

and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

15 While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. 16 But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. 17 And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened.

22 Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning 23 and did not find his body; and they came back saying that they had even 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 as the women had said; but him they did not see." 25 And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. 28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, 29 but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?"

Christ is All in All

Foundational for Christianity is that the Scriptures are the word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. They contain such a variety of materials that we will continue to discover new things as long as we live and reinterpret things we thought we already knew. Their magnificent complexity and diversity are subsidiary evidences that they are more than just another human book. Hidden in the ordinary words of the prophets and the apostles are always more treasures to be discovered, so that so that in this lifetime we may never fully grasp all that writers had to say. That said, in hearing the familiar Scriptures read every Sunday, we discover that the deepest meaning to be discovered in them is Christ himself. As we find Christ

in the Scriptures, we are the same time looking into the souls of writers who in the Old Testament anticipated Christ in their lives and in the New Testament Christ reflected on their witness to him. Then we take this one step further, and we discover that Scriptures are speaking about us. In this sense they do not have to be updated. Scriptures also confront unbelievers who when they find out that in calling them to faith, they re addressing their unbelief, they shut their ears to avoid the judgment of God. So it was with prophets like Isaiah and then Paul who were frustrated that their hearers rejected the call to faith (Acts 28:27).. In finding no need for redemption, those who do not believe work at convincing themselves that the wrongs they may have done are inconsequential peccadillos with no lasting consequence but not serious felony sins. The best way to avoid accountability to God is live as if he does not exist.

In distinction from all other professions, biblical search and discovery are what preachers do for a living in preparing a sermon for the upcoming Sunday. Being immersed in God's word, they have the best possible job, even though those who hear them preach may think otherwise. Preachers are dealing with the only words through which God offers salvation or to put it more bluntly they are the only words that have eternal meaning, 'Balance of Nature' might keep you healthy into your eighties so that you can play golf, but what the preacher says will give you a life after this life is over. Reading the Scriptures in preparation for preaching is hard work and this burden is compounded by preparing a sermon in such a way that those who sit in the pews will grasp what the preacher has to say and then accepts as true. Then having preached the sermon, the preacher comes to the point of physical and emotional exhaustion and then he has to think on the very next day what he is are going to say on the following Sunday. For the preacher there is no in between weekend on which he does not have to think about the next time he gets into pulpit. If your high school and college age offspring do not look forward to

writing terms papers, because of the research that is required, think of the pastor who every week has to turn the Scriptures inside out in Greek and some times in Hebrew [pages from Hebrew and Greek Bibles], to prepare a sermon that will keep the congregation's attention for twenty minutes or so. Yesterday's sermons are not applicable today. Paul said those who preached well were worthy of double honor (1 Ti 5:17), that is, he is worthy a decent salary and then some.

What a pastor preaches on will be determined by the appointed readings from the Old Testament, the Epistles and mostly by the Gospels all of which have been arranged into cycles that are repeated every three years. Every three years the pastor pulls up on the computer the sermon he preached three or six years before, but in looking at it, he recognizes things in the Scriptures he did not see before. It is not as if his sermon was inadequate, but in every Scripture there is more to be grasped than when he first studied it. He may see connections between the appointed Gospel, which must always remain front and center, with the reading from the Old Testament and then ask how this theme is developed in the Epistle. The task of how one Scripture is connected with another is never completed. Every time we look at any Scripture, we are bound to find something we did not see before. Besides uncovering things in the Scriptures he has not seen before, but he looks at a congregation that is not exactly the same as it was three years ago. So the pastor is caught between the currents of two rivers. Just as his knowledge of the Scriptures, the faces of his congregation change from year to year.

Seminary students, who will be tomorrow's preachers, inevitably grumble about being assigned a section of the Bible in which they say they cannot find anything in it about which to preach. Good preaching requires a great deal of intellectual sweat, but only in struggling with Scriptures are great rewards found. There is no one way to preach an assigned Scripture and so I try to listen to the sermons of other pastors, because in listening to the sermons of others we

discover aspects of which we were previously unaware. The public reading of the Scriptures on Sunday must be done with a clear diction and a loud convincing voice, so that our rapidly aging congregations can hear it. Faith comes by hearing and if the people cannot hear, they cannot believe. When Paul wrote to Timothy to pay attention to reading, he did not mean that he should read still another book, even though this expands the intellectual horizon of the preacher and make him more interesting. Paul was telling Timothy that he should read the gospels during the church service with clarity and conviction and that this clarity and conviction should extend into his sermons (1 Ti 4:13). The public reading of the Scriptures is the prelude to the sermon and it is not simply another part of the liturgy. [A photo of a pastor reading the Scriptures.]

