

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Watertown, WI**

“It’s All About Jesus”

Rev. David K. Groth

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“And he said to them, ‘O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Lk. 24:25-27).

It was that first Easter evening. Jesus had died. There was no doubt about that. Of course, a few of the women were saying his tomb was empty and were even claiming to have seen him alive. But lots of people claim to have seen visions of the newly deceased, usually when not fully awake. How trustworthy can their testimony be?

Two followers of Jesus are getting out of Jerusalem, maybe for their own safety; maybe to escape the horrific memories now associated with the city. The execution of Jesus was a crushing blow. With Jesus they had such high hopes for themselves, for their nation, even for the world. But now he’s dead, and it’s all they can do to walk and talk about the things that happened and try to sort through their grief.

As they walk, a stranger catches up to them. We know it’s Jesus, but they don’t. The text says, “their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” The stranger asks them what they’re talking about. Then one says, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who doesn’t know about the things that happened there?” “What things?” the stranger says, giving the two full opportunity to unburden themselves. They start off reluctantly, but a trickle turns into a gush. They tell him everything. “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” “We had hoped”. Past tense, pluperfect, which means they’re no longer hoping. Their hopes are dead and buried.

That’s when the stranger lets them have it. “O foolish ones” he says, “so slow to believe! Didn’t the prophets of old say it had to happen this way?” He scolds them rather harshly, wouldn’t you say. But His point is they should have known this. There’s no excuse for them *not* knowing it. Unbelief often lays claim to great intellectual powers and penetration, but is, in truth, the most pitiful and tragic ignorance. These two Jewish men should have known their Scriptures better. We old Lutherans should know the Scriptures better too. With them, we are also without excuse.

The stranger sighs the sad sigh of a teacher going over material that should have been learned long ago. Once again, He starts from the beginning. V. 27, “. . . beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” Concerning Himself. That is, it’s all about Jesus.

Adam and Eve? It’s about Jesus. “And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between her offspring and yours.” That’s Jesus.

The first Adam succumbed to the temptations of the serpent. The second Adam (Jesus) remained perfectly obedient when tempted by Satan. The first Adam ate the forbidden fruit and brought death to the world. But God made the cross of second Adam a life-giving tree for all who trust in Him, and of its fruit we are invited to eat . . . often.

It’s all about Jesus. Noah’s ark points to Jesus. As God used Noah to save the world, so God sent His Son to save the world. By entering the ark, Noah ensured the safety of himself and his family. When by baptism and faith we enter the ark of God’s church, we ensure our survival through eternal life with Christ. Noah’s ark had one door. Salvation has one Door. “I am the door” Jesus said in John 10. “If anyone enters by me, he will be saved” (v. 9).

It’s all about Jesus. As Moses lifted up the bronze serpent on a pole saving people from their sin, even so was Jesus lifted up on a cross to save us from our sins. (John 3:14).

Abraham nearly sacrificing his son Isaac was about Jesus. Isaac was the long-promised son of Abraham. Jesus was the long-promised Messiah, Son of God. Both Isaac and Jesus had a conception that was pre-announced. Both were miraculously born. Both were named before their birth. Both were the only and beloved son of their fathers. Both carried their own wood of sacrifice. Both were set up to be sacrificed at the same location, albeit many centuries apart. Both submitted to their father. The difference? Isaac was saved by a lamb but Jesus was sacrificed as the Lamb.

It’s all about Jesus. Think about Joseph, the favorite son of Jacob. Both Joseph and Jesus are rejected by their own people. Both became servants, slaves even. Both were betrayed for silver. Both were falsely accused. Both provided salvation for gentiles. (Joseph provides physical salvation by storing seven years of grain for the famine, while Jesus provides a deeper physical and spiritual salvation.) Both came back to life. Jacob had long thought his son Joseph was dead, but discovers he is alive and at the right hand of Pharaoh. Jesus rises from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father.

