EASTER SUNDAY
April 2, 1972
Rolling Meadows, Illinois

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Luke 24: 28 - 35 SO THEY DREW NEAR TO THE VILLAGE TO WHICH THEY WERE GOING. HE APPEARED TO BE GOING FURTHER, 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. WHEN HE WAS AT TABLE WITH THEM, HE TOOK THE BREAD AND BLESSED, AND BROKE IT, AND GAVE IT TO THEM. AND THEIR EYES WERE OPENED AND THEY RECOGNIZED HIM; AND HE VANISHED OUT OF THEIR SIGHT. 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?" AND THEY ROSE THAT SAME HOUR AND RETURNED TO JERUSALEM; AND THEY FOUND THE ELEVEN GATHERED TOGETHER AND THOSE WHO WERE WITH THEM, WHO SAID, " THE LORD HAS RISEN INDEED, AND HAS APPEARED TO SIMON!" THEN THEY TOLD WHAT HAD HAPPENED ON THE ROAD, AND HOW HE WAS KNOWN TO THEM IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD.

The MESSAGE of the RESURRECTION - the GREATEST NEWS in ALL THE WORLD - has been GROUND into little PIECES between the MILESTONES of THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION. How will we ever be able to COMPREHEND the REALITY of ONE RISEN from the DEAD? What HOPE do we have? The theologians answer in a HUNDRED DIFFERENT WAYS - - and their UNCERTAINTIES about the FOUNDATION of our FAITH really cause a GREAT STIR in the CHURCH.

WHO REALLY BELIEVES that man can MEET the THREAT of DEATH and come away TRIUMPH? Who REALLY BELIEVES that the COLD HAND of DEATH can reach out for him - - and he can STILL HAVE the GIFT of LIFE ONCE MORE? This is something that ALL of US have EXPERIENCED at one time or another. "IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?" The CRY goes up from the depth of our SOUL: "WHO WILL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH?"

The ANSWER comes with EASTER and the EASTER GOSPEL! It is the RISEN LORD who stands before us and says, "I WILL!" The ANGELS themselves bear WITNESS: "WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD? HE IS RISEN = HE IS NOT HERE!" And the congregation STANDS in ADORATION before the GREAT TRUTH: "THANKS BE TO GOD

who GIVES US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST."

OR DO WE? Is EASTER FOR US - in our AGE of SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY - just so MANY WORDS? Is it ONLY the PRODUCT of WISHFUL THINKING? Or do we have SOMETHING MORE that we can HOLD ON TO?

Our text says that we DO! Our text says that we can KNOW HIM - TRIUMPHANT OVER the GRAVE just as those EMMAUS DISCIPLES DID. We can KNOW HIM "IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD."

It was in the BREAKING of the BREAD that they finally came to REALIZE and UNDERSTAND and KNOW that CHRIST had KEPT HIS WORD. He was ALIVE! - that He had RISEN! This same BREAKING of the BREAD on EASTER God gives to EVERYONE of US who are HIS PEOPLE. For WE TOO have the PRIVILEGE of CELEBRATING that EASTER MEAL every time we GATHER AROUND HIS TABLE. Here it IS that our RISEN LORD sits down to EAT WITH US. In the BREAKING of the BREAD and the SHARING of the WINE - He would give us the JOY of SITTING DOWN WITH HIM. He would GIVE us the ANTICIPATION of GATHERING AROUND our SAVIOR in HEAVEN - - - KNOWING that He is ALIVE! In the SACRAMENT, YOU and I have the PRIVILEGE of being LIFTED PAST TIME to that day BEYOND the GRAVE and BEYOND JUDGMENT - - when we shall SEE our LORD FACE to FACE!

Still we are MEN of such LITTLE FAITH. We have our DOUBTS. Like the EMMAUS DISCIPLES, we WONDER. They WALKED ALONG with Jesus that day and they SAW HIM. They SHOULD have KNOWN HIM. They had spent time WALKING these ROADS with Him BEFORE. They KNEW what He LOOKED LIKE - they had SEEN HIM and even TOUCHED HIM. Yet when Jesus APPEARED to them on the ROAD, they just WOULD NOT BELIEVE IT.

