**Luke 24:13-35** (especially 21-27,32) April 30, 2017

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Easter 3

 *Luke 24:21“We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” 25He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” 27And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself…*

 *32They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*

For the full reading, refer to a Bible.

Dear Friends in Christ,

**When Jesus Opens the Scriptures**

 So what do you know about ancient Egypt? Perhaps more than you think. You have surely heard of the Great Pyramids, and maybe the Sphinx. King Tut was an ancient Egyptian king found in an ancient tomb. It is fascinating how many things have survived the 4,000 years since Egypt’s heyday. There is one other ancient Egypt thing you might have a vague knowledge of: hieroglyphics. That cool ancient Egyptian writing with owls and hawks and snakes and other things. Huge walls are covered with these hieroglyphics, not written in ink or paint, but carved into stone. These walls full of hieroglyphics have stood there before the watching human eye for 4,000 years. But strangely, as time progressed, people forgot how to read them. They were a mystery without an answer. Then in about the year 1800, the Rosetta Stone was found. The Rosetta Stone with a couple other key documents eventually led some scholars to unlock the language of hieroglyphics. Without the Rosetta Stone it would still be a mystery.

 A couple thousand years ago, two men –not all that far from Egypt – were faced with another mystery. They had information in front of them, but they had no idea what it meant. These two men were followers of Jesus. We don’t know if they were some of the Twelve, or part of his larger group. But they were on a 2 to 3 hour, 7 mile walk, leaving Jerusalem. More likely than not, they were going home after the huge Jewish Passover celebration.

 As they journeyed, they considered a mystery. Two and a half days earlier Jesus had died. Earlier this same morning some women had gone to Jesus’ tomb to complete the burial. They found no body, but they did find angels who said Jesus was alive. It was like hieroglyphics, which they could not make heads or tails of. But there is one thing they were pretty sure of, it really didn’t matter. Jesus had died, and the hopes vanished with his death.

 So when they met Jesus traveling *incognito*, they related their disappointment as a done deal. ***“We had hoped that [Jesus] was the one who was going to redeem Israel.”*** They *had* hoped, but no longer did. They thought it was over because of their misunderstanding of the word “redeem.”

 Maybe you are wondering what “redeem” means? It’s a question I often ask the confirmation class when I get to teach them. One of the best known Old Testament Bible passages is, “I know that my Redeemer lives.” What is a “Redeemer”?

 A Redeemer is a Buyer-Back. A redeemer is a person who frees another person from prison or captivity. A redeemer is a liberator, but not by show of force. No, a Redeemer must pay a price. These disciples had been hoping that Jesus was the Redeemer of Israel. But now that he was dead, they were sure he was not. Without saying as much, we realize that they were not really wanting a Redeemer from sin, but a Redeemer from earthly forces. A Redeemer from the occupying Romans to be sure. And probably crime and poverty and all these other nasty life issues. Oh sure, they did not want a *merely* political redeemer, but some mixture of the political and social and religious. A righteous earthly king, perhaps a bit like King David, but stronger and holier. In their thinking, the Redeemer they expected could have accomplish nothing by dying. His death in this world was the death of their hope because their hopes were tied to this world.

 I can’t believe that those disciples, who walked and talked with Jesus, could have had such worldly expectations of Jesus.

 Except I can understand it. Our expectations too, tend toward the earthly. And the best way I can illustrate that is by asking you what you are day-dreaming about right now. Oh, come, now. We all know this happens to us, even in church? Just last week I had the chance to sit in the pew instead of stand in the pulpit. We don’t want to daydream, but being human, our minds wander. When we day dream, what do we think about? I would guess that very few daydream about the Bible Class after church, or the hymn we just sang. We probably do not daydream about our Bible reading schedule (if we have one). Even in church we daydream about important things like lawn care, the next vacation, what’s for lunch.

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 Except I can understand it perfectly. A few years ago there was a family comedy show. One of the recurring skits was a spoof of the *Star Trek* series. So, in the comedy skit, three astronaut pigs (remember, this is a spoof) are approaching the end of the universe. They find out that when their spaceship reaches the end of the universe, they will discover “The Meaning of Life”. They are so excited. They get closer, they get more excited. They want to know what everybody on earth wants to know: “The Meaning of Life.” Two minutes from the end of the universe, the dinner bell rings. The Meaning of Life or Dinner? The Meaning of Life or Dinner? One by one, they figure, “Dinner!” (“Pigs in Space” skit on *The Muppet Show*, #501)

 It’s funny, because that is how we are. When it comes right down to it, we want now what we want now. Eternal life, or the meaning of life, or whatever else it might be, we have a really tough time concentrating on these things. Our minds wander in worship services. We often choose a few more bucks over weekly church attendance? If it is sporting or camping or leisure on the one hand and leaving the hotel or campground to find a church, I can tell you which one will win in most people’s hearts. My latest update on social media or gaming that will end up consuming perhaps hours of time, or ten concentrated minutes in prayer—it is often quite a fight even if I do finally make the right choice, and I don’t always.

