

The breaking of bread

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Preacher: Prof J.Douglas Macmillan

- [0 : 0 0] Let us turn now for a short time this evening to the portion of God's words read. The Gospel of Christ according to Luke, the 24th chapter.
- And let us center our thoughts around the words of that sacrifice. And be told what things were done in the way and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.
- The great desire of God's people in coming to the Lord's table is that they will know the Lord Jesus there.
- When the Spirit through the Apostle John defines what eternal life is, he defines it like this.
- To know thee, said Jesus, the only living and true God. And Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, this is eternal life.
- [1 : 2 2] And the one right that anyone has to go to the Lord's table is that he or she knows Jesus.
- And knows God through Jesus as the God of all days. In a preparatory service, you see me very often one of self-examination for the Christian believer.
- And it's good and right that that should frequently be so. It is a good preparation for us to know our sin and our needs and our total dependence upon Christ.
- And yet, this evening, rather than dwell upon our selves and our experience, I want us to rather center our faith, our hearts, our songs, upon the Lord Jesus himself.
- Because he is the very center of the Lord's Supper. And the supreme desire, I believe, of every Christian who comes to the Lord's Supper is to know the Lord himself in the Supper.
- [2 : 5 8] The apostle Paul, when he writes of the Lord's Supper, speaks of discerning the Lord's body.
- Knowing with a spiritual understanding what we do when we handle bread broken and wine poured forth.
- We handle the tenderness of Christ's own love to us. So these two disciples of Jesus had an unveiling of the Lord Jesus to them in the breaking of bread.
- I don't think that this was an observance of the sacrament. Seems more likely that it was just an ordinary evening meal.
- Nevertheless, these two men, I'm sure, had heard from the disciples through the days when the Lord was laid in the grave.
- [4 : 1 8] They had heard from the disciples. The other disciples what Jesus had done on the eve of his crucifixion. How he had gathered them together to observe the Passover with them.
- And how when they had observed the Passover, he instituted the Lord's Supper. He took bread. He took bread. And he blessed it.
- And he broke it. And he gave it to them. And that was probably still fresh in the mind when they sat at this table in Emeas with Jesus.
- Anyway, whether that be so or not, the scripture says that it was in breaking of bread that he was made known to them.

Now, before he was unveiled, Jesus was unknown to the disciples. And that would be the first point for our church this evening as we focus on this wonderful story.

[5 : 36] Jesus, heaven but unknown. Possible for the Lord Jesus to be in the midst of his people and to be present with any one believer.

And for his people or for a believer not to be consciously aware of it. That may seem a strange thing.

Yet, it should be a heartening thing for us too. But the Lord Jesus can be with us and ourselves be unaware of his presence.

Indeed, according to his own word, he is always with us. Not always are we aware of his presence. But he himself has said, I will never, never leave thee.

I will never, never forsake thee. Jesus was with these men. And yet, these men never recognized him as Jesus.

[6 : 42] He was in their thoughts. And he was in the speech when he drew nearer to them. And yet, although he came so close that he walked with them in the way, his presence went unrecognized.

Quite an amazing thing. And yet, it happened. And it happened not only there, but it has happened often in the experience of every Christian believer.

How many days as we journey along the maestroad of life, although he is there and with us, we are unconscious, unconscious, unaware of his presence.

It was good that although they started out on the road alone, Jesus was in their thoughts and Jesus in their conversations.

It could hardly be otherwise. These two men had been disciples. Lord Jesus had called them to follow him and they had become disciples.

[8 : 07] And then, the masters, they followed and they followed him because they loved him. That master had been taken and by wicked hands had been crucified and slain.

It was the thing that filled the horizon of their thoughts. the amazing, unexpected event. Unexpected to the earth despite the fact that the Lord had so frequently in the last months of his ministry spoken to the twelve about his death and about his resurrection.

And only two days before this had reminded them. Only two days before his crucifixion had reminded the disciples that crucifixion was coming.

Ye know, he said, that in two days it is the Passover and the Son of Man is betrayed to be crucified. And yet, when it came, how their faith was dimmed and their hopes dispersed.

We thought it had been he. These two men was probably just coming up the feeling that was left among the disciple band of Jesus.