It’s all about Jesus. Jonah was in the belly of the sea creature for three days. Jesus was in the tomb for three days.

The Scapegoat was driven *away* with the sins of the people on it. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes *away* the sin of the *world*.

Daniel was called blameless, as was Jesus. Daniel's trial resembles that of Jesus before Pilate. Daniel escaped certain death because God shut the lion's mouths, nor could death keep its hold on Jesus.

The Passover points to Jesus. It had to be a spotless lamb at Passover and on the cross, without blemish or defect. At both, it's the blood of the lamb that saves. At both, the hyssop branch makes an appearance, tossed in there by God to ensure we connect the dots.

The crossing of the Red Sea points to Jesus. What God did through Moses was provide salvation from slavery to the Egyptians. What God does through Christ is provide eternal salvation from slavery to sin, death, and the devil. Passing through the Red Sea, Paul says the Jews were baptized into Moses (1 Cor. 10:2), but passing through these waters, we (Sawyer and Koya) were baptized into Christ.

Water from the rock saved the people from dying in the wilderness. Similarly, Jesus stood and announced, "I am the water of life" (Jn. 4:14).

King David points to Jesus. Both David and Jesus were born in Bethlehem. Both were about God's business as youth. Both were made fun of by their brothers. Both were obedient to their fathers. Both had many enemies, foreign, domestic. Both were betrayed by close friends. David killed Goliath. Jesus destroyed the works of the devil. Both were shepherds. Both were kings. David could not build the house of the LORD because he shed too much blood. Jesus built the house of the LORD *because* He shed His blood.

It is and has always been all about Jesus. He is the key to understanding all of Scripture. From the prophet Isaiah written 700 years before Christ: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." If not Jesus, then who? Jesus even points us to this chapter and tells us to look for Him here when He says, "For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'" (Lk. 22:37).

Luther said His Bible did not have two parts to it, meaning Old Testament and New. It's all about Jesus. Acts 10 says the same thing. "All the prophets bear witness to Jesus so that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Some of the words spoken from the cross were quotations lifted right out of the Old Testament, such as, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus finds Himself in the Old Testament. You and I should find Him there too.

"O foolish ones" the stranger said, "how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Slow here means sluggish, unresponsive. Makes me think of a lawn mower with a gunky carburetor. You hit a patch of thick grass and the thing nearly dies, all smoke and noise and exhaust but no power.

Same way with people. Many talk a good game about being spiritual and in touch with God but are indifferent to Jesus. When they hit the thick stuff, it's all smoke and exhaust but no power to get through it, no hope, no assurance.

As the three men approach Emmaus, the stranger acted as though he was going farther. He will force Himself on no one. But they strongly urged him saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening." He came as a guest but becomes the host. At the table, he took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. Of course, it's the language of the Lord's Supper. Verse 31, "Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him." You see what's going on here? They did not know Jesus until they experience Him in Word and Sacrament, in the stranger interpreting Scriptures for them along the road, and in the breaking of the bread.

This is the only way we come to know Jesus, through Word and Sacrament. If you are not regularly in the Word, not regularly receiving the sacrament, then you should not be surprised if your faith is all noise and smoke and exhaust but no power. Martin Luther said, "We need to hear the Gospel every day, because we forget it every day."

You cannot live off the faith of your parents or grandparents, but Word and Sacrament makes all believers first-generation Christians.

Finally, when these two men come to know Jesus through Word and Sacrament, notice the change in them. Before, they had been walking slowly and hopelessly from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Now they walk hastily and hopefully from Emmaus back to Jerusalem. Before, they felt compelled to talk with each other about the sad and tragic things that had happened in Jerusalem. Now, they feel compelled to share the Good News with others. They find the eleven and those with them, but before they even get to share their news, they are told, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"

The living Lord appears also to us, in Word and Sacrament. As you page through Scripture, you'll keep finding Him within its pages, from Genesis to Revelation, because it's *all* about Jesus. Thanks be to God!