

August 5, 2018 The Guest Pt. 7 Luke 24:13-35

A question: Did you ever think there were so many instances in the ministry of Jesus, in which HE was the guest in someone's home for dinner? One of the things I want you to understand is that I was not aware. I have heard my daughter mention several times in casual conversation that one of the things she finds so attractive about Jesus, is that HE loved a party. The first few times I let it slide. One day she made that comment again and I took the bait...."Why do you say that?" I asked. She simply replied, like it is an observation everyone must be aware of, "Jesus never turned down an invitation to dinner out."

That response has been marinating in my head for several years. Finally I took a look in one of my reference Bibles. It has pages and pages of groups of Scripture Readings under common headings. One of those headings is "Christ: A Guest In Various Homes". I was surprised at the number of instances listed....and here we are. My point is, that for me too this is new ground, and something I had never given much thought to the fact that it happened as often as it did. As I said...Here we are!

This morning this study takes us to the road to Emmaus. What we would call the 3 years of Jesus ministry are over. On Friday of the week, Pontius Pilate issued his verdict. Jesus was whipped and stripped and crucified. He was dead by mid afternoon. Joseph of Arimathea, a pharisee, donated a

tomb that had never been used, probably a tomb in which he expected his own remains would lie. Joseph donated it for Jesus burial. As a result Jesus was entombed before sunset Friday. With Sunset, Sabbath (Saturday) began. At Sundown Sabbath ended and Sunday began...3 days dead and buried. And on the third day HE arose.

Jerusalem is abuzz with rumors. The disciples of Jesus do not know what to believe. The women have reported that Jesus is alive. Peter and John have been to the tomb and have confirmed the body of Jesus is not there. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Peter wondered what actually happened (Luke 24:12), which brings us to this morning's reading beginning at verse 13. Two of the disciples were walking to Emmaus, "a distance of about seven miles from Jerusalem." The KJV says it was a distance of "about 60 furlongs". I did not check the math. I assume the endeavor on the part of Bible translators to tell us the episode in modern English got it right. The importance concerning the distance is that it is walkable in an hour and a half if you are working hard at it...2 hours if you are strolling and talking.

All of the translations make the same point about what happened next. As they were talking and reasoning together, trying to make sense out of the last 3 days and the reports of Sunday morning, Jesus joined them on the road. Another walker. My daughter often refers to the "God moment" and I have learned that this episode is a really clear

illustration of what she is getting at when she uses that phrase. Cleopas and Luke are walking and talking. They become aware that they have been overtaken or joined by a 3rd figure. Here is what it says in verse 16 “but they were kept from recognizing him.” In other words, they have not suddenly gone dense. It is not that Cleopas and Luke are stupid. Jesus is with them. God is with them on the road and the Lord keeps them from recognizing Jesus as Jesus. It is the God moment. Revelation is about to occur. The KJV says it this way...”their eyes were holden, that they should not know him.” Their eyes were held in the hands of God, that they should not know the stranger on the road was Jesus. I get goosebumps when I read that.

The result of that God moment is that Cleopas and Luke display with a marvelous degree of honesty their inability to understand how all the pieces fit together. The stranger does not seem to know about the crucifixion. HE does not seem to know about the testimony of the women or the discovery of Peter and John that the tomb was empty. They admit openly their amazement at the news borne by the women. They share that Peter and John verified that the tomb was empty. But they also point out that Peter and John did not see Jesus risen from the dead.

It is at that point that the stranger chides them for being foolish, and slow of heart to believe. And then HE begins with Moses and the Prophets to instruct them yet again on how the Messiah, the Christ, “had to suffer these things, and then

enter into HIS glory.” Now if you are like me you figure at that point the cat should be out of the bag. They ought to know at this point that it is Jesus, risen from the dead that is walking with them on the Road to Emmaus. But that is only because we forget so very quickly who it is that is “holding their eyes in HIS wounded hands.” God is present with them. And therefore the light does not come on. They do not recognize HIM and they do not put the pieces together. Revelation occurs! But it occurs according to the timing of God and for the maximum benefit to those for whom revelation will change everything.

What Luke tells us is that he and Cleopas were suddenly aware that they were approaching Emmaus. It looked like the stranger was going to continue on down the road. But as it is late in the day, and because they have so enjoyed the warmth and truth of the Bible teaching that HE has shared with them, “they urge HIM to be their guest, to accept a place to rest the night through, and to enjoy an evening meal. Jesus never turned down an invitation to receive hospitality.

And so we come to the moment of revelation. They are at the table, the three of them. Luke, Cleopas and Jesus. Jesus takes bread, HE gives thanks, He breaks it, He begins to give it to them. “This is my body broken for you...take....eat...remember.” As recognition dawns, as their eyes are released to see WHO it is with WHOM they sit and eat...HE disappears. And all they can talk about (Cleopas and Luke) is how rich the experience was as Jesus taught them from

the Scriptures of the Old Testament, how the Christ must suffer and die to redeem.

I am going to say something else here that I cannot prove. You know when we read about the Last Supper, and the gift given to us of what we call Holy Communion, The Eucharist, The sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We think of Jesus and the twelve sitting at the table together. The Renaissance painting is burned into our minds. I am going to suggest to you that there may have been a hundred people present. Luke and Cleopas are not members of that inner circle of 12. But here we are, shown that it is the breaking of the bread of that sacrament that triggers the moment of revelation that it is Jesus who walked the road to Emmaus with Luke and Cleopas. And I have been in that upper room in Jerusalem. It is a huge chamber for 13 people to use to celebrate the Feast of the Passover. A hundred to a hundred and twenty? To me, the shoe fits.

But here is what is marvelous about the episode in Emmaus. Here we are told as plainly as we will ever be told in Scripture, that believers, disciples of Jesus will always taste the real presence of the Lord who saves us from sin...as we handle the elements of that sacrament. In our participation in the broken bread and the wine poured out...we will have our very own "God Moment." Our eyes are released to see who we are, and who Jesus is. We are disciples like Luke and Cleopas. We see God in Christ at the Table. Remember the line from our Communion Hymn 543? "Here, we touch and handle things

unseen.” At the Lord’s Table we remember who it is that saves us. At the Lord’s Table we commune with God. At the Lord’s Table our eyes are opened. Sometimes we even get emotional. In the presence of the Guest who is our HOST.

Let us pray;

Precious Lamb of Glory, we bow before YOU. We almost cannot believe you have touched our lives so intimately. Your grace toward us is almost too complete for us to comprehend. We are tempted to reject the idea You could love us this much. It is your word alone that professes you love us with an eternal love, not because we are so good, but because YOU are so worthy. Worthy of our praise. Worthy of our worship. Worthy of our service. Walk with us. Talk with us. Now and always. Amen