

Crumbs – Good News for the Diaspora!



Illustration: The Journey to Emmaus

A Devotional for the Week of the First Sunday after Easter.

SUNDAY.

As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. – John 20:21.

When the disciples came to rejoice at seeing the Lord in their midst, He repeated the words of greeting: "Peace be unto you!" And then He said: "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." The Father had sent the Son to procure peace for mankind. This was accomplished now. The Father had also sent the Son to communicate this peace to mankind, to bestow peace upon us through the knowledge of Him, the Savior. He had just done this for the frightened company of disciples.

But He means to do this for all of us. Therefore He said to His disciples: "*As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.*" Through the Word of Christ, the Crucified and Risen One, the disciples were to convey to their fellow-men the knowledge of Christ, and peace by this knowledge. To this end He breathed on them and gave them the Holy Ghost. For the Holy Ghost is the eternal personal breath of the Father and of the Son. And He is with the Word of Christ. Through the Word He kindles faith in Christ in the heart, and gives peace through this faith. This peace, however, is rooted in the forgiveness of sins. Therefore the disciples, by the Word of the Gospel, were to deliver to mankind the forgiveness of sins procured by Christ. And faith, wrought through this Word by the Holy Spirit, was to have and possess this forgiveness. For whatsoever the disciples give by means of the Word, God Himself gives through it. But whoever would reject their gift, his sins the disciples were to retain. And whatsoever thus they would retain, God Himself would retain.

– This office and command the Savior gave to His assembled disciples on Easter evening, not to the Apostles only, but to all the disciples there assembled, both men and women. This office and command the Savior gives to His disciples of all times, not only to the called and ordained teachers and preachers, but to all disciples,

both men and women. This office and command He also gives to you, Christian. Note this well!

PRAYER. – I thank You, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, sole Bringer of peace, that through Your Word, which is preached by the Church, You have bestowed peace upon me also. Grant that I may know Your gracious will and my calling, and be most eagerly intent upon conveying this peace and the forgiveness of sins to others, too. To this grant me Your Holy Spirit and abundance of grace. Amen.

Hymn 426, 2-4.

Hence Christ, His foll'wers gave command:
Go forth and preach in every land;
Pardon to every soul extend
That mourns, believes, and will amend.

Whose sins soever ye remit,
I truly pardon and acquit;
Whose sins soever ye retain,
Condemned and guilty shall remain.

What ye shall bind, that bound shall be;
What ye shall loose, that shall be free;
To all alike the keys are given
To open and close the gates of heaven.

MONDAY.

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.
– *John 20:29.*

But Thomas, one of the Twelve, called Didymus, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. O Thomas! – The other disciples therefore said to him: "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them: "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my

finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." O Thomas!

– And after eight days again His disciples were within. And Thomas was with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said: "Peace be unto you!" O Thomas! – Then saith He to Thomas: "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him: "My Lord and my God! " Jesus saith unto him: "Thomas, because thou hast seen thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

So mercifully did the Savior deal with Thomas, and bring him back to faith. But He also permitted him to see Him, for Thomas was an Apostle, and was to be a witness of Christ's resurrection, an eye-witness. But we must not see, and yet believe. We must believe the Word of the Apostles, the eye-witnesses. We must believe the Scripture both of the Old and the New Testament -of the Old Testament, where the resurrection of Christ is foretold, and of the New Testament, where the resurrection of Christ is attested. We must believe the Holy Spirit, who has given the Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, by inspiration, and who moves and is active therein, and mightily and convincingly witnesses that it is the truth. In heaven we too shall see.

PRAYER. – Deal mercifully with me, Lord Jesus, and do not altogether quench the smoking flax of my faith, but fan it into a flame through Your Word and the Holy Spirit, by Your great mercy. I call upon You, Lord Jesus -hear me! I trust in You, firmly believing that You will not permit me to be bereft of the comfort of true faith, but will preserve my faith until I shall come to You in heaven. Amen.

Hymn 243, 4-6.

See, He lifts His hands above,
See, He shows the prints of love.

Hark! His gracious lips bestow
Blessings on His Church below!

Still for us His death He pleads;
Prevalent, He intercedes;
Near Himself prepares our place,
Harbinger of human race.

There we shall with Thee remain
Partners of Thy endless reign;
There Thy face unclouded see,
Find our heaven of heavens in Thee.

TUESDAY.

This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead. – John 21:14.