[9 : 38] We thought it had, should have been he. Yes, he was a prophet, mighty in deed and in word. And then the prophet so mighty in deed and in word had been crucified and he was buried and he blamed it all on the chief priests.

Well, there was talking about all this when Jesus himself still neared. We read in Malachi that at a time when faith was small and when righteousness had almost disappeared from the land of God's people that then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another and the Lord hearkened and cared and what a lesson for us that even when we feel deserted and when we feel that our spiritual life is at a low ebb and that the power of the Lord is withdrawn and that things have taken unhooped for and unexpected turns what a lesson to us as Christian believers and as our fellowship and as our congregation that still the Lord should be in our thought and in our conversation because it's when believers talk together of spiritual things that Jesus draws near and through that has often been through my Christian friends in your own life and your own experience when you fellowship with other believers and when you go over the amazing things that

God has done and that God has promised and accomplished a lesson comes into the fellowship and it's the presence of the Lord Jesus himself well Jesus hasn't but unrecognized not only is it possible for the Lord to be present with Christian believers and yet to be unknown amongst them by them yet it's even possible for him to be blessing believers when believers are still unaware of his presence these two men walked this he may have showed this was a testimony of it afterwards that while he walked with them and talked with them in the way their hearts burned within them what a lovely expression spiritual spiritual things began to flame up in their minds and their experience when Jesus was opening to them the scriptures and expounding in all the scriptures all the things concerning himself what was

Jesus doing he was opening the word of God to them as it had never been opened to them before their minds were being illuminated in the things concerning himself and as their minds were illuminated their hearts were warm made to burn and still he was unrecognized by him and the scripture gives us two reasons as to why they didn't recognize him one in themselves and one in the law these two things are not contradictory but complementary this gospel says that their eyes were holden that they should not know him it would seem that God did something to prevent them from recognizing who had drawn near to them and who was journeying with them something in themselves their eyes were holden we read later on that their eyes were opened that they should know him now when the scripture talks of eyes in that sense is talking of a mental a spiritual moral understanding a moral vision does that often it's difficult to determine exactly what the scripture means when it says their eyes were holden but there was something held back in their understanding something something in them so that they should not recognize

Christ until Christ's moment for revealing himself had come and then there was something in Christ himself not in Luke but in Mark we read that he appeared to them in another form as they journeyed there was something in Christ risen in a resurrection body others of the disciples didn't recognize him either until he told them who he was very often you know God visits his people and he comes to them in such a fashion that their eyes are holden that they should not know he visits his people for example sometimes with illness and suffering

[16 : 16] I've been talking to you about a gentleman I've been visiting since last July who has been terminally ill since then I was visiting him again yesterday he's much worse than he has been confined now to bed yet yesterday he was very clear in his mind very clear in his heart too I saw and he was able for a little while to convey something of what he was feeling to me and he said you know Mr.

McMillan this whole illness has just been a visit to me of God in his grace his eyes were opened he believed his heart was opened too early on in this illness to find a saviour and now he thanks God father and he sees this illness as a visit from God God comes to us in so many varied ways and he starts with us and working with us and yet our eyes are holding that we should not know him he visits us in some form in which he's never visited us before perhaps it may even be in the love of his people and we question is it the Lord might just be in kindness shown to us by other

Christian believers yes God visits us in many varied forms this I'm sure has something to do with the resurrection body of Christ and did he have for many of his appearances it might appear that he had the ability to conceal himself in some way or to change his appearance anyway he was unknown to them and then he was unveiled to them and he did that himself the first thing I want to notice about this Christ became known where he had been unknown because these two men constrained him to remain with them he was going to leave them and that was no pretense he made as though he should go have gone further he was set to go further and they constrained them and the word used in the

Greek is a very strong word the same word as is used in the gospel Christ himself used it for taking heaven by force by violence it almost indicates that they laid hold of them with their hands as well as their words and they said abide with us their pressing of them was the first step towards recognition of them Dr.