Each Easter season we hear the familiar story found in the last chapter of Luke of how two men who were overcome with such uncertainty about their future that they left the city of Jerusalem for the village of Emmaus, which is now lost in the sands of time. [Jesus walking to Emmaus with two disciples.] This account has to do with how Jesus directed the Old Testament into the lives of two of his followers who without Jesus as their leader, so they thought, faced an uncertain future. A mild form of depression had overcome them and they had good reason to question the value of what Jesus had taught them in being prepared to be missionaries and preachers of the kingdom Jesus said he was bringing. On the previous Friday, that's forty-eight hours before they set out for Emmaus, the corpse of the crucified Jesus was placed in a tomb and so their presumption was that Jesus was dead as dead could be. [The entombment of Jesus.] Their depression was brought on by an uncertain future and was compounded by hearing reports that some of the women who also were followers of Jesus found that his body missing from the tomb. Some claimed they had seen a vision of angels. [Two angels at the tomb]. Rumors are rumors and not much more.

Following the unexpected death of family member, our minds can play all kinds of tricks on us. In our dreams we can see the deceased and hear him speaking, only then to awake and discover that the person is not there. Some rumors are so extraordinary, such as those experienced by the women that the tomb of Jesus was empty and that they had seen a vision of angels, that they may not be worth the effort to determine whether or not they are true. Such was the case with the disciples on the way to Emmaus, as it was with the eleven disciples who would believe only after they had seen Jesus. [Picture of disciples huddled in upper room.]. That tomb was empty and an angel may have spoken to the women was not the only rumor. There were reports circulating among the other residents of Jerusalem that the military detail assigned to guard the tomb of Jesus by no less than the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate himself, that a dazzling bright angel had come down from heaven and rolled the stone away from the entrance of the tomb. [Angel confronts guard at tomb.] and had been reported to the high priests who with the consent of the council who were bribed to tell no one, especially the Roman governor. Like any good story, this one was so extraordinary that it soon found its way into the general population (Mt 28:2-4; 28:11-15), probably at the local taverns. No matter what really happened, there was no disagreement that the body of the man who had been publicly executed by being nailed to a crossbeam placed on a permanent stake in the stony ground properly called Golgotha, because it had the shape of a human skull (Mt 27:33) [the crucifixion of Jesus], was no longer in the tomb where it had been placed on the previous Friday. Conflicting reports of what had happened to the body of Jesus - had he really risen from the dead or was the body stolen - led to the uncertainty of what the two disciples walking to Emmaus would do with the rest of their lives.

Skepticism accounts for the content of most of last chapter of Luke's gospel. Two men,

one whose name was Cleopas, were not among the original twelve disciples whom Jesus called to be apostles, but they belonged to the seventy whom Jesus had commissioned to preach the gospel after he was gone (Lk 10:1). The twelve disciples had the task of preserving and authenticating the words and deeds of Jesus in anticipation that some of them would be entrusted with preserving the words and deeds of Jesus on paper. Customarily after Jesus had preached to the people, he would take the twelve disciples aside to further explain what he said. [Jesus and the Twelve]. Just as the preaching of Moses and the prophets was preserved on scrolls, so the what Jesus said and did would be preserved on papyri, a word from which we get our word for word paper (Mt 13:52) [picture of scroll and papyri] and these documents were copied over and over again and then translated into other languages. It used to be that every hotel room had a Gideon Bible. On the other hand, the seventy were prepared as traveling preachers to establish communities of believers, which we know as churches. Jesus' three years of preaching would quickly pass and the seventy, among whom were the Emmaus disciples, who would advance the kingdom of God by preaching. In all their confusion, the two Emmaus disciples remembered Jesus would make himself an atonement for sin (Lk 24:21), but on another level they understood redemption in a political sense of ridding Judea and Galilee of the Roman occupational forces. [Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem.] After all seven days before the crowds greeted Jesus on Palm Sunday by saying "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Lk 19:38). If Jesus could bring peace in heaven, he could do it on earth. Even those of his followers who heard Jesus preach that he would be raised from the dead on the third day, did not believe it until after he was raised from the dead (Jn 2:19-22), his enemies did (Mt 27:62-68). Just as the disciples could not accept that Jesus would really be put to death, so true to form that they believed that he would rise from the dead. But his adversaries understood exactly what he meant when he said

destroy this temple and in three days he would build it up again (Mt 27:63). And so they placed a guard at the tomb to make sure the disciples did not fake a resurrection of body by stealing the corpse. Ironically while the enemies of Jesus understood that in speaking of the destruction and reconstruction of the temple, he was speaking of his resurrection, his closest followers did not understand that the word temple was a metaphor for his body (Jn 2:19; comp Mt 26:62). One possible exception among his followers of Jesus who believed that Jesus would rise from the dead was an woman who is anonymous to us who poured expensive anointment on his body the night before he died (Mt 26:12). [Woman anointing body of Jesus.]

The body that would be buried would be the same body that would be raised from the dead. So it is even now that a parishioner who takes the words of Jesus at face value, grasps a biblical truth, that may escape the pastor.

