

1 Learn of Me

“Thus says the Lord, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me. That I am the Lord who exercises loving kindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things.” (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

They had met only a few weeks ago. Since then, there was a flurry of e-mails and phone calls and notes. They talked into the wee hours of the night, not seeming to mind the loss of sleep. Their hunger to know about each other was almost insatiable. Such is the nature of love. When two people are attracted to each other, there is a desire—even a need—to learn as much as you possibly can about the other. Love feeds on this kind of information with a ravenous hunger. The more you get to know the person, the deeper the love grows. Should it be any different in our relationship with God? God doesn't think so. Listen to what He says: “. . . let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me.”

It seems so obvious. God wants me to know Him and understand Him. Yet, if I am honest, this is not a high priority with me as much as it should be. When I turn to His Word, it is not necessarily to know *Him* better. I am in search of understanding *my life* better: What am I supposed to do in life? What am I not supposed to do? How do I quit worrying? How can I overcome a grudge? What do I do when I am lonely or depressed? You know the list. Where do you turn when you are _____? (Go ahead and fill in the blank.)

Don't get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with seeking that kind of help. That is why God put those truths in the Word in the first place. But why is it not a priority of my heart to first learn about *His heart*: What makes Him sad? What does He delight in? God has feelings. He gets jealous. He delights in our offerings. He gets angry. He yearns for fellowship with us. The more I learn about Him

in His Word, the more my heart is ablaze with His joy and His love. Ask the two men who walked some eight miles with a stranger on their way to Emmaus. Dejected and despairing, they were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus. At a normal pace, that would be about a two-hour walk. Somewhere along the way, a man came up beside them. It was Jesus, but He kept Himself from being recognized by them. As He joins them, He asks what they are talking about. Listen to their response:

“They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, ‘Are you the only one living in Jerusalem who doesn't know the things that have happened there in these days?’ ‘What things?’ he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth, they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning, but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see” (Luke 24:17-21).

Wouldn't you expect Jesus to just suddenly reveal Himself and say, “It's me, brothers. It's true”? Wouldn't there be the desire to take

these men out of their despair as quickly as possible? Jesus, however, takes another route on this eight-mile walk.

“He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

An eight-mile walk with Jesus as He reviews what the Old Testament foretold about Him. That is a Sunday walk I would take at any time. This two-hour Bible lesson reminds me that my heart, too, can be ablaze with new joy and hope in His love. Remember the rest of the story:

“As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, ‘Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’” (Luke 24:28-32).

Learning of Him is the first and most important mission response. It brings passion to all the other mission responses—Praying, Giving, Telling, Sending, Going and Celebrating. You can see these responses beginning to surface in the final words of this text:

“They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’ The two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when He broke bread” (Luke 24:33-35).

An eight-mile walk that began in despair led to an eight-mile return walk that was much different in pace and spirit. The journey back to their friends in Jerusalem was filled with a joy burning inside of them. What they had learned would change the pace and direction of their walk for the rest of their lives. It all began with what they learned as Jesus opened the Scriptures to them.

It is no different today. Jesus is ready to open the Scriptures to our hearts as well. Is your journey this day one filled with despair or doubt? Is your pace a little slow and dragging? Is your spirit burdened and weighed down? Jesus is willing to walk with you as He did with the two men on their way to Emmaus. Take the time to get to know and understand Him. Take one more look at Jeremiah 9:23-24 and the final words, “. . . let him who boasts, boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight.”

This is what He wants us to learn. God is not one to delight in suffering or unfairness. There is much in life that causes confusion as to why God allows certain things to happen. The men on the road to Emmaus were confused. But the more we learn of Him, the more we will see and understand Him to be a God that delights in showing us kindness and in doing what is right. He can be trusted. No where better can His desire to exercise kindness, justice and righteousness be witnessed than on the Cross. The Cross alone helps me to learn all that I need to know about Him.

What difference would it make in your walk—in its pace and in its direction—if Jesus were to open His Word to your heart?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, walk with me this day. As you open my heart to your Word, teach me all that you desire for me to learn about you. When life seems unfair or when events confuse me as to where you are, remind me of your Cross. It is there that I have come to trust that you really are One who desires to exercise kindness, justice and righteousness. As you open your Word to me, then will my heart burn within me and I shall serve you with renewed love and joy. **Amen.**

Challenge: Read John 18-21. As you read these verses, what do you learn of Jesus? Write down your thoughts as though you were introducing Jesus to a friend. Tell what you admire about Jesus. What attracts you to Him? Who is He?

Scripture Reading: Psalm 119:97-112

From the Book of Concord: “Remember, then, that you must be concerned not only about hearing the Word, but also about learning it and retaining it. Do not think that it is up to your discretion or that it is an unimportant matter. It is the commandment of God, who will require of you an accounting of how you have heard, learned, and honored his Word.

“In the same way those conceited spirits should also be punished who, after they have heard a sermon or two, become sick and tired of it and feel that they know it all and need no more instructors. This is precisely the sin that used to be numbered among the mortal sins and was called *acedia*—that is, laziness or weariness—a malignant, pernicious plague with which the devil bewitches and deceives many hearts so that he may take us by surprise and stealthily take the Word of God away again.

“Let me tell you this. Even though you know the Word perfectly and have already mastered everything, you are daily under the dominion of the devil, and he does not rest day or night in seeking to take you unawares and to kindle in your heart unbelief and wicked thoughts against these three and all the other commandments. Therefore you must constantly keep God’s Word in your heart, on your lips, and in your ears. For where the heart stands idle and the Word is not heard, the devil breaks in and does his damage before we realize it. On the other hand, when we seriously ponder the Word, hear it, and put it to use, such is its power that it never departs without fruit. It always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devotion, and it constantly creates clean hearts and minds. For this Word is not idle or dead, but effective and living. Even if no other benefit or need drove us to the Word, yet everyone should be motivated by the realization that through the Word the devil is cast out and put to flight, this commandment is fulfilled, and God is more pleased than by any hypocrisy, no matter how brilliant” (The Large Catechism, The Third Commandment, p. 400.98-102).