

Do You Recognize Jesus?

 **Downcast hopes** (vv.13-24)

 **Uplifted spirits** (vv.25-32)

 **Ready feet** (vv.33-35)

In the name of Christ-crucified and risen, dearly redeemed disciples of Jesus:

The Second Commandment was broken all over the world this week. You could see it in the media. Instead of Jesus rightly honored as the Head of the church, there was something about a funeral for someone who sets himself up in the church instead of Christ. The Latin word for “instead of” is “anti.” The fact that a work-righteous world extols the virtues of the anti-Christ after the man has died is more evidence of how acceptable his earthy church and religion are to a world destroyed by sin. But just wait. In short order the pundits will stop themselves from praising the devout people who put their faith, not in the Pope, but rather in Jesus Christ. And since worldly minds can’t tell the difference, they will start bashing Catholics along with all Christians any day now. That way they can feel good about themselves for taking out their frustrations on everyone who trusts God’s grace alone without any merit besides. Obviously, our world cannot see or know Jesus. Do you? **Do You Recognize Jesus?**

 **Downcast hopes** (vv.13-24)

We broke the Second Commandment this week just as it was shattered by these two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Remember? **You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.** *What does this mean?* “We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie or deceive, or use it superstitiously, but call upon God’s name in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks.”

“But, Pastor, we did not curse and swear this week...” – or did we? “Maybe the Pope and false teachers lie and deceive by God’s name, putting their own laws above God’s Word, but we didn’t do that, did we?” Did we use it “superstitiously” this week by acting as if our Baptism in God’s name has magical powers to protect us even if we neglect reading and meditating on God’s Word? My fellow sinners, these are sins of commission, things done wrong in God’s sight. But we’re also on the road to Emmaus sinning by omission, failing to use God’s name rightly to “pray, praise and give thanks.”

They had walked and talked with Jesus Himself, heard His preaching, learned His prayer. But then they saw Him crucified, and it was as if three years of higher education from the Master Himself all went down the drain with “pray, praise and give thanks.” Jesus had warned them Good Friday was coming. Then He suffered and died as promised. Instead of waiting in anticipation until Easter Sunday, they think the stories strange that were circulating among Jesus’ followers. Was He really alive? Could He do what He promised on “*the third day*” and rise from the dead. They failed to “pray, praise and give thanks” because they did not really believe Jesus. **Downcast hopes** had them dead inside.

And they would have stayed as dead as we are by nature except that a stranger walked up with a stranger question. You tell Him what you’re talking about, but He doesn’t seem to have a clue. “*What things?*” He asks. With that He just pried open the door to your heart. **Downcast hopes** start pouring out. You thought Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet, but all His powerful words and deeds did not stop your religious leaders from crucifying the One you thought would “*redeem Israel.*” Hope died for an earthly ruler to end violence and injustice, fill every tummy and balance every checkbook. Your taxes are still too high, the mortgage too long, gas prices rising and new life seems as far away as the moon. **Do You Recognize Jesus?** Can you praise Him without ceasing? No way! “*It’s the third day*” but our **Downcast hopes** only prove Easter still needs to penetrate our sins against the Second Commandment.

Uplifted spirits (vv.25-32)

If we spent the rest of our lives talking with each other, nothing would get any better. We'd be like the Hollywood elite who never get done with their "shrink." They may look ever so happy in front of the cameras, but there is no hope of heaven to praise God. Wrinkles defy plastic surgery. Murders, suicides, adulteries – all these things plague the rest of us out here in the real world because we rely on our own name and reputation, our own opinions, our self-taught gurus to give our spirits a boost. But it's always like a fifty-pound boy trying to throw his 200 pound father out of the water onto a life raft. We're drowning in sin ourselves, caught up in life's worries and fears. We naturally grab onto the most popular, powerful people, only to find them laid out in death eventually like the rest of us. Dire circumstances in Jerusalem nearly 2000 years ago would leave us as victims to the worms and the eternal fire to torment us.

But **Do You Recognize Jesus?** He's not going to give up and leave you to free yourself from sins against all His commandments. He walks up as unnoticed as your Bible on a shelf at home. You don't recognize Him through your tears. You walk and talk with friends but miss the most important Friend of all. Thank God Jesus does not wait for us! He who died for our sins, comes to us with His forgiveness.

This rebuke is meant to cut a hole in our heart to make room for new life: *"He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?'"* Doubting fears put us with the most vile, mindless sinners. Our minds are as dull and muddled as a dead corpse until Jesus steps up and scolds us for being so down and dirty natural sinners. It's no excuse that everyone is like that, especially not for us who grew up in Christian homes. Should everyone around us have to dress in black like Katie Luther because the good doctor kept acting as if Jesus were still dead? Only the resurrection of Christ can really give us **Uplifted spirits**. And because we are so slow to **Recognize Jesus**, He must begin again with *"Moses and the Prophets"* to explain to us *"what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."*

Even before we can **Recognize Jesus**, His comfort makes us want Him to stay with us. Evening comes so quickly to young and old. We just don't want Him to go away. How quickly He answers prayer: *"They urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them."* Are you so eager for Jesus not to go away? **Do You Recognize Jesus** in His Holy Supper? Do you talk about Him with fellow Christians even when He seems to disappear? Have you noticed the way He makes *"our hearts [keep] burning within us"* if only we'll take the time to walk and talk with Him, listening to His Word instead of letting Him move on to somewhere else?

Ready feet (vv.33-35)

There's a world of ultra-religious people out there who want you to come and meditate with them. They may even talk about Jesus as a good man. But until **You Recognize Jesus** as God's own Son and your only Savior from sin, death and hell, you'll always be a victim lying and deceit by God's name. But our merciful and gracious God wants His forgiveness to turn our stumbling into **Ready feet**.

Just look what happened as soon as the Emmaus disciples recognized Jesus. Even though He disappeared from their physical sight, their faith sprang into action. Sins of omission left them in shadows with dashed hopes. But faith finds a glorious race back to the heart of enemy territory to tell Jesus' other disciples the Good News. There we see more evidence to help us in our new life of Easter.

Do You Recognize Jesus? He wants to walk and talk with you this week in His Word treasured up in the Holy Bible. He wants to walk and talk through you to our community in upcoming weeks as our WELS Kingdom Workers come to New Life to help us survey our neighbors for Early Childhood Ministries? Do you have **Ready feet** to offer to the cause of Christ? Are they *"fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace"* (Ephesians 6:15)? We need to carry the Gospel to every home and heart in our community. And we need to be the **feet** and voice of Jesus to members who are publicly despising God's name by not hearing His Word. God help us bring them back for Jesus' sake. Amen.