Grace and Peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the 50 days of Easter this Sunday is the third Sunday of Easter, where we hear yet another story of Jesus’ appearance after his resurrection. I think it is important we look at the text before today’s story. In a familiar story after the tomb wasfound empty Cleopas and a friend were getting out of town. They were running away to Emmaus, a small village about seven miles from Jerusalem. Jesus starts to walk with them but did not recognize him but he injected himself in the conversation by asking what they we talking about. And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” Cleopas, was incredulous and asked him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” They told him about Jesus, the mighty prophet mighty in deed and word before God an all the people and how the religious leaders handed him over where he was condemned to death and he was crucified. Theywere crushed since they looked for Jesus to redeem Israel.

They then told Jesus about how the women had found the tomb empty and an angel told them he was alive so some went to the tomb and verified this but they did not find Jesus. Jesus said they were foolish and slow of heart. Wasn’t it necessary like the prophets had declared that Jesus was suffer and then entered his glory. foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Jesus thenbegan with Moses and all the prophets, as he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. They urged Jesu to stay with them and sharing the mealwhere he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. They then returned to Jerusalem, and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together and told them “The Lord has risen indeed.” Then they told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Today’s story continues where we encounter Jesus here and now, as the Holy Spirit gathers us together, to hear the word, to eat with him, and others in the fellowship hall, to connect with his body of believers who God’s Spirit gathers worldwide. This story is reminiscent of the first two Sundays of Easter where he gathers amongst the two travelers and other believers. This time even though the travelers had told them all this, they are still doubtful and afraid because they believe they are seeing a ghost when Jesus came to stand in their midst. He asks why they are frightened and have doubt and shows them his hands and feet to see that it is indeed Jesus and he is not a ghost because he has flesh and bones unlike ghosts and they can actually touch him. Then, while they are joyful but still have a hard time believing he said he was hungry and eats the piece of fish they gave him. Ghosts, not having a physical body, have no need for food and certainly cannot grasp utensils. Luke, the purported physician, stresses the physical reality of the resurrection. Unlike ghosts Jesus’ resurrected body has “flesh and bones.” Jesus is hungry the same way we become hungry and eats a piece of broiled fish “in their presence.” When Jesus’ eats before the disciples this not only confirms the physicality of Jesus’ body, while it demonstrates his presence, especially in the context of hospitality where he is “in the midst” of them. When Jesus eats the broiled fish they gave him his meal not only affirms the physical nature of Jesus’ resurrection but reinforces the importance Jesus places on meal fellowship like he did with the two travelers. Sharing meals is still an important part of Christian life not only in worship at the Lord’s supper but in the fellowship halls after worship who Bob and Kay thankfully have as part of their ministry, the fish fry’s that is part of Chuck others ministry and in the potlucks we have. We are able to celebrate the power of sharing food with others and the gift of table conversation while having a connection with each other. We excel in having meals while meals are also shared at dinner tables in people’s homes where we pray “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blest” “Come, Lord Jesus” is the last prayer in the Bible.  Jesus to us in a humble context, the family gathered together for a meal. “Be our guest.” Join us. We welcome you into our home and to our table to be amongst us. When we call upon the name of Jesus, as we do in this prayer, he is present with us. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:20). God is present when we sit around the table with our family, our guests and even strangers to enjoy a good meal.  The 19th-century German artist, Fritz von Uhde, a devout Lutheran, [made a painting of this prayer](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fartsandculture.google.com%2Fasset%2Fthe-mealtime-prayer-fritz-von-uhde%2FagEHH0H-76Eh8Q%3Fhl%3Den&data=04%7C01%7Croy.askins%40lcms.org%7C0ef9a6626f454655871b08d89a39f310%7C44235acde77a4dd3a42f625be236b4a0%7C0%7C0%7C637428920976522781%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=ckqs1I7eM0XnUal0chmueI8H%2BIztWkiL9hQEWOEkOUE%3D&reserved=0). It shows an ordinary peasant family sitting around a table and then Jesus walks in. They stand to greet Him, with bows and shy looks, as they would with any guest. Jesus, the Lord of the universe, has come to this humble family to be with them.

The word “gift” an important for Lutherans as we recognize the gifts God has given us--our lives, our works, our family and our extended family, our faith community and the food that sustains our bodies so we can share Christ with others. Our salvation is not a matter of being compensated for what we do, our “good works” which do not save us but rather this free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Salvation is not our doing, but the gift of God’s grace: Ephesian 2:8 says ‘**8**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.’

This simple but powerful table grace “Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blest” helps us reflect on Christ’s presence and God’s gifts even in something as ordinary as eating a meal. Plus, the extraordinary meal of communion on Sundays where we have the presence of Jesus in the bread and the wine.

Jesus them told them like he told the travelers everything written him in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled while he opens their minds to understand the scriptures, and reiterated the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48You are witnesses of these things.”

Inspirational slogans can be banal background noise, but sometimes they also express timeless truth. One such saying is “God doesn’t call the qualified; God qualifies the called.” The disbelief and wonder the disciples express to the risen Jesus in Luke (24:37, 41) is both surprising and comforting, since we would likely have reacted in similar ways. When Jesus issues the call for us to follow, we can take comfort in knowing he has already accounted for our lapses of faith and lack of understanding.

The risen Christ is here among us, eating with us, and that meal is part of the proclamation of the Messiah risen from the dead on the third day and offering forgiveness to all nations.