They would NOT BELIEVE IT - because to them it was IMPOSSIBLE that a MAN who had DIED could be ALIVE AGAIN.

Maybe that is why I am SO FOND of this ACCOUNT. The SCRIPTURES and the RESURRECTION REALITY and the GLORY of our RISEN SAVIOR do not come out of MYTH or legend. They come from the EXPERIENCE of MEN like YOU and ME - - MEN who DOUBTED - MEN of LITTLE FAITH - MEN who found it DIFFICULT to BELIEVE. ..... Yet HERE HE IS KNOWN to THEM in "THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD." And latter on they had to say 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?"

This is the thing - the MARVEL and the MIRACLE - that TURNS the WHOLE WORLD UP SIDE DOWN. "I HAVE RISEN! IT IS I - YOUR LORD!" I HAVE COME BACK FROM THE DEAD!" That is what HE DOES with US WHO DOUBT. In the SACRAMENT, He asserts that HE HAS RISEN INDEED - that HE IS ALIVE - that He is WITH US and AMOUNG US! It is REALITY! * ..... Here we have the PRIVILEDGE of sitting down LIKE THOSE DISCIPLES DID - and SEEING JESUS BREAK the BREAD and HAND IT TO US. And we RECOGNIZE HIM as the ONE who GIVES US FORGIVENESS - LIFE - and SALVATION. We find our FEET THEN RUNNING as FAST as they will CARRY US to TELL the GOOD NEWS.

just as real as the Bread & Wine in our stomachs

All that MEN ever did to show forth "THAT CHRIST MUST SUFFER AND THUS ENTER INTO HIS GLORY " was only the PRELUDE of the GREAT HYMN of PRAISE which comes when we REALIZE that the CRUCIFIED LIVES! The RESURRECTION is a VERIFICATION of ALL THE GLORY which comes to US through the BLOOD of the NEW COVENANT. HERE IS THE REALITY - "FOR YOU." Here you can find REST for your SOULS - - because the ATONEMENT is a FACT VERIFIED by GOD in CALLING JESUS CHRIST BACK from the REALMS of the DEAD to the JOYS of the LIVING - - which WE HAVE

through HIM!

The CONFIRMATION is HERE FOR YOU in the SACRAMENT. IT IS HERE in the BREAKING of the BREAD. It is HERE when you DARE to say, "STAY WITH US, ~~FOR IT IS TOWARD EVENING AND THE DAY IS NOW FAR SPENT~~." It is HERE when in FAITH you come to EAT and DRINK.

And what does THAT mean? - except this: "BOLD SHALL I STAND ON THAT GREAT DAY, FOR WHO CAN LAY ANYTHING TO MY CHARGE?" ONLY CHRIST - - but by His DEATH & RESURRECTION He JUSTIFIES ME - - and I am ALREADY DECLARED INNOCENT -- I am ALREADY, in THIS MEAL, ~~declared~~ assured that I will LIVE WITH HIM IN ETERNITY. I AM THE VICTORIOUS ONE - I AM GOD'S SON IN CHRIST - - I SHALL LIVE FOREVER AND EVER.

Your whole life must be DIFFERENT NOW. You can no longer LIVE WITHOUT CELEBRATING the EASTER VICTORY of JOY and GLADNESS. You can no longer go along in the OLD HUM DRUM WAY. The RESURRECTION REALITY is YOURS! You MUST LIVE for HIM who LOVED YOU and GAVE HIMSELF FOR YOU. You MUST say with JOB of OLD, IN FIRM FAITH: " I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES, AND THAT HE SHALL STAND AT THE LATTER DAY UPON THE EARTH - and EVEN THOUGH AFTER MY SKIN WORMS DESTROY ME THIS BODY - YET IN MY FLESH SHALL I SEE GOD WHOM MINE EYES SHALL BEHOLD AND NOT ANOTHER. " I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES! And THAT makes ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD. Amen.