

"The Misdiagnosis"

Text: Luke 24:13-18,25-29

"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." (Jude 1:24-25)

Dear Fellow Christians: There are words that we wish didn't exist – not because of the words themselves, but because of that which they represent or identify. There is, for example, no word that I am aware of in any language for a man suddenly turning into a pocket gopher. There is no word because it doesn't happen. So we wish there were no such thing as disease, and therefore no need for such a word. No such thing as narcissism, hedonism, pedophilia, cannibalism and the like. Those words exist because that which they identify exists. The title of this morning's sermon - "Misdiagnosis" - is another one of those words that we wish didn't exist. The word "misdiagnosis" exists because it happens. Unnervingly often. My guess is that virtually all of you have been misdiagnosed in one way or another or at one time or another, some perhaps often. The word is used most often in the field of medicine, and you don't have to be around the world of medicine for very long to understand why they refer to it as "practicing medicine." As complex and as wonderful as modern medicine has grown, it can still be a very inexact science.

Human beings make mistakes, and when dealing with something as complex as the human mind and the human body, mistakes are inevitable. With greater capabilities comes greater potential for error. In the old days an infection in the foot could be fatal. Someone then figured out that cutting off an infected foot or leg could save the patient's life. Yet even then an appalling number of mistakes were made, including the amputation of the wrong leg. Because of this, somewhere along the line doctors began writing "This Leg" with magic markers on the offending appendage. That still allowed for mistakes, so doctors began writing "Not This Leg" on the one to be spared. Again, if mistakes can be made on something that simple, we can only imagine the possibility for error as the complexity increases. Obviously some mistakes, some examples of misdiagnosis, carry more devastating consequences. Yet, as in all things, mistakes in the spiritual realm are always infinitely more alarming than anything that can go wrong in the physical. There simply is no comparison between temporal and eternal.

With this thought in mind we join two men on a lonely, fearful walk recorded in our text for this morning. They were utterly dejected and afraid, for in their minds they had been abandoned. Their minds and their eyes told them that they had been forsaken by their Teacher, their Savior, their Lord. In their case, if their misconception and misdiagnosis could not be corrected, the results would be utterly, eternally catastrophic. We read their story in the 24th Chapter of the Gospel of Luke, beginning there with the 13th Verse:

^{ESV} **Luke 24:13-18, 25-29** *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. ²⁸ ¶ So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹ but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.*

Here ends the text. This *is* God's Word. With complete confidence in that fact, and with absolute confidence in the power of these words to work its miracles in each of us, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."** Amen.

Would you have any objection if the world came to label you no longer as "Christian" but as a *"Fool for Christ Jesus"* or maybe even *"Christ-Fanatic"*? Interesting question when you take a moment to think it through. Obviously this is exactly what the world thinks of us, but it certainly isn't flattering. The real question is: Is it accurate?

The fact is the unbelieving world sees each of us as just that - as idiots, fanatics, zealots. What comes to their minds when they hear "Christian" is a fool that has been drawn into some mindless, semi-

fanatic, woefully outdated cult that is completely detached from any true sense of reality. You and I supposedly demonstrate that foolishness by actually *believing* such things as miracles – like a virgin giving birth to the Son of God and the resurrection of people after they have died. *We* believe we are God's special children and heirs of heaven; which in turn means that *they* believe we are delusional – at best.

So who is right and who is wrong? You and I have no doubts, but that in itself does not make it so. God makes it so. Judgment Day will prove it. Unlike those who deny the Christian faith, I know that I have no fear of facing my God as his fool – as a miserable sinner who took him at his Word and based my only hope for salvation on the foolishness of the forgiveness that is mine not by what I do or don't do, but through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

When you come face to face with a rank unbeliever and visit with him on this subject, you really come to understand just how diametrically opposed human wisdom is to the gospel in particular, and to faith in general. In spiritual, unseen matters of faith, man's eyes deceive him more often than they help.

This was at least part of the problem that weighed down those two men in our text for this morning on the road to Emmaus. Their own personal world, their own reality, had been shaped by what they *saw*, by what they had *experienced*. Our text gives us the impression that they were absolutely fascinated by the man who walked with them those seven miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, but their eyes, their minds, dictated their understanding. Even though they didn't recognize the risen Jesus at first, they were clearly captivated by their conversation with him. Later they described their feelings: **"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"**

Yet they didn't know it was Jesus at first, did they? In fact what they had seen with their eyes caused them to make that catastrophic *misdiagnosis* recorded in our text. The first reaction of Cleopas, one of the two, was more or less to disparage Jesus as ignorant: **"Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"** In other words, in the humble opinion of Cleopas, he himself was privy to the truth, but the Son of God and Savior of the World was steeped in ignorance. His diagnosis of the situation: *"I am knowledgeable, you are uninformed."* I have little doubt that the two were about to attempt to disabuse Jesus of his ignorance as they walked along the road when, thankfully, just the opposite took place.

