

Go Forth and Stay

“And He was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

This passage is portrayed as an encounter on a walk, but it's really about the Eucharist. And in the early Church they didn't recognize that right away, but then they came to recognize it. Jesus draws near and they don't recognize Him right away. Their eyes are downcast. They're saying all the things; they were hoping, but it's like they've given up hope. They say all of the things they believed about Jesus, but they don't think they've come true. And even though they've heard the story that He has risen, they don't believe it because they're not staying in Jerusalem. They're leaving, but they're downcast. There's no hope in them. And that's one of the things that happens. Jesus comes and is with them and they can't recognize him - they who knew Him - because they're not really looking for Him and they're not looking at Him. And because they're not, they don't see Him right with that. But He draws them out. And then after He finds out what's on their minds and in their hearts, He says “Ah, how foolish. Didn't you understand?” And then he explains and he starts with Moses and the prophets to explain. And that's what happens when we're sitting here. We hear the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the priest or the deacon breaks open the word he starts to explain, but it's not his own words, it's the Lord's word. It's the Lord breaking open. And that's why sometimes when we're hearing the word broken open, our hearts do start to burn with a love for Him. Yes.

So, this little encounter on the way is really about this encounter here - and how we come to know him in the breaking of the bread. That's what Eucharist was called in the early years. Most of us, our experience of Eucharist is as a morning prayer service. But for the first several hundred years, Eucharist wasn't celebrated in the morning. It was celebrated late in the day. The very first Eucharist, The Last Supper, was at night. And so, they kept that tradition going. It isn't until the Church is forced into the catacombs and then eventually when they're able to surface and have churches of their own and they can celebrate at different times that they start offering this celebration at different times. And when the monks came, they started their day early and celebrated early in the morning. And that took hold all throughout Europe. And so, morning Eucharist became the norm. But it wasn't always that - it was late-in-the-day Eucharist for hundreds of years. And so in this passage, it's late in the day and that's what brings the Eucharist to mind.

Now, Luke's Gospel was written probably in the 70s or the 80s of the first century. And I would say about 75 years later, in the early parts, middle parts of the second century, the one hundreds, there was a convert to Christianity. His name was Justin. He was a very intelligent man, very literate, very learned. And he wrote as a convert in defense of Christianity. And eventually it cost him his life. And he is known to us as Justin Martyr. So Justin writes, for people who don't know about Christianity, about the mass, so this is, this might be 130, 140 A.D., something like that. So just listen and see how much of your experience of Eucharist is in what he says. “No one may share the Eucharist with us unless he believes what we believe” (There are limits about who is allowed to receive Eucharist.)

“Unless he is washed in the regenerating waters of baptism,” (You have to be baptized, baptism for the remission of sins.) “and unless he lives in accordance with the principles given to us by Christ.” (this is less than a hundred years after Jesus rose from the dead).

“It's clear we do not consume the Eucharistic bread and wine as if it were ordinary food and drink for we've been taught that as Jesus Christ our Savior became a man of flesh and blood by the power of the word of God. So also the food that our flesh and blood assimilates for its nourishment becomes the flesh and blood of the incarnate Jesus by the power of his own words. “This is my body,” contained in the prayer of Thanksgiving, the Eucharistic prayer, the apostles in their recollections, which are called gospels handed down to us what Jesus commanded them to do. They tell us that “He took bread, gave thanks and said, ‘Do this in memory of me.’ “This is my body.” In the same way he took the cup, he gave thanks and he said, “This is my blood.” The Lord gave this command to them alone. And ever since then, we have constantly reminded one another of these things. The rich among us help the poor. And we are

always united for all that we receive. We praise the creator of the universe. (Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation through your goodness....” “We praise the creator of the universe through his son Jesus Christ.

And through the Holy Spirit on Sunday, we have a common assembly of all our members.” (This is less than a hundred years.) “We have all, everybody comes on Sunday, whether they live in the city or in the outlying districts. The recollections of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as there is time. When the reader has finished, the president of the assembly speaks to us. He urges everyone to imitate the examples of virtues we have heard in the readings. And then we all stand up together and pray.” (The general intercessions we stand). Why do we stand? Because they stood. It's not just somebody decides it. It's who we are. It's our heritage, it's our tradition. It's who we are).

“On the conclusion of our prayer, bread and wine and water are brought forward. The President offers prayers and gives thanks to the best of his ability. And the people give their assent by saying “Amen.” (through him and with him and in him, O God Almighty Father.... And you say, “Amen.”) The Eucharist is distributed. Everyone present communicates, and the deacons take it to those who are absent. We have eucharistic ministers we send forth to take it to those who cannot gather with us. The wealthy, if they wish, may make a contribution. And they themselves decide the amount the collection is placed in the custody of the President who uses it to help the orphans, the widows, and all of those who for any reason are in distress. Whether because they're sick in prison, away from home, in a word, he takes care of all who are in need. And we do that. We give hundreds of thousands of dollars each year to those who are in need from you. Hundreds of thousands. We hold our common assembly on Sunday because it's the first day of the week, the day on which God put darkness and chaos to flight and created the world.

And because on that same day, our savior, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The new creation starts on the same day. The original creation started Sunday and Sunday for he was crucified on Friday. And on Sunday, he appeared to his apostles and disciples and taught them the things that we have passed on for your consideration. That's why we do what we do.

Now in that passage from Luke today, where the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, they're really downcast and so forth. But as Jesus talks to them, something happens to them and they say to him, stay with us. Come in with us. And so He's their guest. He's invited to be with them. And then when he's seated with them, He takes the bread and He becomes the host. He breaks the bread, He's going to feed them. And we call the Eucharist the host because he is the host of our gathering. There are reasons we do what we do and they asked him to stay with them.

But Jesus asks us to stay with him. Do you not know many people today who are like those two disciples on the road to Emmaus who were saying things that they had hoped, but they don't seem to believe are really happening anymore. And so they're going away.

No longer gathering, no longer staying. So I, I've been praying about this and the Lord has spoken a word to me that I am to share with you. And it's in the form of a little song. And He wants me to sing to you, which I don't do too often. But today I do:

Stay with me.

Please stay with Me

And pray with Me. Please pray with Me.

And play with Me. Please play with Me.

I'll lead you home. I'll keep you safe.

You'll hear My voice.

You'll feel My love.

Abide with Me.

Abide with Me.

Pray with me. Please pray with Me.

Stay with Me.

Please stay with Me, My love.

May the Lord bless us all today and give us His peace.