

Bread Crumbs:
April 19, 2026

When I read this gospel lesson...
It makes me think...
Of the old fairy tale... **[1 Hansel and Gretel]**
Hansel and Gretel.

The part where they go into the deep dark woods...
Which in fairy tales...
Is always a scary place.
A place where you are going to encounter...
Challenges... difficulties...
And maybe even an evil malevolent force.

For example...
A witch... with a big oven...
Who lives in a house...
Made out of candy.

Some major red flags... there.
Never trust a witch with a candy house.

Anyway... that's not the part...
I want to focus on today.
It's the bread crumbs.

Remember how they cleverly...
Dropped bread crumbs...
Along the way...
So that when they were done...
Doing what they were doing...
They could look back...
Follow the bread crumbs....
And find their way home.

It was a good plan...
And it could have worked too...
If not for the birds.
The hungry...
Bread eating...
Birds.

So... as you know...
When they looked back...
There was nothing to see...
The bread was gone.
The trail was gone.
They were lost.
Without hope.

Ok. We will get back to the bread crumbs...
In just a little bit.

But for now...
I want to talk about our expectations. **[2 Signs]**
Have you ever noticed...
That people... and sometimes we... expect God...
To work BIG in our lives.

Like we become unhappy with God...
When something bad happens...
To us... or to a family member.

Or when a prayer goes unanswered...

Or when a miracle doesn't occur.

We want to know God.
We want to see God at work in our lives.
We want to feel God's presence...

And when life doesn't go the way...
We want it to go...
We question God.
Where are you?
What's going on?
I believe in you...
So... do something.

And it doesn't always help... that we have bible stories...
Like the lesson from the book of Acts... **[3 Peter Preaching]**
Where Peter stands up...
And preaches a sermon...
Which BTW... wasn't all that...
Inspirational...
Or flashy...
Or anything...

It was simple...
It was clear...

All he said... to the crowd... was...
Let the entire house of Israel know...
With certainty...
That God has made Jesus...
Both Lord and Messiah.

This Jesus whom you crucified.

And that was it.
The crowd asked...
What should we do.

Peter said...
Repent and be baptized...
In the name of Jesus Christ.

And they did.
3,000 in one day.
Listen... I have never talked...
To 3,000 people at one time...
Let alone... inspire them...
ALL to be baptized.

This was clearly a miracle.
This was God at work...
All Peter did was point to Jesus...
And the Holy Spirit...
Did the rest. POWERFUL.

And it's not bad...
To want the same kind of things...
To happen in our lives...
In our world.

We desire... to witness...
The work and the power of God...
We want to see...
Some kind of sign.
Some kind of miracle...
That God is with us.

Others before us... wanted that too...
In the book of 1st Corinthians...
Chapter 1... verse 22...
Paul addresses this very issue. **[4 Christ Crucified]**

He says...
Jews demand signs.
Greeks desire wisdom.
But you know what y'all get?

We proclaim Christ crucified.
A stumbling block to Jews
And foolishness to Gentiles...

But to those who are called...
Both Jews and Greeks,
Christ [is] the power of God
And the wisdom of God.

All this to say...
I think it's a natural human reaction...
To want God to intervene in our lives...
And give us light in the darkness.
And hope in the face of hardship.

Like the disciples... who were on the road to Emmaus. **[5 Emmaus]**
First of all, these are not part of Jesus' inner circle.

They were not THE disciples...
Like Peter, James, and John.
They were other disciples.
Ones whom we don't really know.
Like Cleopas... mentioned one time in the bible.
In this story only.

And oh yeah... the other one.
Not named.
Not relevant.
Doesn't matter who he or she was...
All that matters is what happened.

They were walking down the road.
When some stranger comes and walks along side...
And asks them...
What they were talking about...
Why they seemed so dejected...
What was wrong?

Then they explain.
All about Jesus.

And they say...
We had hoped.
That he was the one. [can you hear the despair?]

But he's dead.
He's missing.
He's alive.
We don't know...
What's going on.

