THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD
Rolling Meadows - 1977

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IN NOMINE JESU

ST. LUKE 24: 13-49

Few stories are more dear to the Christian heart than THIS STORY of THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS. Here in a few sentences all the COMFORT and GLORY OF EASTER are applied directly to the PROBLEMS OF LIFE AND LIVING. Here we see, CLEARLY AND FINALLY, the meaning of the OPEN TOMB for our OWN JOURNEY toward the LAST SUNSET. The ENTIRE STORY began in CONFUSION AND PAIN and ended in FAITH AND JOY. It began in DARKNESS and ended in the WHITE LIGHT of EASTER MORNING and the RISING OF THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. It began in LONELINESS and ended in the MAGNIFICENT TRUTH that NO BELIEVING HEART need ever to ALONE again.

Look at what happened. On the afternoon of the FIRST EASTER DAY, two of the SORROWING DISCIPLES -- weary with the BLACK MEMORY of GOOD FRIDAY -- were walking toward EMMAUS. Their hearts will filled with SADNESS AND FEAR. They were face to face with the END OF EVERYTHING they had HOPED AND BELIEVED. Three days had come and gone since the NEWS OF HIS DEATH had reached them. Nothing more had happened. True, a few of the FAITHFUL WOMEN had been at the TOMB that morning and had astonished them by reporting that the BODY was not in the grave and that they had seen a "VISION OF ANGELS." But that seemed to be only WILD RUMOR! — chalked off as just a rumor from hysterical & emotional women! When will we ever learn?

As they walked and talked, JESUS joined them on the way. Their EYES -- DARK WITH SORROW and BLINDED BY TEARS -- did not recognize Him. He asked the reason for their SADNESS. They told Him the story of the MIGHTY WORDS AND DEEDS of HIM whom they had now lost -- of His SHAMEFUL DEATH -- of the RUIN of all their HOPES AND DREAMS -- and of the STRANGE REPORT of the WOMEN..... Their whole life was now EMPTY AND WITHOUT MEANING!

And then the STRANGER spoke! "AND BEGINNING WITH MOSES AND ALL THE PROPHETS, HE INTERPRETED TO THEM IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF." He reached far back into the DAWN OF TIME in order to show them WHY GOOD FRIDAY and the CROSS had to come. He spoke of ADAM AND EVE and PARADISE LOST -- of ABRAHAM and the PROMISE THAT "IN HIM ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH WOULD BE BLESSED" -- of MOSES and DAVID and ISAIAH. He showed them how the PROPHETS had FORETOLD EVERYTHING that had happened. He explained that this was NO SUDDEN and UNEXPECTED EVENT planned and executed by the powers of darkness --- but THIS - EVERY SINGLE STEP - was a part of the ETERNAL COUNSELS OF THE HOLY TRINITY ----- CONCEIVED IN ETERNITY and EXECUTED IN TIME: "WAS IT NOT NECESSARY THAT THE CHRIST SHOULD SUFFER THESE THINGS AND ENTER INTO HIS GLORY?" Don't you see that the STORY OF THE WOMEN has to be true? Don't you understand that the ANGELS AT JOSEPH'S TOMB have only ONE MISSION -- and that is to make THIS MESSAGE REAL? They had been there to say that they SAVIOR HAD COME INTO THE WORLD when CHRIST

was born in Bethlehem. And ever since they have been STANDING ON TIP-TOE to say it now --- that CHRIST IS ALIVE and that HE HAS FULFILLED EVERY WORD OF HIS PROMISES to them.

Out there in the DARKNESS OF CALVARY He had cried out: "IT IS FINISHED!" The TRIUMPH OF HIS SUFFERING -- the COMPLETION OF THE GREAT WORK which He came to do -- the VERIFICATION OF THE ANGEL'S SONG: "A SAVIOR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD" ------ that is all assured now BY FAITH: "O FOOLISH MEN, AND SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN."

No wonder they did not know Him. But see how LOVING and PERSISTENT Jesus is. The MARVEL of the WHOLE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL is that He does not GIVE UP on us! We are such FEET DRAGGERS! ..... Only after JESUS had gone in to "STAY WITH THEM," the simple little act of "BREAKING THE BREAD AND BLESSING IT" suddenly opened their eyes so that they "KNEW HIM." ..... They ran those SEVEN MILES back to Jerusalem -- it must have seemed like only a 100 yard dash -- and they couldn't wait to TELL THE STORY: "HE WAS KNOWN TO US IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD." THE GRAVE WAS REALLY EMPTY! THEIR LORD WAS ALIVE! HE HAD WON THE FINAL VICTORY OVER DEATH! Now they KNEW that EASTER had come! ..... Do you begin to see now why Holy Communion is so important? It is here that Easter happens for us too!

Many centuries before the dawn of that FIRST EASTER, a GREAT CRY WRUNG from the HEART AND LIPS OF JOB: "I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES." That CRY has been TAKEN UP and REPEATED by COUNTELESS SAINTS across the ages of time. It has become the GREAT, ETERNAL MESSAGE of the OPEN GRAVE and the EMPTY TOMB. It has become the EVERLASTING ANTIPHON of the CHRISTIAN HEART: "I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES." Each one of us -- each man, woman, and child -- we can ALL SING IT and KNOW IT. The STONE IS ROLLED AWAY -- and is an ETERNAL WITNESS and MONUMENT to our SAVIOR'S LIVING PRESENCE with us!

There is nothing VAGUE or INDEFINITE about the MESSAGE! It reads like your MORNING NEWSPAPER. CHRIST LIVES! HE LIVES WITH US! HE LIVES FOR US! ..... A BELIEVING CHILD can understand this. It is SURE AND CLEAR. It is a FACT witnessed by HISTORY and certified by FAITH!

Look at those EARLY CHRISTIANS as they took the words of JESUS seriously -- that "REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS SHOULD BE PREACHED IN HIS NAME TO ALL NATIONS." The WHOLE ROMAN EMPIRE began to tremble at these NEW BEARERS OF THE CROSS -- SURE NOW THAT DEATH COULD NOT HARM THEM. If they were BURNED AT THE STAKE, they knew that they were TORCHES FOR THE GOSPEL. If they DIED, their FACES at the moment of death were like that of STEPHEN'S -- the "FACE OF AN ANGEL." ..... Why? Because He had answered

their prayer "ABIDE WITH US" with the great sentence which ends all LONELINESS AND FEAR for the Christian heart: "LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, TO THE CLOSE OF THE AGE."

Amen.