Even though we know that some things are inevitable, we push them so far into the future, so that we do not have to come to terms that they will ever happen. We do not like to think of serious sickness, old age and death and so we push such thoughts to the back of our mind, as if they will never happen. But of course, they do. Like some of the other things that Jesus said, the followers of Jesus did not really grasp, for example, that he said he was God's Son and as God himself and as an atonement for sin. After feeding the four and the five thousand, the disciples came to Jesus saying they had forgotten to bring bread for lunch. This is unbelief in its perfect form. They did not comprehend that the one who gave the bread and the fish was really God (Mt 16:6-12). [Jesus feeding 5000.] Similarly they did not believe that he would be put to death and then restored to life by the resurrection. To take this one step further, the two men on Emmaus Road gave little credence to the report that women who had not found the body of Jesus in the tomb and they had seen a vision of angels. Had they believed it, they would have remained in Jerusalem, but they didn't. [Just two men walking to

Emmaus.]

With Jesus dead, so they thought, it was time for these two men to pick up stakes and start making plans for a future in which Jesus would have no part. Even if we know changes are inevitable, any change in our routine can be traumatic - a child leaving home for college or the military, the marriage of a son or a daughter or an unanticipated loss of a job. Since only seven days had passed since Palm Sunday, when it seemed obvious to his followers that Jesus would usher in the kingdom of God, these two men, as all of his followers, were in no way prepared to accept Jesus would die by crucifixion and then be raised. His resurrection was not even remotely on the radar screen. Here was a recipe for a roller coaster of emotions - first a victorious parade into Jerusalem, arrest at night in the garden then a trial, execution by crucifixion, and burial. All this within five days. So these two disciples had good reason to be skeptical of the report of the women that Jesus' tomb was empty and that they had seen angels.

For nearly everyone there comes a time to cash in the chips and to change direction in life. [Photo of Wall Street during a falling market.] In a falling stock market, it might be better to sell rather than lose everything. It's called cutting your losses, What these two disciples experienced was even more traumatic than a drop in the stock market. This was not a matter of money. They believed that their teacher would bring about the kingdom of God and that this kingdom would extend beyond this life into a much more glorious life, a kind of millennialism, a paradise on earth, the Garden of Eden restored [Picture of Eden].. Now the one who said he was the life and promised life was dead and so his promise was null and void. In their own words, "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Lk 24:21) . In their eyes, Jesus had failed to deliver.

This once in a life time conversation took place on a road that led out of Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. It was not as if something happened on the road - nothing concrete

happened, no miracles, no voice from heaven, no flashes of lightning. It was just three men talking with one another about had happened in Jerusalem over the last two days from Friday afternoon to early hours of Sunday morning. At the time two of the men had no no idea that the third man without whom they were talking was the man about whom they were talking - the man who died crucifixion and whose body was placed in tomb and now according to rumors whose body was missing. It may be better not to talk about someone you do not know to other people, because that person may be present. This can be embarrassing. In the conversation on the way to Emmaus, the third man who without invitation joins in the conversation was the man they were talking about. It was Jesus himself.

. What was different about the conversation on the road to Emmaus differed from any of other conversations Jesus had with othr - and he had many of them -, in that Jesus remained unidentified, until he broke bread with the two disciples which was the first celebration of the Holy Communion after his resurrection. [Jesus breaking bread at Emmaus.] On the way to Emmaus there was no display of divine glory like the giving of the law at Sinai or at the transfiguration, which was so magnificently beyond description that each of the three evangelists do not agree on how to describe it . The fourth evangelist put it succinctly “We beheld his glory.” Looking at Jesus was like looking directly at God. The transfiguration was beyond description which we will experience when Jesus returns in the glory (Rev 1:13-16).

In contrast to the transfiguration in which Jesus was speaking to Moses and Elijah, the conversation on the road to Emmaus was as ordinary as ordinary can be. No miracles. No angels. No flashing lights. No opening of the heaven. No earthquakes. No lightning. No voice from heaven. No tornado like winds that accompanied the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. No flames on the heads of apostles. No majestic organ. No praise bands. There

