

What Is Your Response To Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Word and your word to our hearts in Christ's name. Amen. Can I talk to you this morning about the scripture lesson that was read for us by Dr. Smith, even though it says that Mr. Newton read it, actually Dr. Smith read it, and I suspect most of you are aware of that.

It's the story of one of the resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ. And to my mind, it's an extremely beautiful story.

I talked about it last Sunday night at 8 o'clock, but some of you weren't here, so I'm going to talk about it again this morning, simply because I think it illustrates in a quite remarkable way how we encounter the person of the risen Christ.

Christian faith, as we talked about last week, means nothing apart from the resurrection. The resurrection is the singular event in which God seems to have intersected with history in a particular act in which the whole of the laws of nature were turned upside down, and that this was demonstrated in raising Jesus Christ from the dead.

All the laws that we're subject to were suddenly reversed, and all the things that we've become used to and acclimatized to were suddenly turned upside down when Christ rose from the dead.

[1 : 4 7] Now, how can you or me come to the place where we can appropriate in some way the reality of the fact that Christ is risen from the dead?

Probably the most significant fact of the resurrection is that he, being raised from the dead, dieth no more.

In other words, that the resurrected Christ is the contemporary of every generation, so that we in every generation of time and of history should come to know him.

And how can you come to know him? How can he break in on the routine and circumstances of your daily life in order that you can be aware, in some personal way, of the fact that Jesus is risen from the dead?

Well, this story, I think, tells you very graciously how it happens. There were two disciples making their way home to the village of Emmaus, having been to Jerusalem and having been involved in all the tragic events of that weekend, and having watched with many, many other named and unnamed disciples the trial and crucifixion and burial of our Lord Jesus.

[3 : 1 0] And so they were deeply discouraged and disheartened as they walked home to Emmaus on this evening of the first day of the week.

And as they went, we're told that Christ himself drew near and walked with him. And they didn't see him. They didn't recognize him.

So that I think the first thing I want to illustrate to you from this story is that for all of you who go around saying, and many people do, seeing is believing.

Christ saw fit that they shouldn't see him in order that they should believe in him. He deliberately turned it around.

And he didn't allow them to see him until they came to believe. And I think that this remains true in Christian experience, that once we have come to believe in him, then we are much more liable to see him.

[4 : 14] So as these disciples walked and Jesus walked with them, they weren't able to see him. But he started to talk to them.

And these are the things that he found necessary to tell them. First, he asked them why they were sad. And they said he must be the only person in Jerusalem that didn't know of the events of that weekend and how wrong, of course, they were because he knew of them in a way that no one else knew of the events of that weekend.

And so as he walked with them, he began to explain to them how it was necessary that the Christ should suffer. And you see, in order to understand the person of Jesus Christ, you have to understand his death.

I told you about this last week, that Martin Luther said the key to understanding the Christian faith is to understand the fact of his suffering and that the Gospels occupy themselves in large measure with telling the story of the death of Christ in order that we can understand the significance of the resurrection.

And asking the question, why did he die? Why was it necessary for him to die? Is a fundamental question that we all have to ask and we all have to come to terms with.

[5 : 37] Most of us come to terms with the question in a personal way and that is, why is it necessary to suffer at all? And why is there so much suffering in our world?

Well, Christ was very clear that it was necessary that the Christ of God should suffer and that this was the way in which God was to vindicate his chosen one.

And so he explained to these disciples why it was necessary to suffer. The disciples had already contradicted three times in the Gospel of Mark the sufferings of Christ when he said it was necessary for him to suffer.

And he three times told them this and they three times didn't comprehend or didn't understand. So to be a disciple of Jesus Christ without understanding the necessity of his suffering is an impossible situation.

And so Christ makes it his business to tell them of the necessity of his suffering. Then what he does is take them through the scriptures and beginning from Moses and all the prophets he told them of the things concerning himself.

[6 : 55] So it was that Christ understood the scriptures as illustrating to men who he was. That if you know the scriptures you will know Jesus Christ and if you know Jesus Christ you will understand the scriptures.

Those things go together. And so Christ went back and reiterated to them beginning from the very beginning of the Bible the things concerning himself. And this in the preaching of the acts of the apostles is the basis of their preaching because they were preaching to a people who knew the Bible who knew the Old Testament scriptures and they were saying to them this is the one of whom the scriptures speak.

That's why it remains of paramount importance that Christians should go on reading their Bible. Reading it in, well, reading it daily reading it in great quantities not just little bits and snippets of it but reading the great stories of scripture from Moses through all the prophets in order that we may become aware that they are speaking of someone in order that we may become aware of the one of whom they are speaking.

