “for you” – directing you to where He is to be found – giving you the hope that only comes from knowing that Christ is risen from the dead.

The devil knows the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and so do the enemies of Christ. And so, they make the tomb as secure as they can, and post guards. And when their efforts come to naught – and God does what He promises – they go into crisis management mode by spreading lies and deceit, claiming the body of Jesus has been stolen away.

You see – while Jesus directs you to His Word and Sacraments – the enemies of the Gospel seek to direct you ANYWHERE BUT TO the Word and Sacraments – so that you may not know, and believe, that Christ has been raised from the dead.

They want to keep Jesus hidden from you. They want to keep you away from the Word of God that burns within your hearts as the resurrected Christ walks, and talks with you – opening the Scriptures, and the truth of the resurrection, to you.

The enemies of the Gospel do not want you to come into the house with Jesus and sit at Table with Him – for fear that you will recognize Him in the “breaking of the bread” (the Lord’s Supper).

They want to keep you away from church – or at the very least – from a church that preaches Christ and Him crucified and risen for the salvation of sinner. They don’t mind if you go to a church if it is nothing more than a gathering of disciples who believe that Jesus is dead – that He is not here – that He is not presently and actively doing anything. For without the resurrected Jesus – all is dead.

When Christians declare that – “Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!” – they declare that Christ is victorious – that their sin is forgiven, and their death defeated.

When you rejoice that – “Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!” – you rejoice that the resurrected Christ is with you – even now – even though your eyes are prevented from seeing Him.

Dearly beloved – this very day you hear the living voice of Christ – and receive His living Body and Blood for the forgiveness of all your sin – making your hearts glad, and giving you a hope that does not perish.

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