was just the noise of the feet of three men with sandals shuffling their way on a road to a village so insignificant that has slipped away into the sands of time. The Midwest is scattered with these once-upon-time towns. [Photo of an abandoned town.] Just as the two distraught disciples were figuring out what to do with the rest of their lives, a man interrupts n their conversation. Some of would consider this rude. We are uncomfortable in making small talk with people we don't know and may be we don't care to know. But this is exactly what Jesus did in making conversation with two men who did not recognize him and to make matters worse, he took over the conversation. As Luke writes, , "While [the two disciples] were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (Lk 24:15-17). Let's reconstruct the awkwardness of the scene, as much as we can. The conversation took place about forty-eight hours after Jesus had died, some time on the afternoon of the day we have come to know as Easter. As already said, second and third hand reports were floating aboutnd that some women found the tomb of Jesus empty and had seen apparitions of angels. These two disciples did not take what the women said seriously . Listening to gossip can be scintillating, but there is no guarantee that what we hear may have ever happened. It is good not to believe everything we hear. We know the women who reported that the tomb of Jesus was empty were his mother Mary and Mary Magdalene. With other women had remained with Jesus throughout his crucifixion and followed the cortege that carried his body to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea . They aw it placed in the tomb and stone rolled in front of the tomb. [Picture of the stone in front of the tomb.]. Unlike the eleven disciples who feared for their lives and locked the doors where they were staying,, these women were able to pull themselves together, so that twenty-fours after the body of Jesus was placed in the tomb, that is, on Saturday when the Sabbath regulations were no longer in effect, they went out on the streets to purchase oils to anoint the body of Jesus to

complete his burial. On Friday there was only time to wrap his blood stained body in a shroud which was a twelve foot piece of linen wrapped around his body from his feet over his head and then down the front of his body. [Photo of The Shroud of Turin.] This was the ancient counterpart of our body bag. Since his body was mangled from the head to the feet, washing the body would not be a pleasant task and was left to Sunday morning. The scourging with a whip with iron pellets at the end of each did not leave any part of his body untouched. The fine features of his face were mangled and his face was jaundiced with a yellow color face and his lips were swollen. It was just as Isaiah said, "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, [he was] as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised" (Isa 53:3) These women were doing the task that morticians now do on those who die gruesome deaths. Before they could apply the ointments to the body of Jesus, they had to wash it and the soonest this could be done was on Sunday, the day we came to be our Easter. Before the rising of the sun, about twelve hours after they purchased the oils to anoint his body, with ointments in hand the women set out for the tomb. The dawn in the early spring gave the women enough light even before the sun cracked the horizon to make their way through the streets of Jerusalem to the tomb that was near Golgotha where Jesus was crucified.

People die, we all die, and quite apart from the tragedy of death that all of us know, life goes on for the survivors, but for each of us, life goes on in different ways. There is no one prescribed to react to tragedy and death. These women had a job to do and they were determined to do it and so they became the first witnesses of the resurrection and so it is appropriate that church honors Mary Magdelene as the first witness of the resurrection during the Easter celebration of the Holy Communion. As the pastor says, "Therefore with Mary Magdelene, Peter and John and all the company of heaven, we glorify and magnify you saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory.'"

Now fast forward eight hours from the early morning to afternoon with two disciples were on the way to Emmaus thinking, that Jesus was still dead. They were discussing what to do with the rest of their lives, a not uncommon conversation for those who have lost their spouse.

Someone comes along and they begins telling them him what had happened to Jesus. This borders on the weird, since the man about whom they are talking is the one talking to them and he takes over the conversation, not in correcting what they were saying about how Jesus had died, but explaining why these things that had to have happened the way they did because this was what God had determined. They knew what had happend' but not why it happened. "And [Jesus] said to them, 'O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?'

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the ngs concerning himself" (Lk 24:25-27).) .It was not as if these two men got the details of how Jesus was put to death wrong, but they did understand why Jesus had to die. .

What had happened to Jesus did not happen by chance, but was determined by God in eternity. Again the words of Jesus "“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”“ God who is righteous in himself could bring the fallen creatures back to himself only by placing our unrighteousness on one who was righteousness in himself. Adam was not a fit candidate to redeem humanity, since he had forfeited his righteousness in which he was created by listening to Satan and not to God. Neither could itt be done by any of his progeny who shared in Adam’s sin. So God took our unrighteousness placed it on his Son and so John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world . But this was not a new thought at all. This was the Old Testament was all about. As Luke says “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” To explain what

happened to Jesus from the time of his arrest, execution by crucifixion and burial, Jesus went through the entire Old Testament - its history, its prophets, and even the wisdom books, especially the Psalms. It was only the direct messianic prophecies the horrors Jesus experienced were horrendous, but they had been lived out in the lives of the Old Testament saints. Jesus could hardly avoid Genesis, the first books of the Bible where the story of redemption began, and he ended with Malachi who wrote that we are to remember the words of Moses, that is the first five books of the Bible and who promised that Elijah would come before the great and terrible day of the Lord..

Without identifying himself as the one who had been crucified and raised from the dead, Jesus took the Emmaus disciples step by step through the entire Old Testament. Since we do not know where Emmaus is, we can only approximate that journey by foot from Jerusalem took about five or six hours and during this time Jesus laid out the Old Testament as a blueprint for his life, death, and resurrection. Those who men and women who gave their lives for others embodied in themselves who Christ would be and what he would do. In laying down their lives they previewed Jesus, who embodied in himself who and what the Christ would be. Like a master weaver, Jesus wove the christological themes from Old Testament into a seamless fabric that we know as the four gospels - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

We might even go so far as to say that the Bible is a collection of conversations of which the one on the way to Emmaus may be the most important in making the point that Christ cannot only be found in the Old Testament but he is its content.. If we can construct how the conversation Jesus had with the Emmaus disciples, it had to begin with Genesis chapter two in which God gave Adam the supervision over the creation with the prohibition that he was not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. [Picture of the Serpent talking to Eve.]

