

Fed By Grace | Food in the Gospels

“In the Breaking of the Bread”

4.7.13

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Luke 24.13-49

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. ¹⁷ And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" ¹⁹ And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. ²¹ "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. ²² "But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. ²⁴ "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." ²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

²⁸ And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. ²⁹ But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³² They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

³³ And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." ³⁵ They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by

them in the breaking of the bread. ³⁶ While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; ⁴³ and He took it and ate it before them. ⁴⁴ Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ "You are witnesses of these things. *Luke 24.13-48*

Today concludes the series called Fed By Grace... at least for this year. We do plan to come back to it for a second course next year.

We've been looking at the theme of food in the Gospels...Jesus Christ was born and immediately put in a bowl...a "feeding trough"...He IS from the very start, presented as food for the world...spiritual nourishment for the spiritually starved...

And here at the end of the Gospel, food is again an important element in the story...The risen Jesus Christ is not recognized by some of His followers UNTIL He offers them food...When He breaks bread they recognize Him...and later He eats with them to give them the substantial, solid evidence they need, that HE is risen and real and not a vision or a ghost.

In the middle of this story is a GLARING and life threatening spiritual problem faced by all people, by both nonreligious and secular people... AND by... spiritual and religious people ...We ALL have a constant tendency to seriously misread the Bible. It's like our default mode for reading the Bible is all wrong...We've very prone to get the wrong idea...a failure to get out of the Bible what God intends for us.

What Jesus Christ gives in these episodes is a kind of interpretive key for understanding and for actually benefitting from the Bible... And if we can get it, or at least start getting it, it can ignite our spiritual lives, free us from superstition and fill us with purpose and a real sense of mission.

Let's look at: 1) Getting CONFUSED 2) Getting CONCENTRATED 3) Getting KINDLED

Two disciples, (Cleopas and another) not from the twelve (now eleven!) are walking down the road and they're "talking and discussing" (v. 15) what everyone's discussing in and around Jerusalem and THAT IS all the events surrounding this astounding Man, a mighty prophet, Jesus the Nazarene, who did miracles witnessed by thousands of people. And these two followers and many others were convinced that He was the One that all Israelites were awaiting, the Redeemer!

But they were NOW very disappointed to learn that He was apparently NOT the Redeemer after all...and they CAME to that conclusion when they saw Him rejected by the religious authorities and then crucified and dead... 'cause when your dead, it's over...can't do any good when you're dead!

And as they're discussing and debating like students are apt to do...so engrossed that they forget everything else...only the discussion matters...and in that very focused state, they're joined by a third Person... It probably took a few moments before they even noticed Him. And this third Person asks, "What are these things you're knocking around?" And they STOP! They're shocked and sad; "Have You had Your head in the sand? EVERYONE is talking about these things...don't you have a TV, a radio, the internet!? How could you miss this?"

The third Man asks, "Miss what?" And they tell Him all about it and how their hopes were dashed when they saw Him defeated and dead...and now three days have passed! And NOW it's really OVER! Even though...there was some rumor about Him being raised...but that would be too amazing ...and it turns out the only witnesses were...women."

And THEN this...dolt...this ignoramus...this bumpkin... this uninformed simpleton...He sort of turns on them and eloquently but firmly confronts them, "Foolish and slow of heart to believe in all the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into His glory?"

Now their gears are turning and they listen up! "Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in ALL THE SCRIPTURES."

And turns out this Person really has something to say ... their hearts are on fire as He interpreted the writings they had known since childhood...but apparently had hardly understood...And they try to force Him not to keep walking but to stay with them ... and He does... and they eat and when He blesses the bread, breaks the bread... and as He starts to give it they recognize Him and just like that, He's gone... "We should'a known! Weren't our hearts on fire as He explained the Scriptures to us?!"

And you wonder how this could've happened...not just that they didn't recognize Him (Jesus apparently didn't want to be recognized and somehow prevented it) but the bigger surprise is

that all their lives they had read the Tanakh, the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament and had failed to see the main idea...had failed to see the Suffering Servant in the Prophet Isaiah, ch. 53, (written 700bc),

But He was pierced through for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

And why after all Jesus Christ had already told them was going to take place couldn't they see it? And if THEY, so well schooled, so close to the actual events so spiritually attuned...if they could MISS the whole point, how about WE? It can come out in a lot of different ways, this confusion about the Bible and it's Big Idea.

