

The proper **EXPECTATION** of the Christ ...
Leads to a proper **HOPE** for redemption ...
Leads to a proper **RECOGNITION** of the risen Lord in our lives.

INI

Luke 24:13-35

¹³ Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ¹⁵ So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

¹⁷ And He said to them, "What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?"

¹⁸ Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

¹⁹ And He said to them, "What things?"

So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. ²¹ But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. ²² Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. ²³ When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. ²⁴ And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but Him they did not see."

²⁵ Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

²⁸ Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. ²⁹ But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them.

³⁰ Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

³² And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

³³ So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

This is the word of the Lord.

We pray,

Dear Father in heaven, send now Your Spirit to open the Scriptures before us, that our hearts may recognize our risen Lord and Savior and come to a proper hope in your redemptive work; through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In Jesus name, grace and peace to you all, dear fellow redeemed,

We hear it all the time: God is good, God is love. But is He God? We expect certain things from God. We expect Him to give us good things: good health, good life, good food.

But what happens to our expectations are let down? What happens when things take a turn for the worse? We hear the sad news. An unexpected death steals away a loved one too soon. Yes, it was bad news for those two disciples. An unexpected death had stolen away their Lord. They leave Jerusalem empty handed, confused, a future lost, a hope that has failed. Things seem anything but good.

And we wonder: where is God? We begin to cast Him aside saying things like: they must have deserved it; it was the devil's fault; it was a matter of free will; it was sin that caused it – and we may be right on all accounts. But does that mean God has left us? God is love. God is good. But is He God?

A false expectation of God leads to all kinds of problems. It leads to a perpetual sorrow or rejection of Him as Savior. It leads to two men sulking away from Jerusalem; leaving behind a dead Jesus; seeing only a lost future and a failed hope. And so they say, "But we were hoping that it was he who was going to redeem Israel."

Today we join those two disciples in the same sort of sorrow, the same sort of confusion that plagues us, the same sort of feelings that we have been let down by God or that God is not God. Today we return to the Words of our Lord that we might gain The proper EXPECTATION of the Christ; that we might find the proper HOPE for redemption; that God might reveal to us a proper RECOGNITION of the risen Lord in our lives.

1) The proper **EXPECTATION** of the Christ ...

In 1518 Martin Luther prepared a series of theses for debate. It was the beginning of a school of thought that combatted the teachings of Rome and would form a basis for reformation. He called it “the theology of the cross” and contrasted it Rome’s teachings, calling it “the theology of glory.” In it, he writes: “That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened.”

A theology of glory expects glory now; and expects it to be clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened. It is to measure of God’s goodness in the accomplishments and events of our lives. Do we expect such a Christ? One who comes to give us good lives here on earth and to reward us for our efforts? Such an expectation leads to sorrow and lost hope. It leaves us blind to the Christ who walks beside us.

This is why two disciples leave Jerusalem full of sorrow. They leave Jerusalem with a lost hope. A man approaches who seems to know nothing of what has happened. How can he not know? How can he not sorrow? They explain how this Jesus of Nazareth was a great prophet and was supposed to be the Christ. He did great such wise and wonderful works for all to see. He was supposed to liberate them, to redeem them and bring the glory of an everlasting kingdom to Israel. But now He is dead. His death was unexpected and surrounded by mysterious reports of an empty tomb, angels; but they have yet to see any proof. They have a false expectation – a theology of glory.

Luther argues instead for a proper theology; he calls it “the theology of the cross.” So he writes: “He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.”

And so hidden away in a stranger, a foreigner, this man who seems to know nothing turns out to be the one who will reveal everything. He walks with us and begins to reveal how we are the strangers, we are the foreigners, we are the ones caught up a theology of glory and lost in false expectations. We expect to see God in our lives,

rewarding our efforts; but God must strip us bare – He must remake us and remove all earthly works and glory, until the only thing left is this stranger who speaks to us.

Yet this stranger will make Himself known – not through seeing, but through hearing. He opens the Scriptures and beginning at Moses explains how all of God's Word directs the Chosen Messiah to do the opposite of our expectations: *O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*

The Scriptures are opened to us and we find Christ made visible. Hidden away in prophecy upon prophecy: the bruised heel of Genesis 3; the forsaken cry of Psalm 22; the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53; the Christ who rises in Psalm 16 – Was it not necessary that the Christ would be humbled, would suffer, would die before entering His glory? This is how God is God and how we come to a proper expectation for the theology of God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

2) leads to a proper **HOPE** for redemption ...

The theology of the cross puts things into perspective. It robs us of any contribution to our salvation and proves that a suffering Christ is the cornerstone of our faith. So Luther writes: He who has emptied himself through suffering no longer does works but knows that God works and does all things in Him."