Satan persuaded Eve that eating the fruit would have benefits in that they would no longer be just like God but they would become like God himself. [Picture of Adam and Eve with the forbidden fruit in hand.] Eating that fruit was not intrinsically poisonous a sin, but it was a test to see if Adam would take God at his word. In a third conversation Eve persuades Adam to eat the fruit and by this act he puts God's word to side and puts himself in the place of God. Now comes a fourth conversation in which God speaks first to Adam, then Eve, and then the serpent. By listening to Satan, Adam and Eve had made Satan their god and you know that God does not tolerate competitors. "You shall worship the Lord your God" became "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Adam was no longer in a position that he could say as we do in the Matins that "It is he who has made us and not we ourselves." Adam had undone his own creation and no longer would he be God's partner for conversation, but he would return to the dust of the ground. Even before Adam fulfills his destiny in returning to the earth out of which he was created, his oldest son Cain, who Eve thought would reverse the curse, out of envy takes the life of his younger brother. Lest we think too much of ourselves, God's focus is on crushing the serpent who dared to take his place and in the irony of all ironies he do this by the the woman who was enamored by Satan's cunning. [Crushing the serpent's head.] Her progeny would crush the serpent's head. What was permanent damnation for Satan became eternal redemption for us. And how this would happen is the topic of the conversation on the road to Emmaus of how the Old Testament saints took up the christological task of defeating sin and Satan, all of which culminated in Jesus of Nazareth

No one had more conversations with God than Moses. In one of them God made Israel his people and in another in which he gave the law, a conversation that was accompanied by God's devouring glory to make the point that when God speaks we are to take it seriously (Ex

24:17) [Mt. Sinai with lightning].. Perhaps the most magnificent conversation that ever took place was at the transfiguration when Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah of how he would be put to death and then be raised on the third day. [The Transfiguration] This conversation concluded by God speaking from heaven (Lk 9:30) that Jesus was his beloved Son to whom we should listen to him. Jesus told the three disciples that only after he had risen from the dead, that they were to keep what they had seen and heard to themselves (Mt 17:8). Every Sunday in church, first listening to the prophets and then hearing the gospel read by the pastor, we are obeying the voice of God to listen to Jesus and by our listening the sin of Adam is undone who listened to the serpent and not God. The reading of the gospel takes us to a higher and more dynamic level above and beyond the Old Testament, because the Old Testament words take on their full and completed reality in hearing what Jesus said and did. As the Book of Hebrews says, "God who in former times spoke to us by the prophets has spoken in these latter days spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1:1). So that at the announcement of the gospel, we stand and sing the alleluias and after it is read, pastor concludes with "This is the gospel of the Lord" and we respond with "Praise be to thee O Christ." What we do on Sundays is all about Christ. When in church hearing the gospel read, we are listening to Jesus and if we do not hear Jesus speaking, we are not penetrating its deeper, essential meaning of the Scriptures that Jesus is the Son of God and that believing in him we should find eternal life (Jn 20:30-31). Those who do not find Christ in every portion of the Scripture have at best an incomplete and in some, perhaps most cases a false understanding that was not intended by the writers. On that account the Scriptures can best be understood to their fullest and only sense, when and where the saints of God are assembled to give glory to Jesus.

Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, begins with the genealogy of Abraham and not with Adam as Luke does in his genealogy which he positions in his third chapter [A large photo of the first verses of Matthew chapter one.]. By this Matthew intends to say that Jesus is to be understood as Christ as the one the Old Testament comes to a completion and is fulfilled. Abraham was so obsessed with God's promise to him that in his son all the nations would be blessed, that he put the promise on fast forward and he took Hagar [picture of Hagar] as his second wife to procure a son that Sarah did not give him; however, that son Ishmael was conceived in an ordinary way and hence could not be the child of promise. By any measurement the conception of Isaac from the ninety year old Sarah is extraordinary and is the precursor of Jesus' even more conception by Mary who was a virgin [Picture of Sarah and Isaac and other picture of Mary and Jesus] . In both cases God overcame the impossible so that only he could be considered as the one who brought them into existence. Jesus Adam who was created by God alone . Then Abraham's life takes a dreadful turn when God requires him to sacrifice Isaac who even has to carry the wood to the altar on which he will be sacrificed by his father (Gn 22:1-13). Before Abraham brings down the knife comes down on his son's neck, an angel intervenes and a ram is caught in a thicket is sacrificed in place of Isaac (Gn 22:12-14). This episode sets the theme for the Old Testament that God requires atoning sacrifice for sin and the Book of Leviticus expands on the theme of substitutionary atonement and so all aspects of Jewish life are marked by sacrifice to God. [A picture of sacrifices in the temple.] By their sacrifices Israelites will be reminded constantly that their claim to be God's people was dependent on a sacrifice which God himself would ultimately make in Jesus in whom God himself would make atonement. The christological theme in both testaments is that in contrast to Adam who listened to the sermon, we should love the Lord our God with all that we have