Such is actually the normal reaction of man to God's truth, *until* his God reveals his higher truth to man's sin-addled heart and mind, and then grants acceptance of that truth. The faithless *might* acknowledge the existence of a wisdom greater than their own, but then they naturally *dismiss* God's wisdom when it conflicts with their own. God is wise and powerful, but it's just silly to talk about sick people being healed by Peter's shadow, or of human beings actually walking on water, or of priests being fed by ravens during a drought. Human beings are all ears when God wants to reveal a "higher consciousness," but not when that higher consciousness stands in such sharp contrast to man's experience. Only the Holy Spirit can change that.

So it was that Jesus talked as the three walked, and Cleopas and his companion quickly learned that Jesus was not the one who lacked understanding. Jesus wasn't ignorant; they were – right up until the best part of this account when Jesus removed their ignorance by the power of his words. The same words, by the way, that you and I have still today.

Understand just how silly those words of Jesus would have sounded to those two men had the words not been mixed with faith. After all, *with their own eyes* they had seen – *seen* – the death and burial of their Lord. They had witnessed his apparent helplessness, defeat, and death. They had observed Jesus' crucifixion, and as far they knew he was still dead – along with all of their hopes and dreams. And then here comes this man, this stranger, who was so out of it that he apparently didn't even know what had just happened in Jerusalem, and he dares to call *them* ignorant? **"O foolish ones,"** he said to them, **"and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"** This "ignorant" man nonetheless went on to tell them things like: **"Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"**

Part of the problem with Cleopas and his friend had to do with that simple word "all" in our text: **"and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"** Clearly they believed only *some* of what the Prophets had spoken. They evidently believed the parts about the Messiah being mighty and powerful, but they took it upon themselves to define just how he would demonstrate that power. They knew and readily accepted the parts that agreed with *their sense* of what *should* be – the parts that spoke of the Christ coming in glory and ruling Israel and defending her from all her enemies – but that is all they saw. Their eyes and minds were filled with their own images of glory and power. They rather conveniently overlooked the many passages where *God*

revealed *his* wisdom and *his* truth. Thus they dismissed the Scriptures that foretold his suffering, shame and humiliation. Isaiah spoke of a Messiah "**smitten and afflicted,**" one who was "**pierced for our transgressions...and crushed for our iniquities.**" It was by his *wounds* that we were to be healed. In other words, it was all there for them to see and believe, and yet they had evidently chosen to exclude certain parts of God's Word from their personal expectations. To them it was undoubtedly just small parts – no big deal – and yet the result was a terrible misdiagnosis of Jesus' present condition – and therefore also of their own.

But was it a "small thing" in God's eyes? As far as those two disciples on the Road to Emmaus were concerned, for a time it may have cost them their faith in their Savior. A Savior that remains dead is no Savior. Their misdiagnosis was therefore not so small a thing after all. It took a special visit from that Savior "**explaining to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself**" to turn them around so that they might know and believe the truth.

How many "small omissions" or compromises would it take before *our* faith is destroyed? No one should want to test that boundary. Jesus himself told us that just a little bit of yeast permeates the whole batch of dough – meaning that, given a chance, even a small error eventually takes over the whole, not the other way around.

You and I do not want to make this same mistake. So also now, in what might well be the last days of earth's existence, we cling in faith to the foolish ignorance of the "outdated" Christian faith. The saving truths to which we cling have been given to us by our God. He has spelled it all out for us in his Word - point by point, teaching by teaching. You and I are blissfully bound to the full council of God's Holy Word.

Those disciples did get it right in the end, didn't they? They identified a different way, a far better way, and that far better way was simply to urge their Savior to "**abide with them, for the day is almost over.**" The key for them is the same for you and me today: *never* turn away from our one valid and reliable source for temporal help and eternal salvation, imagining that we know better. Jesus himself once assured us: "**If you remain in my Word, then you are my disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" We absolutely cannot afford to get this wrong, ever. Our only course of action then is to draw him ever closer – to know and cling to him as the starting point and essence of true wisdom, trusting that "**the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.**" The solution is to trust this Lord Jesus to be the center of our lives – the core of who we are and what we are all about.