Redemption is liberation. The Bible calls it redemption because it expresses the idea of setting free. Some suppose this is a liberation from problems; others suppose it is a liberation from fear or anger; still others suppose it is a complete liberation from the presence of sin in one's life. These two disciples were hoping that He was going to redeem Israel. And when He suffers, dies, and is buried – their hope is lost.

Such expectations for redemption are really no redemption at all. Redemption comes at a cost. But does it cost Christ to fulfill a theology of earthly glory? Glory is His nature. It is no trouble for Him to establish a visible kingdom on earth, to free Israel from their bondage to the Romans; to rescue our economy; to prevent this or that illness, struggle, problem; it is easy for him to offer us earthly happiness. All creation is belongs to him and as God's Son, he can do whatever he pleases.

But these are not truly freedom. They do nothing for our bondage to sin. What slave can afford to free himself? Do we truly expect to offer this King our undivided loyalty? Will we serve him in righteousness and truth forever? Or will our works always be bound by sin and leave us enemies rather than faithful servants?

God's proper redemption comes at a cost. It is a great cost to free a slave and that cost would be paid by the Christ. He is chosen not just to pay the price, but to actually be the price. So we read earlier, from Peter: *1 Peter 1:18–19 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

You were freed not by earthly glory or visible works of our doing – but by the precious blood; the blood of God's own Son would be the price. Ought not the Christ to have suffered? God works liberation at a great cost; He gives His own Son for your sins and your sinfulness. And He proves the redemption complete and yours by raising Him up to glory. In this, you are free. In this, you have a proper hope – not that you can perceive in any earthly way, but these are the invisible things – the theology of the cross. This is the redemption God intends: a full payment which liberates us from sin, from death, from every problem, a liberation which is not made fully known until we reach our own bodily resurrection and the new creation. This is a proper hope for redemption. A proper hope for glory to come.

3) leads to a proper **RECOGNITION** of the risen Lord in our lives.

An interesting phrase appears in our text: “He indicated that He would have gone farther.” What does it mean that Jesus acts like He is ready to move on? Actually the Greek word could be translated: “He pretended to go on...” What is Jesus doing here, acting like He might go on, but not intending to?

He has emptied us; we are crushed in realization of our unbelief; our hopeless misunderstanding of what it means for God to be God. It is when this stranger has emptied us of any theology of glory, that we realize how desperately we need this stranger to stay. He cannot go on, He must stay with us. He pretends to go onward, that we might call upon Him, desire more from Him, and sit down with Him at Table. A proper expectation of the Christ leads to a proper hope for redemption leads to a proper recognition of who this is: and so we say, “Abide with us.”

30 Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

There is a debate as to whether this event was the Lord's Supper or a simple meal with the blessing of bread. Either sort of meal would have the same elements. On the one

hand, it has an striking similarity to the institution of the Lord's Supper. On the other hand these are the same words used in the feeding of the 5000. "He took bread, blessed and broke."

Regardless, what we recognize remains the same: this is the Risen Lord in fellowship with us. No longer a guest who is waited on, He becomes the host, the One who blesses and serves us. This now becomes the hallmark by which the disciples recognize Him: "He is risen indeed!"

Notice how it begins in the Word and culminates in Table Fellowship. Sounds familiar. And so we are led to properly recognize the risen Lord in our lives too. He comes to us, hidden away in the word of God. He is in fact, the Word of God. And there He empties us of all false expectations, of earthly works, of vain glory until we no longer perceive God through things visible; but instead He opens the Scriptures, He opens our hearts, and suddenly we recognize Him – in the midst of suffering, in the midst of questions and doubts and fears and sins: here He acts as host, serving us with His risen presence, in Word and Sacrament He blesses us – things are bright and beautiful.

He may vanish, but that does not mean He has left us. The risen Christ is recognized whenever we lay hold of His promises, when we enter into our own sufferings and find our confidence in Him. Our theology is that of the cross, and our purpose is that of Christ's – to suffer; to serve. The risen Christ is recognized wherever His disciples are representing His name; running to tell others and share the news; where His blessing is given to the world through us and through our sacrifices. Ought we not now suffer and enter into our Lord's risen glory?

God is love. God is good. And God is God. The proper expectation of Christ leads to all things bright and beautiful, even when they cannot be seen – it leads to a perpetual joy igniting within the heart; it leads to disciples, now returning with haste to Jerusalem; to their fellow brethren; leaving behind a dead Jesus; and now filled with a risen Jesus. Now we see a future gained and a hope that is sure: a hope that culminates in our own resurrection and final redemption of the body. There on the last day, we will join those two Emmaus disciples and our risen Lord in His redemption and restoration of the whole creation – ours for eternity.

He is risen indeed!

Amen.