



Come, Lord Jesus, Be Our Guest
Luke 24:13-35

An Easter sermon, Sunday, April 21st, 2019
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.

Text: While they were talking Jesus himself drew near and went with them... (vs. 15)

At dawn the women - Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and “the other women” - went to the tomb carrying spices. In the early morning hours they saw that the tomb was open; the great stone that sealed the tomb had been rolled away. Jesus’ body was gone and two men in dazzling apparel stood before them.

“Why do you seek the living among the dead?” the men asked the terrified women.

They left the tomb and told the eleven what had happened. It seemed to the eleven nothing but an idle tale. The women, though, did not see Jesus--the Resurrected Lord.

That evening disciples, Cleopas and another, were walking the seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus. As they talked about everything that had happened a Stranger appeared and walked beside them. He asked what they were talking about. He seemed insightful. Time passed quickly. Approaching Emmaus the sun began to set. The two invited the Stranger to be their Guest for the day was ending.

As they sat at the table their Guest became the Host. He took the bread, blessed it and broke it. It was at that moment that their eyes were opened and they recognized him. But no sooner did they recognize him then he vanished as quickly as he appeared.

Jesus: Stranger, Guest, and Host.

Jesus is the stranger in our midst.

In the words of the New Testament letter to the Hebrews we read, *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body. (13:2-3)*

As the poets Gordon and Gladys DePress wrote,

“Recognizing the stranger/ As the face of God/ Takes so much suspicion and hostility/ Out of life. ...

“Somehow viewing the stranger as a face of God/ Changes him as well as me. / For it is have seen God in him, How can he see less in himself?”¹

1. *Faces of God*. Westminster Press, c. 1974, p.3

In Christ the Stranger becomes the Guest.

It has been noted that there is a difference between a *visitor* and a *guest*. A visitor remains a stranger in our midst. A guest, though, becomes part of us.

In the New Testament *Hospitality* is *philoxenia* or literally “love of the stranger”. This stands in stark contrast to the xenophobia or “fear of the stranger” that is rampant in the world today.

Rather than seeing the stranger as someone to be feared or avoided, we are called to see the stranger as someone to be known. As the Stranger on the road to Emmaus opened the eyes of the two disciples to new understanding, so the stranger can open our eyes to new understandings. The stranger can teach us things that we did not know, challenge us to love with a Christ like love. Christ challenges us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, nurse the sick, visit the imprisoned whether they be imprisoned by the circumstances of poverty or institution.

Jesus once spoke of the Day when the Son of Man would return to the earth and divide all of the people as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. In that parable Jesus said that the Son of Man would appear as one in need to food or drink or a warm welcome. To the ones on his right hand the Son would welcome into the Kingdom because provided hospitality to the least, the last, the lost, and the forgotten. They didn't understand, though. They never recalled doing any of these things. Ah, but you did, the Son of Man would remind them. You did it when you did it to the least. (Matthew 25)

The Risen Lord comes to us most days of our lives in manifestations that we do not recognize. When we show an act of kindness to a stranger or help someone in need, we are really ministering to Christ. It occurs at school, on the highway, in restaurants, at home, and even in the workplace. Maybe, especially in the workplace where too many are expected to do more with less.

The Guest becomes the Host.

He became the Host in the breaking of bread. They recognized him and no sooner did they recognize him then he disappeared, not to be forgotten, but to go on ahead.

At the baptismal font we are reminded that God's love for us existed before we were even born. We are washed in this eternal and incomprehensible love all of our days. At the table we are not only fed to continue Christ's work in this world empowered by his Presence.

I believe that we live in an Emmaus world today. We live in a time of confusion and uncertainty and mistrust and alienation. In the face of this we must remember that we are an “Easter People”. Emmaus calls us to a new way of life; one that is not captured by the forces of negativity and division. We are the yeast that transforms, sowers of Kingdom seeds, purveyors of Hope, witnesses in the Jerusalem's and Judea's of our neighborhoods, the alien Samaria's and even the ends of the earth.

Amen.