For instance: we can get hung up on some particular teaching like angels or End Times... Even really big and important ideas like prayer or child-rearing... ideas that are really THERE but just not the MAIN idea. We can miss the whole panorama...can see the trees but not the forest. Or we focus on those few verses that give me comfort...or counsel or wisdom...or the examples of the heroes of the Bible (great stories). And then we TEND not to connect these big threads to the whole fabric of the Bible...the whole plan and the Big Story.

One reason we do it is because the Bible is a big book and it's made up of smaller books...it doesn't READ like our modern books...It has a lot of different genres like history and poetry and prophecy and letters and laws...It doesn't read like a novel with one very apparent plotline.

Second, we all bring baggage to the Bible, tremendous personal and cultural bias and presuppositions. They COULD NOT think of a suffering Messiah...and WE too have deeply ingrained opinions and convictions that we can't get around...and we don't even know we have them!

Third, if we have these preconceptions and if the Bible contradicts them... we hate to be contradicted. I asked a taxi driver once...he told me he was in a religious group that all three branches of the Christian church (Protestant, Catholic and Eastern Orthodox) all three consider this group a pseudo Christian cult...and I asked him, "If you were truly wrong would you want to know it?"

After a few seconds he said, "No." I think he was more honest than most people. Secretly, we'd rather be wrong than to admit we're wrong and have to change... We're afraid to change.

Another reason is plain old unbelief...we can not or will not trust that there is an Almighty God working out His plan.

A fifth reason for our confused approach to the Bible is that there are so many opinions – so many religious and spiritual options...And we sort of think that each one has a part of the truth (like that old parable of the five blind men describing the elephant ... one feels the side and says, “An elephant is like a wall.” Another feels the trunk and says, “An elephant is like a python.” Another feels the leg and says, “An elephant is a tree.”) And that parable is great because different religions do have valuable things to say and contribute... but what people often miss is that, in this parable there IS an elephant... a single...objective reality called “elephant”.

And Christianity is saying, “God comes to groping blind human beings who don’t get it...who can’t see God...and can never by our own reason or will power or sincerity...WE COULD NEVER SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE... and acknowledging that none of OUR ways to God will GET US TO GOD...Christianity says that God, in Jesus Christ came to us! God came down and revealed Himself through a NATION (the Israelites) and then out of that chosen nation came One who is the actual incarnation of God Himself.

This is the Central Story of the Bible on which we have to concentrate...It’s the only way to get past the confusion...It’s what Jesus Christ was doing on that long walk with those baffled disciples. He was concentrating their attention on the Main Idea of the Bible... that God had always planned from the Garden...to take the blame for His people...to suffer for them and then on the third day...to defeat death and sin.

They were walking on the day of hope, the third day, the day when so often in the Bible, when despair turns to joy, when death turns to life...and those two walkers said, “we HAD hoped he would redeem Israel!” ...And Jesus is saying, “Well, why would you stop hoping NOW? THIS is the third day, the day of HOPE... this is not the day to be unbelieving! This is the day to concentrate on the Big Picture!”

And if you’re focused on this BIG IDEA...this big story of a God who SWEARS to become human and to live a human life of beauty and love and perfect obedience FOR His people – to earn a record of obedience FOR the disobedient – and then to accept the justice that they deserve for their disobedience... IF you focus on that story it makes you both confident and humble.

In other words in our own society where no one can claim that HE or SHE has figured it out...it’s the worst possible cultural crime to say, “I know the truth...and other ideas that contradict this truth must be false” ... BUT THE PERSON who believes the Gospel can say, “I AM one of the blind men... and I am NO BETTER than any other blind man...I did nothing to earn or deserve the

truth... I didn't seek the TRUTH – the TRUTH came seeking for me!" See, I can't believe that and be arrogant or feel superior to people who believe other things...

