

Sermon for April 28, 2019

“Do You See?”

Luke 24:13-35

The place was Canton Ohio. A couple reports seeing the image of Jesus in the wood grain of a door in their house. Apparently, they noticed this image of Jesus in this door years before they told anyone. They even cut it out of the door and carried it with them when they moved to another house. They kept it because it gave them encouragement. The interesting thing is that 41% of the people who responded to NBC online poll concerning the image claim to see Jesus too; however, the wife of the couple claims that it could also be the Virgin Mary and 6% of the respondents see Mary and not Jesus.

In another case patients saw Jesus in the wood grain of a door at Mercy Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama. It makes sense that Jesus' image should appear in a door. He did say, “I am the door” (John 10:7), and he was a carpenter after all.

But we see this kind of thing all the time. One lady in St. Petersburg Florida claims seeing Jesus' image in a potato chip! There are many other places, like rock formations, and the patterns of light and shadows on a wall, that people claim to see Jesus' image.

What leads people to see Jesus in these ordinary places? The skeptic would say that our faith deludes us into seeing things that are not there. “If there were a God” they say, “He wouldn't be in ordinary things like a door or a potato chip!” “You Christians are just seeing things because you want to see them,” they conclude. We Christians however would say that we see Jesus in the ordinary because he is in the ordinary; even things like doors and potato chips. Hey, inquiring minds want to know!

Unlike the Canton, Ohio story, the story of Emmaus starts off with the disciples not seeing Jesus. Cleopas and his unnamed companion were disciples of Jesus. There were more who followed Jesus than the 12 disciples we usually think of. These two might have been part of the 70 who were sent out by Jesus to heal and teach. They certainly would have seen enough of Jesus to recognize him in a crowd. They also would have heard enough of him to recognize his voice if they heard it. Yet they walked and talked with Jesus for the better part of a day and didn't know it was him.

Apparently, Jesus was not the only thing they did not see that day. They also did not see that Jesus' death was part of God's plan. They were still stunned by the events of Jesus' trial and execution. So, Jesus had to open their eyes. He had to explain to them that it was God's plan from the beginning that the Messiah should die. He had to show them that it was all foretold in the prophets.

Jesus was opening their eyes. Helping them to see God's plan. Helping them to make sense of what seemed to them to be a senseless tragedy. Helping them to see victory coming out of what seemed like an utter defeat. Helping them

to see good coming out of evil – life out of death.

Jesus opened their eyes. When their eyes were opened, they recognized him, now just opened to the plan of God that the Messiah should die for the sin of the world. He also opened their eyes to recognize his presence with them. But the way he did it is significant. He didn't part an ocean or cause thunder and lightning or anything big like that.

He took some bread and blessed it and broke it. How ordinary: common bread, a simple blessing and then breaking it to eat. But to these disciples it was an eye-opening event. These simple acts called to their memory the times that Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and fed the multitudes. They may have even heard of him breaking the bread at his last supper with the 12.

And in that moment, in the ordinary, in things like bread and blessings, they saw him. They recognized him, and in a moment, he was gone. But they looked back at their walk that day. They realized that Jesus had been with them that whole time. They said, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road."

Do you see? Jesus is in the ordinary. He is in things like food and drink. He is in things like our daily journey or conversations with friends. He is in Canton, Ohio, Birmingham, Alabama, and Greenville, SC. He is in the closed door, and the bag of potato chips, and the everyday things of our world.

The problem is that we don't see him most of the time. I am not talking about seeing Jesus in doors or potato chips. I am talking about seeing Jesus at work in our world. I am talking about recognizing Christ in the people around us. I am talking about grasping the role of God in our lives. I am talking about hearing the voice of truth in everyday conversations.

Do you want to see the risen Christ? Look in your lives because he is already there. Look in your work places – he is there. Look in your classrooms. Weren't there times when your hearts burned? Perhaps that was Jesus talking to you!

Do you see? Do you want to see Jesus? Begin at this table today. Look in the bread and cup of communion. Jesus took the bread and blessed it and broke it. He said, "This is my body," and "This is my blood."

In a moment I will be taking this bread and blessing it and breaking it. Look for Christ in that moment. See him in the unfolding of the mystery of his body and blood.

If you want to see Jesus, look for him. And begin by looking for him in communion. Then continue looking for him every day and every hour. Your hearts will burn and your eyes will be opened to the glory of God!