When that is *our* confidence, *our* reality, we have this tremendous comfort from our text: As our Lord Jesus once "**went in to stay with them (those two disciples)**" on the road to Emmaus, so also our Lord Jesus will most certainly *abide with us* as we wait for his Second Coming. As he once gave such great hope and comfort to those troubled disciples on the road to Emmaus, so he also most certainly holds out to each one of us the same hope and the same comfort.

To the world, such divine truth will always carry the appearance of ignorance, yet you and I have now been given to know the mysteries of the gospel, and to rejoice in the forgiveness of our sins, won for us by our Savior on the cross. So then with hearts now freed from our former ignorance and guilt, this then is our one great desire: *Abide with us, Lord Jesus, now and for all eternity. You have paid the full debt for our sins; come quickly and rescue us from this vale of tears and carry us to the heavenly existence you have prepared for us. Amen.*

Scripture Readings

ESV **Acts 2:14a, 36-41** But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: ³⁶ ...Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." ³⁷ ¶ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" ³⁸ And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." ⁴⁰ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." ⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

ESV **1 Peter 1:17-21** And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

The Second Sunday after Easter – April 26, 2020

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The First Lesson: (Acts 2:14a, 36-41) Using the Law as God intends it to be used will never be easy; but it is necessary. Note here how Peter used the Law to bring the Pentecost day crowd to repentance. Only then could the gospel do its saving work. Note also how those that felt remorse for their sins immediately assumed that they had to do something to save themselves. Peter's answer contrasted sharply with their question. Man could not do anything. Something had to be done for, or worked in, man, and the Holy Spirit was the only One who could do what needed to be done.

The Second Lesson: (1 Peter 1:17-21) As our first Scripture lesson gave us the spoken words of Peter, our second lesson gives us words from his pen. Once again in this reading we find both law and gospel. Note especially the severity of our sin (the payment for which had to come from the Son of God) and rejoice also that that Son has paid the penalty in full.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Sermon – Text: Luke 24:13-18, 25-29 *(Printed on the back page)*

"The Misdiagnosis"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Offering

The Prayers followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

Silent Prayer

Attendance – Sunday (NA) Average (40) Wednesday (NA)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	Suspended
	-10:00 a.m.	Suspended
	-11:00 a.m.	Suspended
Wednesday	-5:45 p.m.	Suspended
	-7:00 p.m.	Suspended
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	Suspended
	-10:00 a.m.	Suspended
	-11:00 a.m.	Suspended

CLC News – Through the ILC Call Committee on Graduates, Berea of Sioux Falls has called Seminary Graduate Cory Drehle, and St. Stephen of San Francisco has called Teacher Candidate Mikkela Hammond. Ross Kok is considering the call to Holy Trinity of West Columbia, SC. Redeemer of Cheyenne has called Teacher Daniel Barthels to teach in the school they hope to reopen next fall. Immanuel of Mankato High School has called Teacher Neil Bernthal. The CLC Call Committee for Institutions has called Professor Daniel Schierenbeck to serve as President of ILC through the 2022 school year. He has accepted that called position. CLC Board meetings originally scheduled for April 20-22 have been rescheduled for June 8-10, and the CLC Convention has been rescheduled for July 30-August 2.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council met via conference call on Sunday, April 19. All members, plus the Pastor, were present. Given the lack of new information to the contrary, the Council voted to continue the suspension of public services. Treasurer Mantz reported that strong offerings in March erased our previous deficit. Mark Redlin has completed the first phase of our annual financial evaluation ("audit") and has found the books to be in good order. Trustee Coordinator Fettig reported on the ongoing progress of a variety of church projects. Mick Johnson reported on progress related to both the screen project and the production of podcasts. The next Council meeting is scheduled for May 17th.

Corona Virus Precautions – Public services remain suspended at St Paul. This decision was not made lightly, and members were informed by letter as to why the Church Council opted for this course of action. Sermons will continue to be provided in both audio and printed formats on our website: www.bismarcklutheran.org A list of live-streamed CLC services can also be found on the CLC website here: <http://clclutheran.org/directory-of-churches/online-sermons-and-hymns/#cv> The suspension of public services will be re-evaluated each week, and members will be notified when the suspension is lifted.