After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, hence, in Galilee. And on this wise showed He Himself. There were together – Simon Peter, and Thomas, and Nathanael, and the brothers James and John, and two other of His disciples. Simon Peter said to them: "I go a-fishing." They said to him: "We also go with thee." They went forth, and entered into a boat immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore; although the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them: "Children, have ye any meat? " They answered Him: "No." And He said to them: "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find." They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Therefore John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, said to Peter: "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat about him, (for he was naked,) and cast himself into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, (for they were not far from the land, but about 200 cubits off,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon as they were come to land,

they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread. Jesus said to them : "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, 153; and though there were so many, yet the net was not broken. Jesus said to them: "Come and dine." And none of the disciples dared ask Him: Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came, and took bread, and gave it to them, and fish likewise.

– This is the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His Apostles after He had risen from the dead. And these are the men who testify the resurrection of Jesus in their writings, that we might believe. They testify what they themselves have seen. And the Holy Spirit attests the truth of their testimony.

PRAYER. – I thank You, Lord Jesus, that You so plainly, unmistakably, and often did manifest Yourself to Your Apostles as the risen Conqueror of sin, death, and the devil, so that their testimony of Your Resurrection is true beyond all doubt. Grant me, I implore You, Your Holy Spirit, that by such testimony He may make me so certain of Your salutary Resurrection that in life and death I may firmly found my faith thereon. Amen.

Hymn 226, 1.

I am content! My Jesus liveth still,
In whom my heart is pleased;
He hath fulfilled the law of God for me,
God's wrath He hath appeased;
Since Him from life death could not sever,
I also shall not die forever. I am content!

WEDNESDAY.

Lovest thou Me? – John 21:17.

When the disciples had dined with the risen Lord, as we heard yesterday, Jesus said to Simon Peter. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" He said to Him: "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He said to him: "Feed my lambs." – Jesus

now said to him the second time: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" He said to Him: "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee." He said to him: "Feed my sheep." – He said to him the third time: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time: "Lovest thou Me? " And he said unto Him: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Jesus said to him: "Feed my sheep." – So mercifully did the Lord remind Peter of his former haughtiness and contempt of the other disciples, as well as of his subsequent threefold denial, and at once reinstated him in his apostolic office.

Though we have fallen ever so low, yea, and ever so often, Jesus receives us again, and is gracious, gentle, and kind toward us, and permits us to be His own. And we? We love Him. And He knows it. But if we love Him, we must also serve Him. And the service He most desires of us is, that we take care that His lambs and sheep are fed, that is, that His believers, small and great, are properly and abundantly nourished with the Word of God, so that they, too, may rightly know their Savior, love Him, and be saved.

– Do you love your Savior, and do you serve Him diligently and faithfully in His Church?

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, I love You. You know it. I am a great sinner. But You have done everything for me, and again and again You do reveal to me Your kind heart. Therefore I love You; indeed, I cannot but love You. Help me, O help me, Lord Jesus, to lovingly serve You by serving those who, together with me, are Yours, both the small and the great in the Church, in order that they may have the Word of Your grace plentifully, and remain with you, and be eternally saved. Amen.

Hymn 349, 7. 8.

O teach me, Lord, to love Thee truly
 With soul and body, head and heart,
 And grant me grace that I may duly
 Practice fore'er love's sacred art;
 Grant that my every thought may be
 Directed e'er to Thee.

Thee will I love, my Crown of gladness,
 Thee will I love, my God and Lord,
 Amid the darkest depths of sadness,
 Not for the hope of high reward.
 For Thine own sake, O light divine.
 So long as life is mine.

THURSDAY.

What is that to thee? Follow thou Me. – John 21:22.

The risen Lord addressed also these words to Peter: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." This He said to indicate to him by what death he would glorify God, namely, by the death of a martyr. And when He had spoken this, He said to him: "Follow me." Peter was to follow His Lord unswervingly unto death; and Peter now was most willing to do so, in the strength of Jesus.

– But Peter turned about, perhaps because he heard some one walking, and seeing John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who also had leaned on Jesus' breast at the Paschal Supper, and had said: "Lord, who is it that betrayeth Thee?" he said to Jesus: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" He meant to say: By what death shall this man glorify God? Jesus said to him: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

Here take a lesson, my dear Christian! You must follow Jesus lovingly, and Jesus will love you and guide you as He wills, perhaps along rugged paths, but to eternal salvation. And you must not turn about and look at others and say: If I am led so, how will these be led? Or: If I must suffer so much, why not these, too? It is none of your concern how Jesus shall lead each one. That is His concern, and not yours. He will not have anyone interfere with His government. You - follow Jesus fearlessly, and He will lead you a blessed way.

But refrain from interfering with His government! -Then the saving went abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus had not said to him: He shall not die; but: “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, my dear Savior, crucified and risen for me, thanks to whose great mercy I, a miserable sinner, have become Your disciple, grant me the Spirit of faith and of love and of power and of humility, that cheerfully and gladly I may follow Your guidance, wherever You will, without presumptuously questioning why You do this or that; for I know, O Lord, that You lead me to the realms of eternal bliss. Amen.

