

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Luke 24:13-35, focused on verses 28-32

April 3, 2022

Good News Translation

Fifth Sunday of Lent

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Preached by Philip Gladden at the Wallace Presbyterian Church, Wallace, NC

IN THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Let us pray: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

In the book of Acts, the second volume of Luke's writing, we read that the first converts on the Day of Pentecost "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people." (Acts 2:41-42, 46-47a)

In the gospel of Mark, we read this story about the institution of the Lord's Supper: While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mark 14:22-24, 26)

When he fed the 5,000, Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, looked up to heaven, blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. (Luke 9:16)

After Peter and six other disciples went fishing after Easter weekend and caught nothing, Jesus stood on the beach and told them where to find some fish. John tells us, "When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish that you have just caught' . . . Come and have breakfast.' None of the disciples dared to ask him, 'Who are you?' because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish." (John 21:9-13)

And, at the end of the road to Emmaus on that first Easter Sunday afternoon, "he went in to stay with them. He sat down to eat with them, took the bread, and said the blessing; then he broke the bread and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he disappeared from their sight." Cleopas and his companion hurried back to Jerusalem and found the eleven disciples and the others. Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:30-35)

There's just something about breaking bread with Jesus that opens our eyes, makes our hearts glad, and makes us want to praise God with a song! Today, on this fifth Sunday of Lent, we get to do all of those things as we come to the Lord's table as his guests.

Johnny Cash sang a song, “Breaking Bread.”

*Breaking bread, breaking bread,
We are gathered here together to break bread.
Breaking bread, breaking bread,
We are gathered here together to break bread.*

*It's not the barley or the wheat,
It's not the oven or the heat
That makes this bread so good to eat,
It's the needing and the sharing that makes the meal complete.*

*Upon the water bread is cast,
The last is first, the first is last;
For everyone who eats this bread,
There are thousands, maybe more, that will be fed.*

*Breaking bread, breaking bread,
We are gathered here together to break bread.*

Bob Hurd, a noted Roman Catholic music teacher, composer, and liturgist, wrote “In the Breaking of the Bread.”

*In the breaking of the bread
We have known him; we have been fed.
Jesus the stranger, Jesus the Lord,
Be our companion, be our hope.*

*Bread for the journey, strength for our years,
Manna of ages of struggle and tears.
Cup of salvation, fruit of the land,
Bless and receive now, the work of our hands.*

*Bread of the promise, people of hope,
Wine of compassion, life for the world.
Gathered at table, joined as one body.
Sealed in the Spirit, sent by the Word.*

*In the breaking of the bread
We have known him; we have been fed.
Jesus the stranger, Jesus the Lord,
Be our companion, be our hope.*

Bob Hurd also wrote a song particular to this Emmaus Road story, called “Two Were Bound for Emmaus.” Here is the first verse:

*All their hope for the future had been nailed to a cross.
Love unknown then walked beside them,
come back from the dead,
and they knew him in the breaking of the bread.*

Award winning composer Michael Philip Ward wrote a song, “In the Breaking of the Bread (We Saw Him!),” which tells the story of Cleopas and his companion breaking bread with Jesus and invites us to recognize the risen Lord Jesus here with us at the table today.

*In the walking on the road, we saw Him.
In the telling of our hopes, we saw Him.
In the burning of our hearts, we saw the Lord.
At the meal He took the bread,
and then He blessed it, broke it, offered it.
In the breaking of the bread, we saw Him!
Suddenly our eyes were opened,
and we knew He was alive!*

*In the breaking of the bread, we saw Him!
Suddenly our eyes were opened.
There within our midst was Jesus,
and we knew He was alive.
In the breaking of the bread,
He is here with us again,
and we know He is alive.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

Cleopas and his companion thought Jesus was dead. Oh, they had heard reports of him being alive, but, really, who could believe that? But in the breaking of the bread, they saw him! Suddenly their eyes were opened and there within their midst was Jesus and they knew he was alive!

We’ve heard the story all our lives, how Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. We’ve heard how the religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. We’ve even heard the stories that he is alive!

But sometimes our eyes get clouded over by our doubts and sorrows and troubles and worries and crushed hopes, and we don’t recognize the stranger who walks along with us through this journey of life. Maybe that’s how you’re feeling this morning. Maybe it’s hard to see Jesus at work in your life and in the world today. Then again, maybe your eyes are wide open and you’re well aware of the presence of the Lord in this

place. Jesus's invitation comes to each and every one of us this morning – “Come to the table of grace!”

Even though we gather at the Lord’s table in remembrance of him, we aren’t gathering for a memorial meal for a much-loved but long-dead companion. We gather at the table this morning to share a meal with one another and the living Lord. He is the host, we are the guests, and we are invited to recognize him in the breaking of the bread.

In his commentary on Luke’s gospel, Fred Craddock notes, “Luke here tells us that the living Christ is both the key to understanding the Scriptures and the very present Lord who is revealed to us in the breaking of the bread. His presence at the table makes all believers first-generation Christians and every meeting place Emmaus.”¹

As we prepare to come to the table this morning, we will sing Hymn #501, “Feed Us, Lord.” It tells the story of the supper at Emmaus, reminds us of God’s promises, calls to mind the many meals Jesus shared with his disciples, and assures us that our risen Lord will give us what we need for our journey of discipleship.

*Feed us, Lord. Feed us, Lord.
In the broken bread, be revealed again.
Come and feed our hearts, O Lord.*

*Quench us, Lord. Quench us, Lord.
On this thirsty ground, may your love flow down.
Come and quench our hearts, O Lord.*

*Fill us, Lord. Fill us, Lord,
with the bread and wine, of the risen Christ.
Come and fill our hearts, O Lord.*

*Lead us, Lord. Lead us, Lord,
nourished here by Christ, given strength for life.
Come and lead our hearts, O Lord.*

Friends, come to the table.
We are gathered here together to break bread.
May this meeting place be Emmaus for you.
May you know him in the breaking of the bread.

Let us pray: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, all thanks and praise be unto you. As we have been fed by your Word, feed us again at your holy table, you who are the bread of life. By your Word and by your Supper, may our eyes be opened to your presence among us and your will for our lives. Amen.

NOTES

¹Fred B. Craddock, *Luke* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), p. 287.