

Music Sunday
Luke 24:13-35

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands;

Serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with song.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise.

Give thanks to him and call upon his name.

Do those words sound familiar to you? You sang them earlier. They were the words of part of our first hymn. The Old Hundredth is named that because it is the words of the psalmist – in particular Psalm 100. The psalmist wrote those words millenniums ago about praising God, giving thanks, entering his gates and courts. The imagery of the magnificence of entering out of the chaos of this world through the heavenly gates and into the grandeur of God's everlasting court, with God before us and all people of all times and places spread out singing praises to the Lord as far as the eye could see is a wonderful image. These words were set to music to help us feel the emotions of that picture. These words were set to music to teach us to see the revelation of God's glory that is all around us. By mixing words and music together we are taught new things, we can be motivated, inspired or challenged, all by a simple song.

We all have hymns or songs that we like and are our favorite. There are ones that can conjure up happy recollections or painful memories; sometimes tears come to our eyes when we hear a certain song - remembering events or people of long ago. There are songs that inspire us to stand straight and be bold, be invigorated, by the beat of the music and poetry of the words. Music is indeed a wonderful gift that God blesses us all with.

To me certain songs bring back childhood memories. Today being mother's day, I can't help but remember the car rides we as a family took in which my mom made us sing. She said it was to teach us the songs but always thought it was to keep my brother and sister and I from fighting. Because if we were singing we weren't getting on each others nerves on a long ride. Instead we sang songs like "Jesus loves me". "This little light of mine", or even some hymns "Amazing Grace" and "I love to tell the story" were some of our favorites. We had songs that taught us the books of the bible, the apostles' creed and the Lord's Prayer. In singing all these songs, my mom taught us about faith and God and how to even pray.

Mary Lathbury, a mother, a wife, an artist, and a faithful Christian, wrote the following words to help the people she loved to learn about God and faith: She wrote:

“Break now the bread of life, Dear Lord to me.

As once you broke the loaves beside the sea.

Beyond the sacred page, I seek you Lord, My spirit waits for you, O living Word.

Oh, send your Spirit Lord, Now unto me. That he may touch my eyes and make me see.

Show me the truth concealed within your Word.

And in your book revealed I see my Lord.

We use this hymn still today, it is number 235 in our green hymnal and many times used before or after communion, since it talks about the breaking of bread. But in all actuality Mary Lathbury in the mid 1800's wrote this hymn to call people to Bible study. At a summer retreat in New York, she penned those words to invite people to enter into the Word of God, the gift of life that sustains us, and teaches us, inspires us, and gives us truth. I imagine that Mary saw this understanding that is shared with our Gospel reading today. Jesus the resurrected Christ had been revealed in the breaking of the bread of life, the Word of God, through this revealing power the disciples eyes were opened and they could see and know the truth of the word that had been concealed. These words and this message are written right there in her hymn.

Many times in worship the hymns that we sing, the ones the choir sings as anthems, the ones the children sing or the treble bells play reveal this same truth. They are using the word of God to inspire and teach us, to challenge us and to motivate us. The hymns are picked for this very reason, they are not just random, they are picked to match the theme of the day. To teach in liturgy, prayer, preaching, scripture, and yes music what it is that God is saying to us today.

Take note that it took the disciples today quite a while to catch on to what was happening right in their midst. These are not just two strangers. They had been Jesus disciples for a while. They might not have been part of the inner twelve but we do know they were present in that upper room. They might have been there on the night Jesus lifted up the bread and broke it saying this is my body given for you. They may have just as well been there when Jesus held up the cup after supper and said this is my blood shed for you. But they like the rest of the disciples didn't understand, their eyes were not open, they had heard but not understood.

They may have heard the mob yelling crucify him, crucify him. They may have heard the guards taunting him and stabbing him in the side. They may have heard his words of forgiveness even as he breathed his last, dying on the cross on that dark Friday. They may have witnessed and seen all of these things and yet they still didn't understand.

We know they were there in Jerusalem three days later, on Sunday morning, when the women came back telling their story of excitement. The women who came saying that Jesus was no longer dead, but alive. They had been to his grave early on that Sunday morning, but

when they said when they arrived the stone had been rolled back and two angels appeared to them proclaiming that Jesus was not there but risen. These two one the road to Emmaus were also probably there when Simon Peter got back after checking out the women's story. He went down to the grave and found it just as they had said – empty, the stone rolled away and Jesus not dead but gone. They had heard all these stories but yet they didn't understand.

Now it is later in the afternoon, the Sabbath is over and the festival of Passover is completed. So with their leader dead, and people unsure of what to do, they decide to go home to Emmaus – just a seven mile walk from Jerusalem. Along the way in their sadness they talk over all these strange happenings, of all the things that don't make sense to them. When suddenly along the road comes a third man, walking in the same direction as they are going this third man draws into step with them and asks what they are talking about. In remorse they explain what has taken place, even though they still don't understand. Luke said their eyes were kept from recognizing Jesus. This may be because the road was dirty and Jesus like many travelers would have been covered up walking along. Or perhaps because Jesus was resurrected he had bodily changed just enough to confuse them. Perhaps it was simply because they were depressed and anxious not seeing clearly or noticing the very person that walking beside them. But for whatever reason, they didn't see and understand, even as Jesus unveils the word of God to them. Starting with Moses and all the prophets he goes on to show them how the Christ did exactly what the messiah was predicted to do and fulfill.

Only at the dinner table when as the favored guests, is honored to break the bread and offer thanks, is their eyes opened and they understand. They see the words that Jesus had expressed to them along the road. They hear that message of hope and resurrection. They knew the truth that is God's word. And so they race back to tell the other disciples who by now have their own visitation occurrence of the upper room to share also.

Look how long it took those disciples to catch on to the resurrection news. Are we any better. This being mothers day, we remember all the women and mothers who have raised us and taught us the Word of God, but we still don't always hear and comprehend it. This is also Music Sunday and we remember that we sing all these hymns, liturgies, and songs, to help teach us, to inspire us, to challenge us with the Word of God and yet so often we don't sing, read, or comprehend what is right there before us. We give thanks for the songs, the music and the women who teach us, we give thanks for the word of God that we come here each week to hear, for the word that we should dwell in each day in prayer or at bible study. We give thanks for God who keeps revealing to us the truth in so many wonderful ways, because we walk along this road of life like those two disciples and we don't always get it, But thanks be to God that

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here when the word is read, the bread is broken, the songs are sung, we know we are in the presence of the Lord. May the Church in liturgy and song, in faith and love, through centuries of wrong, bear witness to the truth in every tongue. May we see and open our ears to the Word of God this day. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.
AMEN.