Kennedy Dingwall in a very powerful sermon entitled God's Controversy with His People writing probably about 1870 something he was speaking of a past generation of Christian believers those whom he had known when he was a little boy under his father's ministry Kennedy of Calermas he said I knew men and women who not only prayed but had the ability in prayer to constrain the presence of God I knew men and women he said who could bring God into a meeting and who could prevail so prevail with God that God would abide with them he speaks of some men that his father spoke of who knew the presence of God in a very wonderful way for the larger part of the

[20 : 59] Christian experience Kennedy said way back in the 1870s it's not that men that I don't know still men who pray but he said I don't know many who prayed as a former generation did who prayed and prevailed with God to come down into the gatherings of his people well these men constrained Christ and he stayed with he went in with them and there a meal was prepared and Jesus did certainly in action almost exactly what he had done when he instituted the last supper he took bread and he blessed he gave thanks to

God imagine the resurrected Christ in a resurrection body he can take bread he can eat this is not the only occasion in which it is said but he ate but eating even simple dairy bread the risen Christ gives thanks to the fathers that I think is what it meant when it says that he blessed it and he break it some commentators many of the commentators suggest that perhaps these disciples had often seen Jesus preside at a meal amongst his disciples bek

This is what we read. As he broke the bread, their eyes were opened that they should know him. And when they come back, all the way from Emmaus to Jerusalem again, with their amazing story, this is what they emphasize.

They told what things were done in the way and how he was known of them. But, yes, they had come to know this on the seven or eight miles between Jerusalem and Emmaus.

And yet they hadn't known him at all. And now he is made known to them. And how wonderfully Jesus was made known.

[24 : 04] He was written. This was confirmation of the strange things they had heard that very morning.

From women who had gone to the sepulcher. And then from disciples who at the women's work had also gone. And certainly they left to Jerusalem these men knowing that the Lord's body had disappeared from the Lord's grave.

It often amazed me. That that very fact didn't make them stay until Jerusalem. I've wondered sometimes, what kind of pressing business did they have in Emmaus?

That took them away when there was already talk. That perhaps the Lord had risen. And yet, no matter how pressing it was, once they knew that the Lord was risen.

And that he could walk with men and talk with men and speak with men. And break bread for men. Once they knew that, whatever had taken them back to Emmaus wasn't important.

[25 : 12] So important that they couldn't go back to Jerusalem. To share their amazement. And their joy. With the other disciples. I sometimes wonder if, when he was breaking the bread.

Their eyes would very naturally be attracted to his hands. And it may just have been. That their eyes were open to see.

The wounds in his hands. And they knew that they had with them the man of Calvary. I don't know. But we know that he carried these wounds in his resurrection body.

For later he used to say to Thomas. Thomas. Behold my hands and my feet. Reach hither thy hands. And put it into the wound.

I don't believe Thomas had to do that. But Jesus said to him, Thomas. Because thou hast seen. Thou hast believed. And Jesus used these wounds.

[26 : 28] When he came in among the disciples. In Jerusalem. Behold my hands and my feet. That it is I myself. And they thought they had seen. A spirit of some kind.

Was it just that. Inevitably. Their hands. Their eyes were drawn to his hands. As he broke bread. Well that may have been part of it. Yet. There was an opening of their eyes.

Now the holding of a person's eyes. Or the opening of a person's eyes. Is a work of God. It is the prerogative of God.

And my believing brother and sister. Remember this. It is God himself and God alone. Who can make Jesus known to you.

In any of the means of grace. In the preaching of the word. Or in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In prayer. Or in reading the Bible.

[27 : 33] Or in Christian fellowship. It is God. It is God. It is God. It is not just. The teaching of a minister. It is not just your own mind. Understanding the word.

It is God. Opening the inner eyes. Of the soul. And making the blind. To see. That's what it is.

This is the prerogative of Christ. To make himself known. To unveil himself. And I believe he loves to do it.

And as soon as he had made himself known. He disappeared from the sight. That faith now. Had been fed.

And fueled. Given something to hold on to. That he would never forget. And he were to learn. That it was not his bodily presence with them.

[28 : 33] But the spiritual reality of his resurrection. And his spiritual presence with them. That was to be important. But he was made known to them.

In the breaking of bread. Surely it is your prayer and mine. For tomorrow morning.

That when we come to the table. And have. What is the Christian meal. And what is more than the Christian meal. What is. The sacrament.

The mystery of Christ. And parting. Himself. To our faith. Through bread broken.

And wine. And wine accepted in our cup. Feeding us. On his flesh. And on his blood. Feeding our faith.