"Oh, so you're saying that your truth is just a guess like everyone else's truth...that's cool!"

But that's not what I'm saying...I'm saying that there is an objective reality (an elephant) ... there is ONE God...And this One God came to a broken world and gave Himself to save broken people...and that God came to this broken man...gave me to see that I was broken and incomplete...and opened my eyes to receive His pardon and grace and new life... I don't see perfectly, I see through a glass darkly...but I see MOST clearly when I am focused...concentrated on this Big Idea.

Now, how are we going to actually put this into practice, how can we get past the confusion and get concentrated on the True Center on the Bible and how can we do it so that it warms our hearts and melts our wills so we become pliable and so we change and grow...how can we get kindled?

Well, in terms of technical difficulties...even though the Bible doesn't read like a novel...and though it's not always easy to see the big story line...it is possible to read the smaller parts with the Big Story in mind...You can see that David the shepherd boy who defeated the Philistine giant is WAY more than a picture of courage... He's a picture of a champion: he went and did battle against our enemy and we get credited with his victory...David is a picture getting us ready to meet a greater Champion... David's descendant...David's greater Son who triumphed over sin and judgment and death IN MY PLACE!

If you want help with that ...I mean with learning to read the Bible that way (concentrating on the Big Story even as you read the little ones) stick around here...we try to DO it that way in our teachings and sermons and studies here at St Andrews.

Second, it involves repentance and faith. If you are crossing your arms and daring God to convince you and defying Him...He may just leave you stew in your juices and your heart may turn to stone.

You need a heart warming...and it's ok to ask for one. Allow God to show you that belief is not an irrational leap...it's nourished on truth...That's why Jesus Christ came and ate with them and broke bread...so they could always know, "THAT WAS NOT some sort of group hypnosis or hallucination or dream...dreams don't leave breadcrumbs behind!" And so if you come with confusion and some skepticism and hurts and disappointments...that's ok! There's real solid truth here to convince you...

But it will change you...you can not have a Stepford God...whom you make just to confirm your own opinions and habits...That's an idol and not the real God. The real God is no tame lion...and He will break and melt you so be prepared.

Lastly, it's great that these episodes in Luke involve three components that regularly accompany being kindled by the Bible (like a three legged stool) – there's the Holy Spirit moving on hearts and opening their minds and eyes to believe (the God component!) then there's teaching (Jesus Christ is the teacher... He opens the Scriptures and points to Himself, the Big Idea...And that's is an ongoing function and office in the church...what's happening right now, in fact! We need it.) Third: community (they're discussing these things together and later they run toward other believers...WE NEED OTHERS if we're going to get and stay kindled).

And it's IN the community, the Church, that Jesus Christ makes Himself real in other ways too...We'll talk about that as we come to this Table (Pray).

The Communion (4.7.13)

In this passage there's an emphasis on "opening" – Jesus Christ opens the Scriptures, He opens their minds, He opens their eyes to recognize Him. And "in the breaking of the bread", Jesus Christ gives them to recognize Him in a new a fuller way.

There's an important word used here and used throughout the New Testament, in v. 35 "They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was RECOGNIZED by them in the breaking of the bread."

The word "recognized" is the Greek word means, "super-knowledge", as if to say, "They really saw Him, and knew Him and experienced Him in that moment..." It's Luke injecting some important theology here to tell us that when we break bread together..."in remembrance of Him" that HE IS HERE WITH US and WE come to actually experience Him...In fact, the very next words are these, "While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and says to them, 'Peace be to you.'"

Since WE tend to miss the point...and miss what God is doing...AND miss the living Jesus Christ...SO...He gives us this bread and wine... They thought the Stranger on the road was uninformed and dull...but it was them...

AND...IT'S US ...We're the dull ones...foolish and slow of heart to believe and that's why WE DESPERATELY need this moment...when our dull knowledge becomes "super-charged" becomes experiential and Jesus Christ becomes recognized as the Center of our lives.

Let's come and simply ask Him to make Himself known and to stand among us...as the Risen Prince and to kindle our hearts and speak deeply to our lives, "Peace be to you." ... Let's pray in silence.