and that live our lives for the benefit of others by loving our neighbors as ourselves. Abraham reflected God's love for us his willingness to sacrifice his son who literally was all that he had and in loving others we emulate God who showed his love for us as his neighbors by sacrificing his Son. [As a sidebar, I call your attention an article in the March 2023 *Lutheran Witness* by Adam Koontz, "A Sacrifice for Our Children", (April 2023):22-23]. Sacrificial death, which characterizes what it means to be the Christ that appears in sharp relief in the account of Abraham sacrificing Isaac, belongs to the fabric of Jewish life and is threaded out throughout the Old Testament as the blueprint for how Jesus explained to the Emmaus disciples why he had to die and be raised from the dead [Again picture of Abraham sacrificing Isaac.]

At the end of Genesis two Christ like figures, a bit more complex, appear. Among Jacob's twelve sons Joseph is the favorite and is so despised by his brothers that they plot to put him to death and he is saved only by his brothers when they figure out he is worth more alive than dead and they sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver (Gen 37:1-36). [Picture of Joseph's brothers selling him to the Ishmaelites.] Read between the lines and you will find the account how Jesus' own countrymen called for his death and how Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Falsely accused for by his master's wife for impropriety, Joseph is thrown into prison from which he is released to become the prime minister of Egypt. Here are the themes of the humiliation and glorification of Jesus. Joseph not only forgives his brothers for desiring to kill him and selling him into slavery but in a time of drought in the land of Canaan provides them with grain. [Joseph meets his brothers in Egypt.] All this is an overlay of Jesus, who is the favored Son of God, despised by the Jews, sentenced to death, and then overlooks to the side the failure of his disciples (Mt 28:16-20) and is raised to God's right hand.

There is a sidebar to the story of Joseph. At their first meetings, his brothers did not recognize him and he asked them about his younger and now Jacob's favored brother Benjamin, whom Jacob would not allow to go to Egypt on their first trip. To allow their father Jacob to let Benjamin go to Egypt, Judah put up himself as a bond (Gen 43:9). Here again is the theme of substitutionary life that appeared in the story of Abraham offering up a ram in the place of Isaac. Then there is Moses. When God wanted to destroy Israelites for deserting him for other gods, Moses is a Christ like figure in asking God to take his life that instead of destroying the Israelites who had gone after for false gods (Ex 32:11-14; Ps 106:2). [Picture of Israelites dancing around golden calf.] A perception that Moses was all law and condemnation, a view particularly popular with Lutherans, is based on a false interpretation of John 1:17 that the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ, which is used to confirm that God's word is to be understood as the law and the gospel. True as this is, this passage means that through Moses God was known through what was written and in Jesus we know God in the flesh and blood Jesus.. Among all the Christ figures in the Old Testament, David emerges as the most prominent and the nearly perfect king (1 Ki 3:14; 11:33; 11:38). So the New Testament opens in the first verse of Matthew, Jesus is called the Son of David, as he is then on Palm Sunday (Mt 21:9) [Picture of Jesus entering Jerusalem], a theme that is carried over to the crucifixion where he is put to death as the king of Jews, that is, as the heir David's throne and so in the eyes of his tormentors a threat to Caesar (Mt 27:37; Lk 23:38). Luke takes up the theme in the angels announcing that Jesus is born in the city of David (Lk 2:11). While the fully armor equipped Israel military back down before taking on the Philistines in battle, David puts all his trust in God and with a slingshot and a stone takes down the giant Goliath and conquers the Philistines (1 Sam 17:22-51) [Picture of David slaying Goliath.] . Though

anointed to be king, David shows his graciousness in sparing the life of Saul whom God had disposed as king. David's son Absalom almost succeeds in putting himself on the throne in the place of his father. In fleeing from David's army, the apostate son comes to a wicked end by having his beautiful, long hair caught in a tree and hanging there until a dart pierces his heart (2 Sam 18:9-15) [Absalom hanging from a tree.}. Instead of celebrating that his throne was now secure, David cries out in sorrow "Absalom, Absalom, my son, would to God that I would have died for you" (2 Sm 19: 1,40). Here is the theme of substitutionary death that David desires to have taken the place of his traitorous son and so he is like Christ laments to over the unbelief of Jerusalem that will bring it to destruction (Mt 23:37-39; Lk 13:34). [Jesus weeping over Jerusalem.] No Christ figure in the Old Testament measures up Jesus. Even the near perfect David has a dark side who has Uriah killed to take Bathsheba as his wife and with this David set in motion adultery, murder and political upheaval within his own family.