[29 : 30] On us. Through the symbols of him. Surely there it is our desire. And our earnest prayer. That he would be made known to us.

That he would be made known. As our one great sacrifice for sin. For example. For example. That he would be made known. As our high peace. That he would be made known.

As the one. Who is our beloved. Who loved us. And gave himself for us. That he would be made known. As the one.

Who has given us. This means of grace. Until he comes again. That's to come for us. To take us home.

To the glory land. Through the vehicle of death. We don't know. But we do it. Until he comes.

- [30 : 26] And each time we do it. It should be our desire. To know him. In the breaking of bread. And finally. Just this thought.
- Jesus. Uplifted. Jesus unknown. Unrecognized. Jesus. Unveiled. With the faith and the love of these men.
- And then Jesus uplifted. What did he do? As soon as he knew it was Jesus. I think they left the sativate. And they walked all the way back.
- To tell others also. To exalt. The master. The Lord. Who had walked with them. And who had revealed himself to them.
- That should also be part of our desires. As we prepare to go to the Lord's table. That Jesus be uplifted.
- [31 : 30] And that Jesus be uplifted. By every single one of his people. Part of our preparation.
- For ourselves. For going to the Lord's table. Should be a thought of our lives. After we have been there. My friend.
- If you come to know Jesus afresh. To know more of his love. And of his tenderness. And his graciousness. And his kindness.
- What will it achieve for you? What will it do with you? Well surely it will achieve this. Surely it will do this. It will make you long.
- To uplift him. Before others. To let others know also. What the Lord has done. For your soul. Our thoughts.
- [32 : 36] Our hearts. Our eyes. Our minds. As we prepare ourselves. For the Lord's table. There is lift.
- Our thoughts. Our eyes. Our hearts. Our minds. To himself. He doesn't change. He's as tender still.
- To every one of his disciples. As he was to these two. And he may as well. Oh foolish little ones. And slow.
- And hard to believe. And yet he condescended. To come into the presence. Of those foolish little ones. He condescended. To enlighten.
- The darkness. And belief. That gathered around them. And to lighten it. With it. The wonder of the glory. Of his own presence.
- [33 : 31] He opened to them. The scriptures. He began at Moses. The first books in the Bible. And he went through all the prophets.
- And taught them. The things concerning himself. And in the very heart of it. And his teaching. And his unveiling. And he unveiled himself in the scriptures.
- You know. It was before he unveiled himself in the flesh. And the very heart of his teaching there. Was the new Saturday. Of all the events.
- That had just taken place. The new days. Or not. Christ was suffering. These things. And to enter into his glory.
- As my friends. I. Had to suffer these things. In order. That you and I. The light of our hope.
- [34 : 32] Of sharing the glory. Into which he has ended. Because of them. We shall. They spoke.
- They told. Of what things. We have done in the way. I hope my friend. That your experience. Of Christ. Is such. That you too. Will be able to tell.
- Of the things. That have been done in the way. Of what. Great things. God has done. For you. So. Over the years. And over the months.
- Never forget. Don't be afraid. Afraid. And don't be ashamed. To tell. They told. What things. They have done in the way. And how he was known.

Of them. In the breaking of bread. And the soul. Prayer. That we shall know. In the breaking of bread. In the mouth. If we spare.

[35 : 33] To be healed. May he bless these. Few thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our gracious God. God.

We pray. We pray. We pray. That thou wouldst. Indeed. Indeed. In the knowledge of Christ. That thou wouldst. Give us. Discerning hearts. And that thou wouldst. Draw out. Our whole soul.

Toward. Thy self. Bless us. Oh Lord. As we contemplate. In thy goodness. And sparing mercy. Coming here. On the morrow.

and may all who are permitted to come be permitted to sit in the glow and the warmth of thy presence and thy love do thou meet with each one according to his or her deep personal need and do thou manifest thyself as a tender hearty saviour the one who loves to unveil his love and to impart it to us so go before us Lord and see thy word upon our hearts in the end that that word which we have meditated upon may be as a rock upon which we shall rest our souls may our fears and our doubtings and our questionings and our grievings may they all be stilled under the wonder of thy truth as it brings us the saviour himself fix our eyes we pray thee upon Jesus and grant that he shall be glorious to us heal us and our faith and bless us and go before us for his name's sake and glory

Amen Amen