

Sermon for the Third Sunday of Easter

'That very day, two of them were going to a village.'

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In the darkness of night, in the blackness of faithlessness, there appeared a radiance of a star, above a village of no reputation, a backwater, of which no one had a care.

Three men of the East saw the luminance of this light, and they traveled.

Now Him who appeared to travelers in the night by the brightness of a star appears to wanderers in His hidden flesh after the gloom of His crucifixion, wherein even the sun hid itself from the face of the earth.

These two wanderers spoke, even as I am sure the three kings spoke, discussing many things, for such is the way of men. We discuss things. We try to make reason out of things that seem unreasonable. We draw meaning from things that are but confusion. To the kings, the confusion was the rising of a new star to the West. To these two wanderers, the confusion was the rumors of the rising of the Son of Man to the East. For *'some women of our company amazed them. They were at the tomb early in the morning, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.'*

The same Lord appeared to both, in the star over Bethlehem and in the traveler on the road to Emmaus. In both cases, the Christ found it fitting not to reveal, but to draw, to lead. For the three Magi knew not what they were following, nor why, when they traveled to the Holy Land. They only saw, and followed. In the same way, these two men of Jerusalem do not know why they listen to this stranger who has joined them. They only follow.

The stranger asks them: *'What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?'*

They responded: *'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.'*

The two are disappointed, for they had hoped that this Jesus would redeem Israel, yet, from their point of view, His path ended at the foot of a cross. That which Jesus had promised had proven a lie. What they had hoped for, they hoped for in vain.

Yet the wanderer kindly mocks them: *'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?'* Was it not necessary that the way He trod end in yet another way? A path not merely into Jerusalem, but a path into hell? And not a path merely into hell, but a path back to the living?

More is being said here than we understand. For the Jews called the practice of their religion 'the walk', for they were to walk rightly in the sight of the Lord. Indeed, the foundation of their religion was found in walking. For in Adam, man was to walk rightly before the Lord, even as the Lord walked in the midst of the Garden.

After Adam's fall, His distant child, the patriarch Abraham was told to arise, and walk to a land of which God would show him.

And when Abraham was tested, he was told to walk with his son Isaac unto a mountain which he knew not, there to kill his son, only to have him returned.

Joseph led his brethren to Egypt that they might escape famine and death and have life in Egypt. Yet when in Egypt they were condemned to death, Moses marched them through the sea and the desert, out of that pagan land, that they might have life.

These two wanderers, even as they wander, had forgotten that their faith is one of wandering; wandering toward the salvation promised to them by their hidden God.

Now the hidden God enters their midst, that He might explain to them His wandering; that He might explain His walk, His path, the road He had to travel, that He, too, even as the Abraham and Isaac, even as Moses and all the Patriarchs

and Israelites, might pass from life unto death, only then to cross from death unto life.

Yet, the Lord Christ would not merely pass from the judgment of Eden to the toil of earth; nor would He wander from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of Judea. He must descend from the fallenness of this world to the torment of hell, that conquering hell, He might ascend to redeem the fallen of the world. He, too, like His ancestors, must complete His walk.

And having completed His exile, He speaks to these who walk without understanding: *'Was it not necessary that the Christ suffer these things and pass into his glory?'*

Was it not necessary that Him born of God who suffered on behalf of His people, die for those same people, that His suffering might be made into their life?

'O foolish ones.' A woman suffers when she gives birth, that from her pain, life may come. Should not Christ suffer in His passion and descent, that a new birth might be given to us, the Church? This is the path laid out for Christ and all His disciples, *beginning with Moses and all the Prophets*, for they are all *interpreted concerning the Lord*.

We do not always know the presence of God; but the presence of suffering we always know. But walk in this way, even as the Lord Himself did, as did *Moses and the Prophets before Him*. In anguish, we shall know our God, for He has known us in our grief. Truly, we have a God that *has been tempted in every way as ourselves*, and for this reason, loves us in every way in our temptation.

God promises us no lack of misery, for He granted no reprieve to His only begotten Son. He promises only His presence, and in His presence, even in the darkest hour of our life, His final salvation.

Therefore, let us pray, as wanderers in this strange land, what these two wanderers prayed of their Lord, even while they did not recognize Him.

'Stay with us, for it is evening, and the day is far spent.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Acts 2:14, 36-41; 1 Peter 1:17-25; Luke 24:13-35.