

Easter III  
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Zion Lutheran Church  
Fort Wayne, IN

The stranger shows up on the road “but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” Just like Jesus to come incognito, uncover as it were. He hides Himself. Listen to the Prophet Isaiah: “Truly, you are a God who hides yourself, O God of Israel, the Savior” (Is. 45:15). God hides Himself. He will not let Himself become visible. Yet it is in His hiding Himself that He shows Himself to be Israel’s 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 then enter into His glory, and beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself.” They urge Jesus to stay with them and He does for a while. He takes for Himself the place of host and blessing and breaking the bread, He gives it to them. “And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him.” Now they recognize that this stranger with them on the way 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 you. God does not invite you to search for Him where He cannot be found- in the cosmic reaches of space or in the depths of your own soul. Raised from the dead, He is free and loose to be where ever He puts Himself for you and you 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 you: in His Scriptures. It is the Scriptures that testify of Him and as He opens them up 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." It was necessary for you and your salvation. It has been done. The work is completed for you. It is finished. Christ was put to death for your trespasses and raised again for your justification.

Yet even after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus hides His glory. He does not overwhelm the road weary sojourners on the highway 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 you. Your 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. 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 which are spirit and life. You hear Him in His Word of absolution that declares "Your sins are forgiven." We look forward to that day when we can once again gather at His altar. For it is there that You hear Him not at that ordinary supper table at that road stop near Emmaus but at His Holy Supper where He gives you His body to eat and His blood to drink for the forgiveness of your sins. In the meantime, we rely on His sure and certain promises given in His Word proclaimed among us still through the gift of technology. As we heard in today's Epistle where Peter quotes Isaiah, "The grass withers and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever" (I Peter 1:24-25). His enduring Word remains in our midst.

"And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him. And He vanished from their sight" but not from their hearing "for faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ." Amen.

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