

5th Sunday of Easter

5/10/20

Immanuel Lutheran, Macomb IL

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We Do Not Know?

Christ is Risen! (He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!)

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (Joh 14:5 ESV)

What is Thomas asking about the way? The context is that Jesus has just told the disciples the following:

If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

⁴ *And you know the way to where I am going." (Joh 14:3-4 ESV)*

The question this day is are you like Thomas who then asks:

"Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (Joh 14:5)

Most times in a sermon I ask you a question that you do not answer correctly. However, I believe that most of you will know the answer to this question of the way by quoting Jesus Himself in the next verses, *I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

You can understand this sermon as part 2 of last week's message in which I used the analogy of cooking on the basis of a recipe. If you just have a list of the ingredients, that will not be of much help in making the item unless you also have the directions or instructions. The point from last week was to first know the ingredients of Scripture referring to the people mentioned, the stories told, the miracles described, the parables heard. However, the second point was that until you use the instructions from God as to how to understand all these events, you might end up cooking a meal that not only does not taste good but is bad for you.

For example, there were unbelieving Jewish scribes and Pharisees who knew all the facts or ingredients of the Old Testament books but when faced with the message of Jesus, they decided to crucify Him. Why? Because they had not heard the catechetical instructions of the Old Testament which taught that salvation was not on the basis of our good works but on the basis of the death and resurrection of the Messiah.

One of the best examples of knowing the Old Testament ingredients but not yet aware of the purpose of Jesus becoming incarnate is the famous occasion when Jesus spoke with two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Listen how they were aware of the ingredients of what had happened to Jesus but were clueless as to its meaning.

"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,
²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him.
²¹ 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 happened.
²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,
²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. (Luk 24:18-23 ESV)

It is clear that they knew the ingredients or events that Jesus was regarded as a mighty prophet, how the Jewish leaders crucified Him, how some of the women on the third day told us a vision of angels said He had risen from the dead yet in spite of knowing all this, they said, we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel but right now we are confused and sad.

No wonder Jesus began his teaching by referring to them as "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" By referring to the prophets, Jesus was also pointing to Himself Who had specifically told them that yes, He would be crucified but three days later He would rise from the dead! How foolish they were indeed.

So what did Jesus do to help them out of their foolishness. Remember, the Bible reveals that their eyes were kept from recognizing Him. Why? Because even if they had recognized Jesus, they would still be ignorant of how all those ingredients of the Passion week fit together. And note well what was keeping them from trusting that He was the one to redeem Israel? It was the crucifixion.

That's understandable. For on Palm Sunday the whole company of disciples were filled with joy when Jesus entered into Jerusalem thinking that He would get rid of the Romans and restore Israel to its former grandeur. However, on the following Friday He was laid in a grave. Their hopes that He was the one to redeem Israel were crushed. So how did Jesus teach them? Verses 26 and 27 of Luke 24 explains it:

Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luk 24:26-27 ESV)

In other words, Jesus explained not only the necessity of His crucifixion but also the meaning and purpose of that death. I'm sure He used Genesis 3:15 with God telling the serpent Satan that though he would bruise the heel of Jesus, Jesus will crush His head. And Psalm 22 that He would be pierced in hands and feet and Isaiah 53 that God the Father would place on Jesus the iniquity of us all in being our Substitute in paying for our sins. Not long ago we completed a Bible study of over 300 passages of the Old Testament books all about Jesus.

Here are some examples of how certain ingredients from the Bible all point to Jesus. For example, Jonah is important to remind us that Jesus would be in the grave for three days and nights. Noah was important to remind us that as 8 persons were saved by water, so also we are saved by the waters of baptism. Moses was important to remind us that though we are traveling through a wilderness at this time, Jesus says in our Gospel for today that He is preparing a place for you in His Father's house.

At this time, let's give a way not only to understand our lessons for today but also this special day known as Mother's Day. A pastor wrote he did not like speaking of mothers in a sermon because not every woman is a mother and therefore may feel disheartened. How sad was that pastor's attitude because while it is true that not every woman is a mother, every person has had a mother.

When God gives us the instructions how to regard all women, both older and younger, listen to 1 Timothy 5, verse 2 that we are to regard older women as mothers and younger women as sisters as well as give honor to widows. Talk about God Himself having a high regard for the vocation of mother. Indeed it is appropriate to have the opportunity to thank God for mothers, many of ours who indeed brought us up in the nurture of the LORD.

You see, as faithful mothers they answered the question of Thomas about the way of salvation by teaching about the person and mission of Jesus Christ. For because He came into the world as a human being, died on the cross and rose from the dead, all who trust in His Gospel promises of the forgiveness of sins and the robe of righteousness are saved. That is a joyous reminder that God has made us His adopted children through baptism and prepares for us those mansions in heaven that every believer will receive. Amen.

And may the peace of God that does surpass all understanding sustain you in the one true faith of Jesus Christ forever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of the Church Fifth Sunday of Easter 10 May 2020

Almighty God, You sent Your Son to be the Way to heaven by His death and resurrection. Comfort and enliven us with Christ, the Truth, in Your Word and Sacraments, that we might rejoice in Him, our Life, both now and forevermore. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, You honor the vocation of motherhood and make it a symbol of Your Church, where Your people are born in Holy Baptism and nursed with the pure spiritual milk of Your Word. Receive our thanks this day for Your gift of mothers: Bless them in their ongoing vocation of love, prayer and sacrifice for their children of all ages, and grant that their labors might remind us of the new life You have given us through Christ as His Bride. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, Your Son honored You and became obedient even to death on the cross. Hear our prayers on behalf of children and youth: Provide them good and godly homes where they might be trained in Your ways, and give them thankful hearts that honor their fathers and mothers as Your servants. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, bestow Your grace on all the nations of the earth. Especially we beg You to bless our land and its inhabitants and all who are in authority. Cause Your glory to dwell among us, and let mercy and truth, righteousness and peace everywhere prevail. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You provided men of good repute to serve so that the apostles might devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Bless congregations with godly pastors and lay leaders who are willing to shoulder burdens for the blessings of Your people and the spreading of Your Word. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, as You remember us in our living and our dying, remember all those who cry to You in need especially during these days of the virus. Strengthen and deliver us according to Your will, and grant them confidence of Your faithfulness. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Most holy God, with thanks for all the saints whom You have gathered to Yourself throughout the ages, continue to enlighten us by Your grace until we join them before Your throne; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**