

Wednesday, February 24, 2016
Psalm 119:97-104
Luke 24:28-32

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

Well, here we are in week 2 as we continue our time together through the sharing of a meal, fellowship, and now worship. This week we journey onward in our progression of lifting up the faith practices that naturally flow forth from the waters of baptism as we grow into disciples of Jesus Christ. Our baptism sets us out on a lifelong journey that is characterized by our relationship to God, our relationship to our faith community, our relationships in our community and the wider world. These faith practices are not something we should view as one more thing on our already busy schedules. Rather, they are a gift from God. They are a blueprint from God extended to the church offering us the insight and wisdom of the Holy Spirit in living into the fullness of the covenant God makes with each of us in our baptism. It is through these practices God draws us closer to Godself holding us firm in that covenantal relationship God calls us to in and through our baptism. These faith practices, once again, are: to live among God's faithful people; to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper; to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people following the example of Jesus; and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

Tonight, we focus on the second faith practice: to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper. The following words are from the document, *Faith Practices in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America – Living Our Baptismal Covenant.*ⁱ

We listen deeply as we hear, read and study God's word. As God's word speaks to us, it comes both as command and promise. We listen to see how the message challenges us and encourages us in our lives. We listen for God's call and God's guidance. And we

listen to the words of the Lord's Supper to remind us that the body of Christ was given for us and the blood of Christ was shed for us.

The Lord's Supper stands at the center of our lives as Christians. In that meal, we receive Jesus' presence into our very bodies. We receive God's gifts of forgiveness of sin, new life and salvation. At the same time, as a community God makes us into the body of Christ, one with all in every time and place who share this holy meal. We become the body of Christ for the sake of the world. That is, we participate in God's mission. Having been showered with God's gifts, God sends us forth to take that love and compassion out into the world to the lonely, the oppressed, the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned, the angry, and those suffering in mind, body and spirit.

There is so much to faith we simply can't comprehend or explain. As I said on Sunday faith is challenging stuff at times and it requires effort on our part. That is the "yes" we make to God in our own baptisms or when we affirm our baptisms (aka confirmation). While it certainly isn't always easy and at times we may have our doubts God continues to come to us, speak to us, comfort, sustain, and nourish us with the love, compassion, hope, and peace, which can only be found through Him.

Our gospel passage this evening comes just on the heels of the women going to the tomb on Easter morning, finding it empty, and then being greeted by two angelic figures reminding them of what Jesus had told them prior to his death – that he would rise again on the third day. Immediately, they relayed this information onto Jesus' disciples who, we are told, found them to be pure nonsense and did not believe. Which takes us to tonight's text in which we find two of Jesus' disciples on the road discussing all the events of the last 72 hours. Certainly, they had to have had their own doubts and maybe were talking about whether or not what these women had claimed to have witnessed really happened. Certainly, they had to have been mired in fear that their very lives could end just as abruptly and violently as Jesus' did. I imagine their conversation was a continual back and forth trying to figure things out in

the midst of the chaotic events, the vast range of emotions, and even despair and abandonment they were feeling as Jesus seemingly left them to fend for themselves. And then, into the midst of all they were experiencing, comes the resurrected Christ; however, they don't recognize Him. They can't comprehend His presence perhaps because the thick cloud of fear, sadness, despair, and doubt has engulfed them. Isn't that how our own lives are at times? In the midst of whatever it is we might be going through we can't cut through the fog of what life throws out us and catch a glimpse of the risen Christ. And as they journey together down the road with Jesus by their side He reminds them of what He had told them that His ultimate glory would come through the cross and empty tomb of Easter. And clearly He unpacked prophecies of the Hebrew Bible uttered by the likes of Moses to help their disbelief turn to belief. Finally, Jesus shares a meal with them and it is here their eyes are opened and they finally see who it is that has been with them all this while – Jesus.

Yes faith is tough stuff. Being a disciple of Jesus isn't a walk in the park always. Yet, God has given us all we need to sustain us in our journey. God is always moving closer but the problem is we often like to push back and move the other way. Like those disciples on the road to Emmaus we need our eyes opened to see the resurrected Christ right beside us and that is why God has given us these faith practices. Through them God draws near to us, speaks to us, meets us, teaches us, and then utilizes us to be partners with God in carrying out God's work in the world.

ⁱ For a copy of this document go to: <http://www.elca.org/en/Our-Work/Congregations-and-Synods/Faith-Practices/Living-Our-Baptismal-Covenant>