 We neglect the things of God, and we love the things of this world.

 That comedy skit might be funny, but actually it is tragic. It is the tragic truth that even with the Holy Spirit living in us, we drift toward the earthly, the things that make me (not God) happy now (not for eternity). And when we make the choices to go this way, we sin. God says, “Honor, love and trust in me above all these things.” But we don’t.

 And there go the two disciples walking to Emmaus down-hearted because Jesus had not given them a little more freedom, a little less crime, a little more cash in the wallet.

 When our expectations are dashed, we often ask, “Why Lord?” Instead we should say, “Teach me, Lord.” This is the solution, the Rosetta Stone that Jesus provided these two men on the road.

 Jesus identified them for what their earth-bound thinking has made them. ***“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe!”*** He cuts them no slack. Earth-bound thinking is sin; it is the beginning of unbelief. ***“How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”*** He says the problem is that they have not looked into the word of God. Sure, they cried when Jesus died on a cross. Sure, they walked around with holes in their hearts. But they never went to the place where they would find healing and hope—to the “prophets,” to the Word of God.

 So Jesus personally unlocks the mystery: ***“‘Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”*** Using the entire Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, Jesus opened their hearts to understand who the Christ was meant to be. He *had to* suffer and die to accomplish his mission. He may well have begun with the very first words of prophecy from Genesis 3:15. There, moments after the fall into sin, God decreed to Satan, *“[The offspring of woman] will crush your head, but you will strike his heal.”* All following prophecies of the Messiah, of the Savior, expand upon that. They explain more fully how the Savior would crush the head of Satan, but that in the process the Savior would be bitten in his heal. ***“Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”***

 Suddenly they had a new hope, a different view of life. They realized that Jesus did not come to give them more Legos or shinier nail polish. He did not come to put more money in their wallets, to free them from foreign oppression or chronic diseases. He came to forgive sin, to redeem us from our guilt, to give life eternal.

 The effect upon the two dejected sad men walking to Emmaus was startling. Often times, when people comment on the Emmaus disciples, they focus on that moment of recognition as Jesus blessed the meal. Which is well and good, and it was amazing. But did you notice something? These two disciples did not focus on recognizing Jesus. It was not the physical recognition of Jesus that so invigorated them. They marveled, ***“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*** Their hearts burned when Jesus deciphered the meaning of His life, and of their life. The Scriptures were the Rosetta Stone, the key, the answer.

 Which is a good thing, because Jesus will probably not appear to you as you walk down the street. But he has left you the same Word of God, even more Word of God, than these two disciples had.

 Earlier this week I saw something in this church that I rarely notice, but that you see every week – this beautiful window in front of the church. You see, I am usually facing the wrong way to really appreciate it. On Monday I stopped and marveled at this window. Do you understand what this window is saying? It contains a whole lot of what we learn from the Emmaus disciples. Here we have the Spirit of God depicted as a dove, as he appeared at Jesus’ baptism. The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who communicates with us. And this quarter window tells us how the Holy Spirit communicates with us: the Word of God. God the Holy Spirit chooses to talk to us, not through prayer or visions or dreams. That is not how these men and the other disciples, men and women, were brought close to Christ. They were brought to him through the Word of God. Even the blessed sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion depicted in the top quarters of the window receive their power from the same Word of God, for if there is no Word of God, then the water in the font remains only water, and the bread and wine you receive in the sacrament remain just that. It comes down to the Word!

 You have the Word of God which is read in every single church service. It is the Word of God that we study in Bible Class. It is the Word of God which you ought to own at least one copy of at your home. It is the Word of God which you can and should have daily devotions with.

 God’s Word changed the hopelessness of these disciples into undying hope and joy by the Word of God. God’s Word will turn your darkest days from life-ending sadness, to mere shadows of clouds that will pass because you know your Savior from sin. Let us continue to hear and read God’s Word so that our hearts, through all the sorrow and loss of this world, continue to burn within us. Amen.