

## “Where's Christ”

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First Presbyterian Church  
Independence, MO  
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**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON – Isaiah 25:6-9**  
**NEW TESTAMENT LESSON – LUKE 24:13-24, 32**

Where is Christ? Have we lost Jesus? That’s what the two disciples were asking themselves as they walked the road to Emmaus. And whoop, there he is; the risen Lord comes near and walks among them, and they don’t even know it. Asked what’s going on, the disciples answer him, “Are you the only *stranger* in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” “What things?” asks Jesus, this stranger in their midst. “The things!” they reply. “The things about Jesus of Nazareth....”

Jesus is right there in front of them, hidden in plain sight, and they don’t even know it. Has that ever happen to you? Something or someone you are looking for is right in front of you? And until somebody points it out, you’re like (*preacher makes searching motions with his hands and his gaze*). And then, whoop, there it its, right in front of you. “Thanks, buddy, I just couldn’t see it.”

Do you suppose that our relationship with Jesus could be like that – Jesus hidden right under our noses? C.S. Lewis does. This author of the Narnia series, in his book *The Weight of Glory: Readings for Meditation and Reflection*, writes: “Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, *your neighbor* is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he (or she) is your Christian neighbor, he (or she) is holy in almost the same way, for in (that neighbor) also, Christ ... is truly hidden.”

What is C.S. Lewis talking about? Could it be he means that as human beings, we are sacred creatures – something special set aside by God for a holy use? Could he mean that like the Sacraments, *we* are a physical representation of a spiritual presence or act?

(Did you know that’s what the Lord’s Supper and Baptism are – outward signs of the Holy Spirit’s inner workings in our lives?) And of course, C.S. Lewis may have meant that Christ is *actually hidden* in your Christian brothers and sisters – that part of the essence of Jesus Christ lives in them, *actually lives* in all Christians. I suspect that all three meanings are valid – and there are probably other ways in which we are Christ to one another that are just as valid. So, if we are, in one way or another, the outward manifestation of Jesus Christ to one another, how did we get this way? How is it that *we* are the intermediaries of Christ in the

world – or as my General Assembly button says, “Ambassadors for Christ?” We are ambassadors for Christ, the manifestation of Jesus Christ to one another – alive and active in the world – because Jesus Christ was first the manifestation of God to us. God from God, true God from true God. This is who Jesus was in the world, some 2000 years ago – just like this is who we are to people in our lives today – representations of Jesus to one another.

The two disciples, meet Jesus on the road to Emmaus and they mistake him for a stranger, and they start telling him “about Jesus of Nazareth,” saying, he “was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.” Mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. This means that only Jesus stands equally “before God and all the people.” Jesus is the representation of God to us, just like we are the representation of Jesus to other people – *we are their pathway to Jesus*. If someone is going to learn about Jesus, they’re going to have to learn about him from us. There’s no one or nothing else that can actually share Jesus in this world. We’re it. Ambassadors for Christ.

What ways do we share Jesus with someone else? We can be nice to other people – even when we don’t feel like it. We can be generous to other people – even when we think we can’t afford it. We can be bold enough to link our faith with our actions – even actually tell people we act the way we do because of Christ in our lives - even if we’re afraid to look silly or weird.

All of these ways in which we can share Jesus with others make us a blessed people – first among God’s creature – if we actually act like Jesus toward one another. If we don’t, if we don’t share about Jesus freely, give like Jesus generously, act like Jesus selflessly, then we’re not as blessed as we could be. We’re sort of “blessing light,” instead of “full-flavored blessings,” full-flavor Christians. You might get a little taste of Jesus from someone who is “blessing light” (or, what’s that relatively new soft drink, Coke Zero?); you might get a little something nice from someone who’s “blessed zero,” but wouldn’t you instead like to get the “real thing.” Remember when Coke’s slogan was “It’s the real thing?” Remember the lyrics: “I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony?” My brothers and I loved that commercial. And isn’t that what Christ was after? Not a Coke - but rather teaching the world - teaching three brothers - to be harmonious, peaceable, led by Christ and living as one under God?

Jesus Christ: Now he’s the real thing. That’s what the disciples had to learn. And that’s what we’re dying to learn, what we’re dying to be assured of, isn’t it – that Christ is real?

