

Sermon Draft

Text: Luke 24:13–35

Sermon: “He Is Alive Indeed”

In this encounter between the Emmaus disciples and Jesus, there is still the divine hiddenness as Jesus vanishes from their sight. For us, too, Jesus is unseen, hidden under the words of Scripture and under the bread and wine. But when he speaks, our hearts are enflamed with faith, like the Emmaus disciples.

The stranger shows up on the road *“but their eyes were kept from recognizing him”* (v 16). Just like Jesus to come incognito, undercover as it were. He hides himself. Listen to the prophet Isaiah: *“Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Savior”* (Isaiah 45:15). God hides himself. He will not let himself become visible. Yet it is in His hiding Himself that Jesus shows Himself to be our Savior.

It is not that these travelers on the highway to Emmaus were confronted with a case of mistaken identity. Their eyes were kept from recognizing him. It was not that the Lord Jesus was absent from them.

No, he was right there with them on the road, but they were prevented from recognizing him. They could not see him for who he is. Jesus remains to them a stranger. So as the conversation goes on, they tell him of their disappointment and now dead hope.

Then the Lord Jesus interrupts Cleopas and his friend: ***“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”*** *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself*” (vs 25–27). They urge Jesus to stay with them, and he does for a while. He takes for himself the place of host, blessing and breaking the bread, and he gives it to them. ***“And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him”*** (v 31). Now they recognize that this stranger with them is none other than Jesus! The same one who was crucified, the very one on whom their hopes were pinned is now alive and in their midst. No phantom, no ghost, but Jesus! Yet when their eyes are opened to see who it is who is with them, he disappears.

With the Lord's body, he can do with it as he wills. His body is not confined by geography or time, for it is the Lord's body. With his body, locked doors are no barrier. With his body, he need not stay put one place at a time. But where he puts himself, he puts himself for us. God does not invite us to search for him where he cannot be found: in the cosmic reaches of space or in the depths of our own soul. During this Pandemic we need not search for him for he is here with us walking with us through this trial and through all trials. Raised from the dead, he is free and loose to be wherever he puts himself for us. And we need not be in doubt as to where that is.

The Lord hides himself from those men on the road to Emmaus so that he might reveal himself to them, to show himself where and when it pleases him. And this is how Jesus wills to be known by us: in his Scriptures. It is the Scriptures that testify of him and his opening up of those Scriptures, so that he is preached as the very Son of God, who had to be handed over to evil men, crucified, and resurrected for us.

The redemption that these Emmaus disciples had hoped for had indeed taken place, but it was far greater than what they could imagine.

Redemption took place not in some act of political liberation. It happened in the death of God's own Son, who paid the price of our release not with silver or gold but with his own blood. That is what was necessary! ***“It was necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory”*** (v 26). It was necessary for you and me for our salvation. It has been done. The work is completed. It is finished. Christ was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification.

Yet even after his resurrection, the Lord Jesus hides his glory. He does not overwhelm the road-weary sojourners on the road to Emmaus with a blinding flash of dazzling radiance. He comes to them as a stranger whose identity is concealed from their eyes. This stranger reveals himself in his words that interpret the Scriptures concerning himself and in the breaking of bread.

What the Lord did for the Emmaus disciples, he does for each of us. Our eyes are kept from seeing him. There will come a day when we will see him. On that Last Day, the Lord Jesus Christ will no longer be concealed from our view. Then all eyes will be upon him, either to their everlasting joy or their eternal shame.

Then we will behold him and not another. Then in our flesh we will see our Redeemer as Job confessed in the Old Testament. But not yet. Now to recognize Jesus means that he vanishes from our sight. He hides himself so that we may learn to hear him, to trust in him, for faith comes not by sight but by hearing. Now we are not given to see him; we are given to hear him.

We hear him as he speaks to us in the preaching of his Scriptures, his words that are spirit and life. We hear him in his word of absolution that declares, "Your sins are forgiven." We hear him not at that ordinary supper table at that road stop near Emmaus, but at his Holy Supper, where he gives us his body to eat and his blood to drink for the forgiveness of our sins.

“And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight” (v 31), but not from their hearing: for ***“faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ”*** (Romans 10:17).

Amen