While Adam, Abraham, Moses and David are the prominent Christ figures in the Old Testament, there are those who are remembered chiefly by the only one act in putting their lives on the line for others and so they prepared for how Jesus was to be understood as the Christ who died for all. One unlikely person is Samson. With his escapades with Delilah that allowed the Philistines to take the upper hand over the Israelites, some have questioned how he embodies the virtues by which Jesus was recognized as the Christ. [Picture of Samson and Delilah.] What many of us may know of him comes from the motion picture on how he succumbed to her charms and revealed to her that his extraordinary strength lay in his hair. While he was sleeping, she cut it off and he was reduced to a weakling. The Philistines put his eyes out and he was set as a slave to push the millstone in an endless circle to grind grain into wheat. To

make fun of him and the God of Israel, the Philistines chained him to the pillars of the temple to the fish god Dagon (Jdg 16:23-31) and he used this moment to pull down the temple with these words "Let me die with the Philistines." [Some pictures of the blinded Samson pushing the millstone and then one of him pulling down the temple.] It was almost as if he cried out the words of Christ "It is finished" and it was. With his death, the pagan temple crumbled and its priests and the people were destroyed. Thus prefiguring Christ's taking down the gates of hell and proclaiming himself as the victor over Satan and all false gods. This is what we mean when we say that Christ descended into hell. [A picture of Christ storming hell.] Samson is listed in the book of Hebrews as one of the greats of the Old Testament (Heb 11:32). Two women are clearly Christ-like figures in putting their lives on the line for others. Rahab appears in Matthew's genealogy which is strikingly unusual, since genealogies are traced through the fathers. Add to this she was not a Jew but a Canaanite and a prostitute by profession (Mt 1:5). In spite of her questionable credentials, Rahab also is mentioned in the book of James and is presented with Abraham as a person of great faith. [Picture of Rahab taking in the spies.] She also gets favorable mention in Hebrews for hiding two Israelite spies sent to scout out the land of Canaan before the Israelites took possession of it (Heb 11:31). Putting Rahab side by side with Abraham, who is the greatest? Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice his son and he proceeded to do so. Without any command or word from God, Rahab placed her life on the line in hiding the two spies in her house and then telling the king of Canaan that they were no longer there (Jos 3:2-7). Had she been caught, she would have been killed. And so she presents herself as the figure of Christ who gave us life for us. To put this in a more contemporary context, think of those who put their lives in jeopardy by hiding Jews from being taken captive by the Nazis. There is also a third woman, Esther, whose name graces a book,

which as the critics mention, that does not mention the name of God. So may be it should not be in the Bible. [Picture of Esther going before the king and another picture of Mordecai hanging on a gallows of his own making.] You know the story of Esther of how in going to the king, she risked her life to save Israelites and in the end Mordecai was hung on the gallows that he intended for the Jews. For the Psalms only a few words are reserved, even though they have a three fold meaning. Each Psalm reflects the faith of the writer who in most cases is David. They also fit perfectly into the mouth of Christ and reflect his relationship to God and to us. They also serve as our prayers as we live which are like Christ's.

What Paul wrote in Romans 15:4, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope", provides a basis for how Jesus explained on the Emmaus Road that the Old Testament was all about him. And if the lives of the Old Testament saints are ultimately lives which Christ lived in them, so also our lives are lived in him. Christ who was at work in the Old Testament is also at work in us. Just as the lives of the Old Testament saints set a pattern for what Christ would be and do, so our lives are a reflection and continuation of the life that Christ lived. The good works we do is Christ working in us. Paul put it this way: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). Consider these puzzling words of Jesus: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father" (Jn 14:20). But what are these great works? Jesus said, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends (Jn 15:13). The apostle John was equally explicit, "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay

down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jn 3:16). John does expect that each believer will face martyrdom, even though this has happened, is continuing to happen and will continue to happen all over the world. Since what Christ did in dying for us can be seen who die for him. This is the true christology. There are those Egyptian Christians who were given the chance by their Moslem captors to save their lives if they renounced their faith. [News photos of these Egyptian Christians awaiting death on the shores of the Mediterranean sea in Lybia.] They did not and one by one each was decapitated in the presence of those who remained. This is the true christology. In the same section of his epistles, John goes on to say that Christ can be seen in coming to the aid of those who have nothing. “But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (1 Jn 3:17). Just as life of Christ was previewed in the lives of the Old Testament saints who did not see him, so that also his life comes to expression in our lives who have seen him.

We do not know precisely how Jesus pursued the conversation with the two disciples on the Emmaus Road about the Old Testament Scriptures all of which spoke of him, but it continues every Sunday in our hearing the Old Testament and the gospel and it ends for us like it did for the disciples at Emmaus that in the breaking of the bread we recognize Jesus for who he is as Christ and that conversation will come to a conclusion when Christ who speaks to us in the Scriptures will speak to us face to face.

