

Sunday, April 6th, 2008
The 3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:36-41, Luke 24:13-35
Known or Unknown

I thought I'd invite all of you to go downtown with me today, while General Conference is occurring and to join me as we preach sermons like Peter's in Temple Square for most of the afternoon. So, raise your hand now, or speak with me after the service if you're willing to spend an afternoon preaching like Peter at Temple Square. I'm not seeing many takers.

Based on the lack of enthusiasm in your response I'm guessing that you don't think that this would be the most effective way to spread the gospel message of Jesus Christ. But it worked for Peter.

He preaches the summary of the gospel – that God sent Jesus Christ into the world to save the world, not to condemn it, and that we, humans, took God's great gift and nailed him to a tree to die. And Peter doesn't particularly say this nicely or pastorally. He just plain old goes out and says it to a crowd that isn't really sure it wants to hear what he has to say anyways.

But the response he gets is not what we would expect if we did this today at Temple Square. The crowd repents, and weeps, and many believe and were baptized. But if we don't feel comfortable or expect a positive response from this style, then what are we to do?

At the other end of this spectrum, we have the encounter on the road to Emmaus. The two disciples are travelling, leaving Jerusalem on that first Easter day. And they are talking about everything that has happened, when they encounter another traveler, who asks them what it is that they are talking about. And the two disciples are amazed that the traveler has no clue what has happened in Jerusalem over the last week and the last three days. They describe Jesus, as a prophet mighty in word and deed, and they describe his death and even that the women reported that they had seen him, but mostly they comment sadly that they believed he was the one to restore Israel.

And then the traveler amazes them. He explains everything that had happened in those days and most of scripture to them. And they are amazed at the depth of his understanding and his ability to teach them about the Gospel. And as they reach the end of their journey, the traveler looks as though he is going to go on. The disciples request that he stay and spend the night with them, and he does. As they gather around the table, he breaks the bread, their eyes are open and they recognize Jesus. He vanishes and they head back 7 miles to Jerusalem to share the Easter story with the rest of the faithful.

Jesus reveals himself very differently than Peter. His is quiet conversation, and then followed by the sharing and the breaking of bread that means much in today's Christian community. But even Jesus is revealed. Even Jesus eventually stands before the world as the Christ, not as the unknown, unidentified traveler.

So if we aren't comfortable revealing our faith to the world in the manner of Peter – and yes, I'm still taking reservations from a trip downtown – then how

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do we do it? If we aren't willing to harangue and badger folks into submission and belief, then what is our model? Are we comfortable enough with the story of god's amazing love and grace that we can engage travelers on the road and reveal to them the power and love of Jesus Christ in the breaking of the bread?

So, do we preach the Christ known and crucified by you, as Peter did, hoping (and cringing) for a response, or do we meet the people on the road, and are revealed in our teaching and in the breaking of the bread? Gather around the table and let us see Christ in the breaking of the bread....