Hymn 331, 1. 4.

JESUS, still lead on, | Till our rest be won;
And, although the way be cheerless,
We will follow calm and fearless,
Guide us by Thy hand | To our fatherland.

Jesus, still lead on, | Till our rest be won:
Heavenly Leader, still direct us,
Still support, control, protect us,
Till we safely stand | In our fatherland.

FRIDAY.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. – Matthew 28:18-20.

Chiefly in Galilee did the Lord, by many infallible proofs, as He had promised them, show His disciples that He was risen and alive. There He finally appointed a certain mountain where they

should witness a great manifestation of Himself. And when they had assembled there, and probably above 500 disciples with them, they saw Jesus. And they worshiped Him; but some doubted. And Jesus spoke to them the royal words found at the head of this lesson. Christ the Crucified has been raised and thus exalted by the Father, so that He, the Son of Man, has all divine power in heaven and on earth. But it is the will of Him who has redeemed all men with His blood to bring all men to salvation through faith in Him.

Therefore He commands His believers of all times to carry the Gospel to all men, and to make disciples of all who believe in Him, through Baptism. Through Baptism we are brought into the gracious communion of the Holy Trinity, in whose midst is Jesus, for He is the Son. And the disciples of Jesus were to hear, learn, and observe every word which He had commanded His Apostles, and which they have expounded to us in their writings by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And Jesus is with His own always, even unto the end of the world. He is with our testimony of Him, to strengthen it; with our faith in Him, to keep us steadfast; He is with us in life and death. - This is the royal decree of the risen Lord to His disciples of all times and all places. Whoever disregards this cannot be His disciple.

PRAYER. – Omnipotent Lord and Savior, true God with the Father and the Holy Ghost, King and Lord of Your beloved congregation which You have purchased with Your blood and sanctified with Your Spirit: I give thanks to You that You have made me – unworthy though I am – Your disciple. Grant that, obedient to Your command, I may use all diligence, so far as in me lies, to proclaim Your Word and Gospel to all mankind. And always be with me, according to Your promise, until, finally, I shall come to You in Your heavenly kingdom. Amen.

Hymn 110, 1. 3.

LORD Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the even-tide;
Let not Thy Word, that heavenly light,
For us be ever veiled in night.

Lord Jesus, help, Thy Church uphold,
For we are sluggish, thoughtless, cold;
Indue Thy Word with power and grace,
And spread its truth in every place.

SATURDAY.

Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. – Luke 24:45.

The forty days in which the risen Lord was seen by His disciples were drawing to a close. The feast of Pentecost was near at hand. The Lord had again assembled His disciples, especially the Apostles, in Jerusalem. And one day, when He appeared to them, He said to them: "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me."

Formerly the disciples had never been able to understand when the Lord Jesus spoke to them of His suffering and death and His resurrection on the third day; and the Scriptures which had foretold these things had been just as obscure to them as Jesus' words. But now they saw the fulfillment, now they saw the Crucified before them alive, now all was different, now they understood it all. So now He went through all the Scriptures with them; He showed them how everywhere they prophesied concerning Him, and opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. It must have been a long and precious sermon: the risen Lord the Preacher, and the disciples, now so glad, the hearers. He closed this sermon with the words: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

– Note well, Christian: not the New Testament only, but the Old Testament as well everywhere testifies of Christ, and is a Christ-book. Unless you understand this, you do not understand the Old

Testament at all. And Jesus, crucified and risen, of whom the New Testament witnesses, is the Messiah foretold and prefigured in the Old Testament, the Savior of the world. Thus at all times there was but one true faith: the faith of the Christians. And all who ever were saved, from the days of Adam, were saved in no other way than by faith in Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. And there never will be any other saving faith. Let this be your faith, O Christian!

PRAYER. – Lord Jesus, true Messiah and Christ, the Son of God the Father, only Savior of the world, help me at all times and with all my heart to believe the eternal and unchanging, old and ever new Gospel concerning You, which tells that it behooved You to suffer and to die for my sins and the sins of the whole world, and to rise again the third day for my justification and eternal blessedness and for the justification and blessedness of the whole world. Help me, lest I, as so many do, turn away from this Gospel. Grant me grace to cling firmly to it and be saved by it. Amen.

Hymn 225, 1. 2.

CHRIST the Lord is risen again!
Christ has broken death's strong chain!
Hark, the angels shout for joy,
Singing evermore on high: Hallelujah!

He who gave for us His life,
Who for us endured the strife,
Is our Paschal Lamb today!
We, too, sing for joy, and say: Hallelujah!

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