END OF ESSAY

Lutherans see the law in three ways. In its first use the law restrains sin in the world - something which is lacking in some major cities in the country - and with the second use he convicts us of our transgressions. In this use Lutherans customarily speak of the law and the gospel as being opposed to each other in that the law requires and condemns and the gospel

forgives our inability to live up to God's demands. All well and good. However, even in this use the law provides the scaffolding for the gospel or to put it another way the law providing the framework on which the gospel is constructed. Without the law we could not know what the gospel is or to put it another way the law sets down the outline for the gospel. Then there is third use which proves a guide for how Christians are to live and this use of the law which is now widely denied with the argument that Christians live under the gospel. Let's role out the problem. Law as condemnation of sin does not produce good works in neither believers nor unbelievers. However, as law exists in God is a total positive thing and so we to love God with all that we are and to love others as much as we love ourselves. Law turned into a terrible negative condemning us when Adam and his progeny call into question the God's deity by ignoring what he says and by that we sin against the First Commandment and put ourselves in the place of God. Now in Christ who by his life and death has fulfilled the law allows us to see God as he really as the God of love and working in use we can do the works that Christ once did, he works us. This is the proper understanding of the third use of the law not that we refrain from sin, which we can never completely do in this life, but that we do the works that benefit others. .

The one book that explains how Christ is at the heart of the Old Testament and how he is at work in our lives is the Psalms and take any of the one hundred fifty of them and ask who is the speaker and who is the one who is speaking them. Their author who is David is speaking of himself as the one who delights in the law, that is, he finds salvation in the Scriptures. Through David Christ is speaking who is also their author who is obsessed with doing the will of God. Finally, we are the one find ourselves speaking the Psalms. We all know the words , "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." These words were first spoken by David in the

desperation that his enemies had overtaken him. They were prayed by Jesus in baring the sin of the entire world but with the sure confidence that God would deliver him. Finally, as long as we live, we pray these words in our abandonment but like David and Jesus with the confidence that God will come to our aid. In reading and hearing the Scriptures along side of the saints of God and of Christ

There are fifty chapters in Genesis and central figure of the first book of the Bible

EXTRA

This is not the way for Luke or anyone to end a gospel the with the account of two disgruntled disciples thinking thqt they had made bad investment in following Jesus. A better ending a gospel is provided by Matthew who tells the story of an angel coming down from heaven with a face is blazing with lightening. The angel then olls the stone away and then sits on it. This preview of day of the judgment so the terrified soldiers, that they went into such a state of shock that their bodily functions ceased. As Matthew says they were like dead men Compared to what Matthew says about Jesus' resurrection, Luke's account of what happened on the Emmaus road is ordinary beyond ordinary so ordinary that we are be caught off guard by ordinariness.

EXTRA

What made things more difficult for his followers of Jesus was what Jesus said about himself. Jesus was not an ordinary man and what he said and how he said proved it.

The one who said that he was the resurrection and the life was dead. What Jesus said to the people about their accountability to God upset them and so they killed him and things have not changed today. Some will have nothing to do with him and still others are determined that no mention be made of him in public places and the media. Whereas in the past, Christmas carols could be heard in malls and other public places, now they are no longer heard and our ears are stuffed with Santa Claus songs. . If we ask why church attendance is down, the answers are not complex Having a cup of coffee in front of a TV is more comfortable than kneeling at the altar to confront and receive Christ in the body that he offered for sin and in the drinking the blood by which he made a payment for transgression. Many people, perhaps most, do not come to church, because they do not want to hear that they are morally accountable to the God who created them. They do not want to hear the preacher that unless they repent, they will face his judgment. Some can talk about God, but are willing to say that God can only be known in Jesus and the God who comes in judgment is Jesus himself. This kind of preaching cuts to the core of who we are as sinners and one way to handle this is shutting our ears to the preacher or in the case of Jesus himself to get rid of him. Acknowledging Christ as the Savior requires coming to the realization that we are what we are because God has created us. As we say in the Matins service, "It is he who had made us and not we ourselves." From direct experience your pastor knows self-made people who because they are so into themselves, they cannot acknowledge God as their maker and so morally self-content, they cannot and do not know recognize Jesus as their Savior. Your pastor knows this kind of life from direct experience. This is his life. Some people stay as far away from church as they can and should they come to church, they sit in the pews and shut their ears. Though they say nothing, their blank faces deliver the message they do not want hear about God and what God requires of them. Every lab report

builds up in us a bit of anxiety as we wait to learn about our physical condition. Much more serious is learning about our deteriorating spiritual condition. Because Adam chose to listen to Satan and not to the God who created him in his own image, he was the first to hear the sentence that none of us want to hear and which no one can escape: that we will return to the earth from which we came.