Then the stranger tells them...
All about the Messiah.
Everything the bible says...
From Moses and all the prophets.
The stranger tells them...
What had to happen.

That the messiah had to die.
And be raised from the dead.
And they listened.

But then... when they stopped walking...
Because it was getting late.
The stranger... sat with them...
At the table.

He took bread.
Blessed it. Broke it.
And gave it to them to eat.

Then. Suddenly. They recognized him.

Two things they say... about what happened.
First. They look back.
At the road they just traveled.
And they said...
Didn't our hearts burn...
While he was talking to us...

And secondly... they say to the other disciples...
The Lord is risen...
And he was made known to us...
In the breaking of the bread.

And the reason... I think that's so powerful...
Is that when they stopped.
And when they broke the bread...
All the sudden...

They had the ability...
To look back... at their journey.
To look back... at their lives...
To look back... at the road...
And what happened to them...

When they were brokenhearted.
When they were dejected.
When they were empty of hope...
And confused.

And when they broke bread...
Their eyes were opened... and...
They realized that Jesus...
Had been with them... the whole time...
Walking the road.

He was there.
In the middle of their journey.
In their confusion.
In their pain.
He was with them...
Every step of the way.
And they didn't know it...

Until they stopped.
Broke bread...
Remembered...
Until they looked back...
And wondered.

How did we get here?

So. Back during the civil right movement...
And the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

There was a singer... whom he loved. **[6 Mahalia]**
Her name is Mahalia Jackson.
She was... and still is... amazing.

There is a song she sang...
A spiritual... called "How I Got Over"...
She sang this for Dr. King...
On the day he gave the...
"I have a dream" speech.

But I wanted to share a live version...
Of that song today...
This was in Chicago...
The video quality is not so great...
But listen to the words.

[VIDEO - How I Got Over] [7 How I Got Over]

Ok. First of all...
If Mahalia Jackson...
Has a special place at the altar of God...
To sing in heaven...
Like she said in that song...
I wanna be there.

Clearly that song is...
About the civil rights movement...
But it doesn't have to be limited to that...
Particular time in history...

The words apply to the lesson we have today.
Those disciples... looked back...
And they wondered...
How did we get here?

One minute... we were full of grief and sorrow...
And now... we are filled with hope.

Our hearts burned when he talked.
Our eyes were opened in the breaking of the bread.
And we could see...
He was with us... the whole time.

Or the way Mahalia Jackson said it...
I'm gonna thank him for being with me.

So our gospel lesson today...
Is kind of a miraculous story...
Of Jesus being with these disciples...
But it's also a very common story.
One that can impact our lives TODAY.

What if we did the same thing...
That those disciples did.

What if we... instead of looking for some kind of...
Miracle or sign or wisdom...

What if we... looked back... and wondered...
How we got over.

How did I get here?

How did I make it through...
Those times of loss and despair.

How did I survive the pain...
That was breaking my heart.

How did I walk through the hopeless moment...
And end up here...
With these people...
Singing these songs...
Praying these prayers...
Praising our God.

How did I make it?

And then... **[8 Bread]**
After we break the bread.
And fulfill his command...
To 'do this in remembrance of me'.

After we partake of the body of Christ.
After we have been feed and strengthened...
And surrounded... once again...
By the body...
Of Christ...
In this place.

Then maybe... if we let it happen...
If we stop for minute...

Our eyes will be opened.
And we can look back...
And wonder... and ask...

Didn't our hearts burn?
Wasn't he with us?
Wasn't Jesus with me?
In that darkest time.
When I needed him...
The very most?

Wasn't he there? Walking with me?

And don't I have hope now...
Because he is alive?

Hansel and Gretel.
Those darn birds... ate their bread crumbs.
And they couldn't find...
Their way home.

You and I... **[9 Christ is with us]**
Will eat and drink...
The bread crumbs...
The body of Christ...
Which becomes be a part of us...

Christ with us.
Christ in us.

So that we can look back...
See the path that we have traveled...
And know... beyond the shadow of a doubt...
We know the way home.

Because Jesus is our home...
And has been with us.
Every step of the way.

Thanks be to God.
Amen!