And so Christ having expounded on the necessity of his suffering then expounded on the purpose of the scriptures to point men to himself. And having done this they came at last to the place where they were going to spend the night.

And Christ imposed on them the obligation of making some response. And the way he did this was to make as though he would have gone further.

[8 : 45] And they were forced to say to him won't you come in and eat with us or spend the night with us because the day is far spent and the night is at hand. So the disciples invited Jesus to come in and to spend the night with him.

The obligation of responding to Jesus Christ I think is an obligation that all of us are under. And all of us have to come in the point of our understanding scripture to the point at which we do respond to him.

And I would like you to begin to think in terms of what is the nature of the response that you have made to Christ. Have you discussed the whole of the Christian faith?

Looked through all that scripture teaches and then allowed Christ to go on and never having come to the point of knowing him for yourself. Never having come to the point where you recognize who he is.

And this I think happens to many, many people that have never taken it upon themselves to respond to the revelation that Jesus has made of himself to them.

[10 : 05] And I think you need to do this. I think we all need to do it to come to the point where we say won't you come in and sup with me? It's interesting that this is, of course, the exact fulfillment, if you want, of the promise in Revelation 3.20 where you have Christ standing at the door and knocking and saying, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him and he with me. And for countless numbers of people, that has been the context or the picture within which they have responded to Jesus Christ, recognizing him as the one who is knocking at the door and recognizing the necessity they have to open the door and receive him as a guest into their home.

And so, we have to come to that point of personal response. We can go on endlessly hearing the exposition of the scriptures, endlessly, if you want, understanding the meaning of the sufferings of Christ.

But at some point, we are called upon to respond. And we have to invite him to come into our hearts and our homes and our lives. And so, these two disciples were wise enough to do that.

And they spread before him who had become their guest a supper. And in that supper, of bread and wine, perhaps, they laid it on the table and Christ, who had been invited as a guest into their home, suddenly became the master in their home or the Lord of the manor, if you want.

[11 : 55] And he took into his hands the bread and broke it and prayed, giving thanks. And in that moment, he was revealed to them.

They saw who it was. They recognized the Lord Jesus. It may have been because they were in the crowds of people that saw him take the loaves and fishes from a small boy and break them and distribute them.

It may have been that they were in the sufficiently intimate disciples of Christ that they had eaten with him before. And immediately, they recognized who it was when he broke bread before them and made himself known to them.

And in that moment, disappeared from their sight. At the moment that they saw him, he disappeared from their sight. And they recognized that they had been brought in a very gracious way to trust in the person of Jesus Christ, to experience him for themselves.

They had come to that point in their lives. And of course, we all need very much to come to that point. But let me tell you a little bit more about it.

[13 : 12] Because as the disciples thought and talked about it, they said, did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us in the way? At the moment that they recognized him, they immediately recognized that they had in fact known him before.

And I think it often comes that when we respond to Christ, when he, in his grace, makes himself known to us, we discover that we have heard him speaking to us from before.

that he, that they said that their hearts burned within them as they walked with him in the way. That at a deep level of their sort of subconscious awareness, they knew who it was before in their minds they recognized him.

And again, this is, this is the experience that we have of Christ. Not of seeing him directly in this sort of face-to-face encounter with him, but being aware of his presence with us long before we recognize him.

Aware that he is with us. And many people in the course of visiting them and talking to them give testimony to the fact that they have been aware of the presence of Christ.

[14 : 31] And having been made aware of his presence, and Christ having revealed himself to them in this instance, they then return to Jerusalem to share with the other disciples what they had seen.

And I think that this is how the church is built. By one disciple telling another disciple what they have experienced of Christ. 9.30, I talked to people about the necessity of making disciples.

And Cannon Robinson said, that's a tough job. And I agree that it's a tough job. And it's not a job that I feel that well equipped to do.

But what I can tell you is that the business of training disciples is to be done by disciples as one tells another what they have experienced of Christ.

As we can begin to open up to one another and to share with one another what our understanding and what our experience and what our perception of the Lord Jesus is.

[15 : 38] And as we begin to do that so we build one another up and encourage one another. So these disciples returned seven miles that night to Jerusalem to be able to share with the other disciples what they had learned.

I think this is such a beautiful and gracious picture of how Christ makes himself known to us. And I trust that Christ will graciously make himself known to each of you.

That you may be refreshed and renewed. That you may be established in your personal faith in Jesus Christ. That you may be aware of your heart having burned within you as Christ himself draws near by his Holy Spirit and makes himself known to you.

It's a perfect picture you see of how Christ by his Holy Spirit comes near to a believer and makes himself known. And how it is his purpose to make himself known to you and how it is our joy and our delight to be given grace to respond to the one who thus makes himself known.

Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. Hymn number three.

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