



CHRIST CHURCH CRANBROOK

Grace and peace to you from God, our Father, and the risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

I have been thinking about the body of Christ lately. We have this fascinating double entendre. Really, it's a triple entendre implied in the body of Christ. We have Jesus' actual body, crucified, raised, and walking on a road to Emmaus, then ascending into Heaven to sit at the right hand of God. And then we have the Eucharist where the elements of bread and wine become miraculously, the body of Christ, and the blood. And then we have each other. Together, we are the body of Christ and we're that to each other and we're that to actually the whole world. We are the body of Christ in flesh and blood. Three different ways to experience the body of Christ: in Heaven, in the Eucharist, and among one another.

So here's my question to you. Which one is your favorite? And by favorite, I mean, which makes your heart ablaze with hope, with warmth and fierce joy as you experience Jesus fully in body? How does Jesus' body come to you and guide you, and lead you and show you the way? How does Jesus walk next to you when you're confused and bewildered and don't understand what's going on? And then He opens up to you the wisdom from on high and you can begin to see things differently? Because here's what I know, without a shadow of a doubt. Jesus shows up whether you want Him to or not, whether you asked Him to or not, whether you looked for rescuing or you didn't, Jesus is there. We just may not recognize Him.

One of the hazards of living with a pastor, or I should probably say this pastor, is that as a family member, you are subject to pop Bible quizzes. So last week my husband Troy made this lovely dinner. And we'd just finished and he was enjoying just some time of having made this beautiful repast for us, and I thought, aha, here's my in. I said, "Hey Troy. What do you know about the walk to Emmaus?" And he was like, "What?" And it took him just a hot second, but then he said, "Oh yeah, that's that weird resurrection story, right? That's the one where for some reason, those disciples, they don't recognize Jesus who's standing right next to them. He must have had some sort of great disguise, like a big floppy hat that covered his face or a scarf around Him. It was Jesus incognito."

And I thought, oh my gosh, that's such a great way to describe the resurrected Christ: Jesus incognito. The ancient fathers of the church have called Him "the

hidden God." The hidden God who appears to bless us and then disappears from our mind's eyes, leaving our hearts warmed, our energies renewed, and our love increased. This is the hidden God who is found in the heavens beneath the bread and among us.

The other day, I was speaking to someone who was having so many life problems. Her whole entire life is crumbling, it's falling apart, and she was very, very scared and very, very alone. And then all of a sudden, there was a knock at her door and a friend that she had not seen in years appeared, and this was exactly the right person for her to guide her through the massive changes that she was experiencing in her life. Jesus incognito.

The disciples are on their way home after a tumultuous week. They're trying to make sense of things that don't make any sense. The one who was supposed to save Israel has been killed. The one who was killed is no longer in the tomb. And the one who has failed them is now appearing to them. Why? What is going on? And then this man appears and He's there not to just keep them company on the way home, because when He speaks, they can feel this internal change. Their bewilderment and their grief is reduced and turned into hope, and there's a burning in their hearts. They're so captivated by Him and His presence and his words that they beg Him to stay. Please don't leave us. They don't want the moment to end.

There's a writer, Jim Gordon, who calls this the Emmaus moment. It's that experience that we have with one another because there are certain people in our lives, whether they're personally known to you or they're influencers of you, they may be writers or leaders or people that you follow and you're eager to spend time with them because they do something to you. They change your mind. They give you hope in the midst of a complicated life. They are beacons of light in a foggy world. And you recognize these people in your life because, like the disciples experienced when they all got to Emmaus, they didn't want him to leave.

There's a reluctance for this companionship on the journey to end. You want more of them. And when your hearts burn within and that conversation that you have with that other person is so healing, so life giving, and it brings you understanding and a possibility of newness, and it opens up a different future, and you have this feeling, gosh. It's not that I was meeting this person. It's that this person met me. That is your Emmaus moment. That is your Emmaus person. That is Jesus incognito.

Who's your Emmaus person? Now, it may be that you actually don't like surprises, and you would prefer Jesus not to just show up whenever He wants. And, in fact, when that sort of happens, it's not that your heart warms, you get

heartburn. You're like, why can't you just be consistent? Why can't you be constant, Jesus? Why can't you be dependable?

Well, I was having an interesting conversation with a group of people about the Eucharist. Do you remember during the pandemic, we didn't have Eucharist for over a year. Like no Eucharist. I didn't have Eucharist for over a year, and some of us were commenting on how we longed for it. We couldn't wait to have it again. We were so excited for it to be brought back. And then it was brought back, and now a year or two later, we're like, eh. It's kind of rote. It's a ritual. It happens every week. And so people were observing like, is it really that big of a deal?

Well, let me tell you what I think about the Eucharist, about Christ coming to us in flesh and blood, about Christ showing up week after week whether we want Him to or not. We are foolish and we are slow of heart if we do not realize the magnitude of what happens at that rail week after week to us. We are missing Jesus incognito if we're not floored, each time someone hands us the bread and says, "The body of Christ, the bread from heaven."

There was a man in one of my churches who was so old that he needed to be escorted to the altar rail, but he came to the rail as long as he could. And when I handed him the bread and said to him, "The body of Christ, the bread from heaven," he would say, not to me, but to the bread, "My Lord and my God." It's what Doubting Thomas says when the resurrected Jesus appears to him so that he can see with his own eyes that Jesus is alive. Jesus is well, my Lord and my God.

And so I was wondering if you all could do that today, if you can acknowledge the hidden Christ among you when you receive the bread today. I want you to practice meeting the Prince of Peace today. I want you to say hello and greet the Lord of your life today and I mean it. So let's practice it right now. This is a little weird, but y'all know I am weird. So here's what I want you to do. I want you to put out your hands like this. And I want you to imagine in your mind's eye when I say those words, "The body of Christ, the bread of heaven," that there appears a wafer in your hands. And then I want you to reply, "My Lord and my God."

Okay? The body of Christ, the bread from heaven. My Lord and my God. Right there, hidden in plain sight. Jesus is with us in all circumstances, but, my goodness, is He with you when you take the Eucharist.

Finally, the embodied Jesus ascended into heaven is at your beck and call, which is super wild to claim and utterly true. And yet too often we pretend like He doesn't exist up there. You know, they say that the health of a marriage is directly related to how many times you speak to your beloved directly. How many times will you address Jesus by name today? How many times will you reach out to Him and find Him already ready to speak to you and be with you to

warm your heart and give you hope? Whether Jesus is on the throne in Heaven, or in the Eucharist, or among the people in your life, Jesus comes to you incognito through the bread and the wine, and through the people, and through your prayers and your conversations.

And make no mistake, Jesus is alive and we can see Him. And you may have your favorite way to meet Jesus, but Jesus, whether you want it or not, will find you. He always does. May your hearts be burning with this good news.

Amen.