So Jesus Christ comes along side us – in the form of a Christian brother or sister – and says here I am, right under your nose. It’s me. The real thing.

And sensing Jesus present to us in some real way, we get that same warm feeling in our hearts as did the two disciples; (the warm feeling that comes over us) when we encounter a sacred moment, see a holy exchange between people – a truly loving act of kindness, a spring day so beautiful we just can't take it all in? These are the things that can open our eyes to see that God is right in front of us. Just like the two disciples who remembered, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

Let me show you what I mean. Stay with me here, and feel for that the warm-hearted feeling that you get when you just know that Christ is near. But you've got to stay with me. First, pick up the Bible in front of you. Now open it; turn to page 109, toward the back in the New Testament. Look at John 17. Follow along as I read verses 1 & 2: "**After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.'**" Okay, here we've got Jesus. His hour has come. He's heading to the cross. Now, look down at verses 20 and 21 as I read: "I ask not only on behalf of *these*, but also on behalf of *those* who will believe in me through *their* word, that they may all be one."

Do you see what's happening here? Jesus is praying *for you*, personally – praying as he said "on behalf of *those* who will believe in (him) through (the word passed down from generation to generation right up to today)." Praying for you and for me. This is one of the most astounding scenes in Scripture. At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus turns toward the cross and prays for you and for me. Jesus, alive in the pages of history nearly 2000 years ago, standing there praying for us – praying a prayer that is alive and active in our lives today. Do you feel that warm feeling – that feeling of Jesus present here, right now? Yes? No? Maybe?

Listen to what writer Martyn Lloyd-Jones says about the prayer of Jesus we just read. In his book *Growing in the Spirit: The Assurance of Our Salvation*, Lloyd-Jones says: "You would have thought (Jesus) would be spending all his time praying for himself, but if you look at this prayer you will notice that only the first five verses are devoted to himself." (You; you can count the verses later; stay with me now). "The remainder (of the verses)," says Lloyd-Jones, "are devoted entirely to this intercession on behalf of his followers."

This is an incredible prayer, an eternal prayer: "I ask not only on behalf of *these* (with me today, "says Jesus)," but also on behalf of *those* who will believe in me through their word." Jesus prayed for you before he died.

Inspired and informed by this prayer of Jesus', Lloyd-Jones goes on to define a Christian expressly in those terms, saying "a Christian, therefore, primarily, by definition, is one who is being prayed for by the eternal Son of God."

We are the pathway to Jesus for other people, and Jesus is the pathway between God and humankind. That's what the disciples of Jesus learned – then. And that's what we as the disciples of Christ learn today by being Jesus to one another.

One of the clearest expressions of God on earth available to us today is a mother. We may call God our Father, but it's our mothers – or those who act most like a mom in our lives – it's through mothers' love that we come to know the love of God and the compassion of Jesus.

According to the National and International Religion Report<sup>1</sup>, "the 'who' or 'what' that had the most positive influence on religious faith, regardless of age group, sex or denomination, was "my mother," well not my mother – who's actually here today from North Carolina – but "one's mother." That's what people wrote in the survey, quote my mother, unquote.

Mothers – and, yes, fathers – can be and often are the first and most profound expression of heavenly safety and care we can experience. But at some point, we need to transfer that experience, that source of heavenly love and compassion from our parent to its actual source – to God. And for Christians, the way we do that is to draw close to Jesus. And for mortals, for those of us still awaiting immortality in Christ, the way we do that is "to be" Jesus one another.

In our Gospel lesson today, we learned that Jesus Christ was a prophet might in deed and word before God *and* all the people. Only Christ is able to stand equally alongside both God and humankind. That's why the reverence that is due God is also owed to Jesus Christ. AND, if are to be Jesus to one another in the world, than the reverence due Jesus Christ is owed to one another. That's how we experience Jesus Christ in our world today – by treating each other as if we were standing before Christ himself – because, in a sacramental, spiritual, realer-than-real way – that's what we're doing. Coming face to face in the people we see with none other than Jesus Christ. You want to see Christ in the world today?

*Look around* – turn to one another, Jesus is here today, hidden right under our nose; in plain sight; in the mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, family and friends who God has led to this place today, and those whom you will encounter when you step out the doors of the sanctuary as an Ambassador for Christ, a representation of Jesus in the world. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> National and International Religion Report, page 4, March 12, 1990.