

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Text: Luke 24:29 – ***But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.***

Theme: Our New Year's Prayer: ABIDE WITH US!

- How
- Why

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus,

“Abide with me!” For over a century Christians have been singing the hymn penned by Henry Lyte. Though found in the “evening” section of our hymnal, we have become accustomed to singing this hymn at funerals. Both evening and funerals are a very fitting time to sing the words “Abide with me.” At evening we want Jesus to be with us and abide with us. Also at the evening of our lives, as we close our eyes to this world through death we want Jesus to abide with us.

The Scriptural basis for this hymn is found in our sermon text for today. It was the late afternoon of the first Easter Sunday. Two of Jesus' followers were making their way from Jerusalem to the city of Emmaus. As they were walking, they were talking about all the events that had unfolded in Jerusalem that week. From Palm Sunday, to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday. Now there were followers of Jesus who were saying that His body was no longer in the tomb and that angels appeared to them and told them Jesus had risen from the dead!

As they were walking on the road, Jesus suddenly appeared with them. But Jesus appeared in such a way that these two followers did not realize it was Him. As they walked on the way, Jesus asked them what they were talking about. They were surprised that He didn't seem to know what had happened in Jerusalem that weekend. Jesus then scolds them for their lack of faith in the Scriptures. At that point Jesus began having Bible Class with them on the road, telling them how from Moses to the Prophets God had foretold what was going to happen to Jesus.

Then they drew near to Emmaus where the two disciples were going. Jesus, still unknown to them, acted as if He was going to keep going on. It is at that point we have the words of our text from Luke 24 verse 29,

But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.

This is the very Word of God, breathed into the holy writer Luke by His Holy Spirit. God has preserved this Word for us today that we might be strengthened in faith, knowing that He is our God and we are His children by faith in Jesus. May God keep us steadfast in His Word. We pray, O Lord, Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth! Amen.

So what do you hope to accomplish in this New Year? Have you made resolutions for 2011? Some of the resolutions I heard on TV were things like losing weight, exercising more, and being a better person. As we consider what we want and desire for the New Year, let us take the words of these two disciples as our New Year's prayer to Jesus - “Abide with us!” We first consider HOW Jesus abides with us.

The word “abide” may be unfamiliar to us. It is a word we just don't use in our everyday language. To “abide” simply means to “stay” with someone or somewhere. The shepherds who were

abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night, were staying with their sheep out in the fields. When the Emmaus disciples ask Jesus to “abide” with them, they want Jesus to stay where they are staying. To physically come under the same roof as them.

Which one of us doesn't desire the same thing? We want Jesus to stay with us in this New Year and always! But HOW does Jesus abide with us? Jesus first came to abide with us in the flesh. When He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the eternal Son of God came to abide with us on earth. He came to be our brother, our friend, our Savior, and our Redeemer. He came to abide with us to be our Substitute. He was our Substitute under the Law as He kept God's Law perfectly in our place. He was our Substitute on the cross as God punished Him for all the sin we had committed. And He was our Substitute when He rose from the dead. Having been baptized into Christ we have been baptized into everything He did. We are forgiven and righteous in Him.

We should not be mistaken in thinking Jesus will randomly abide with us, without any means. As the all-powerful Son of God, He certainly could. However, He has told us how He comes to us and abides with us. On the road to Emmaus, He simply appeared to the two disciples walking and talking with them. And what was it He was talking about? The Word! In John 8 Jesus says, ***“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*** (Jn 8:31-32) Jesus comes to us in His Word. He works in our hearts by His Holy Spirit.

By His Holy Spirit He works faith in our hearts and sets up His throne in our hearts. He abides in our hearts. In John 14 Jesus says, ***“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.”*** (Jn 14:23) Again it is through the Word that Jesus comes to make His home in our hearts.

In just a little bit, we will be celebrating Lord's Supper. This is another way in which Jesus abides with us. The Apostle Paul writes of this sacred meal, ***“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”*** (1 Cor 10:16) In, with, and under the bread and wine Jesus comes to abide with us as He gives us His body and His blood. He gives us Himself and abides with us.

While Jesus certainly could appear on to us and abide with us on the road of this life, as He did to the Emmaus disciples, He has given us no promise that He will do this. But Jesus has promised us how He will abide with us - through His Means of Grace. He comes to abide with us through His Gospel in Word and Sacrament. We should not be mistaken that we can stay away from Lord's Supper and the Word, and Jesus will just come and abide with us.

We want Jesus to abide with us in the New Year and always. But we must remember how He comes to abide with us. Through His Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

WHY?

Why do you suppose those two disciples wanted Jesus to abide with them? Well they give their reasons in our text, don't they? ***“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”*** They wanted Jesus to abide with them because it was almost evening. For Him to travel on that night would have been dangerous.

As we begin a New Year, we do well to remember that the day is far spent for us as well. With every tick on the clock, every day that passes, and every New Year, we are that much closer to THE Day. The day when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. Furthermore each one of us is that much closer to the evening of lives, our days in this world are far spent. As we draw closer and closer to eternity we want Jesus to abide with us. On Judgment Day we want to say, “We're with Him!”

As we approach the Last Day, Jesus warns us of how difficult these last days will be. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy of what the evening of this world will be like. As you listen, see if you can identify some of the things that are going on today in this world. 2 Timothy 3, ***“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving,***

unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" It reads like the headlines of today's newspaper, doesn't it? We see so many of these things in the world and society around us.

Because of the hardship of the last days, we need now, more than ever, for Jesus to abide with us! We need Him to abide with us to protect us from the evil of this world, the temptations of the devil, and the weakness of our own sinful flesh. "Abide with us, dear Jesus! For our lives are far spent and it is toward the evening of our lives and this world. The days are evil and dangerous! We need you to abide with us every passing hour! Amen."

But there is another reason why the Emmaus disciples wanted Jesus to abide with them, wasn't there. It was not just because they were hospitable and were worried about the dangers of traveling at night. Later on, when Jesus revealed Himself to them and they realized it was Him they spoke about their conversation on the road earlier that day. ***"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"*** (Luke 24:38) Jesus was at work in their hearts as He was with them on the road and they wanted Him to continue to abide with them and work in their hearts.

As we consider why we want Jesus to abide with us in the new year, another reason is that He would work in our hearts and our lives. Listen to what Jesus has promised to all who abide in Him in the Vine and branches section of John 15:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. 9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. 11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

This is why we want Jesus to abide with us. Without Jesus we are a lifeless branch that is cut away from the Vine and cast into the fire. But when we abide in Jesus through His Word and Sacrament He promises to do great things in us and through us. Abiding in Jesus bear fruit which glorifies God. He gives us spiritual life. He causes us to do good works. In Jesus, God the Father hears and answers our prayers. In Jesus, we have the love of God at work in our hearts. In Jesus we have joy in our lives.

We rejoice to look back at 2010 and consider the ways in which Jesus was abiding with us. He was with us in our trials and saw us through them all. He was with us in Word and Sacrament as strengthened our faith. As we approach this new year, we pray that He would continue to abide with us. Abide with us through His Gospel. Abide with us as we hear His Word and receive His body and blood in the Sacrament here at church. Abide with us in our homes and with our families as we hear His Word in our family devotions. Abide with us especially in these evil last days. Abide with us that we may lead God-pleasing lives in 2011.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in, Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell:
Oh, come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel! Amen. (TLH 647:4)