

Come, Lord Jesus

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest,
And let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen.

Every mealtime in many Lutheran Christian homes, these words are prayed. My question is, "Do the people who pray this prayer really believe what they are asking? Do they really and honestly believe Jesus can and will be present with them around their kitchen table, as they eat their meal?"

We used this prayer in the years our kids were at home. Actually, Margo and I still use them. It's true that sometimes these words are prayed very quickly and out of obligation. Yet, if we believe what we are asking, we might actually appreciate the real and risen Lord Jesus is himself with us while we eat.

After supper one evening, a boy asked his mom, "Is there any other time Jesus is our guest?" His mom, somewhat puzzled, said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "We prayed for Jesus to be our guest at supper, but when else is he with us?" With a smile on her face, his mom replied, "Whenever you ask him."

Indeed, I do believe when we ask Jesus to be present with us at a meal, or any other time, that he is. But I also believe the Lord Jesus is present with us at times in our lives when we do not see him. In fact, because of the what the Gospel reading says, Jesus can be with us, and we don't even know he's there.

Consider what Jen just read. Two men were walking from the city of Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. Suddenly, even though they were not asking or expecting Jesus to be present, the Lord was there walking with them. The weird thing was that they did not recognize him the whole time they were walking.

So, what prevented them from seeing Jesus? Did God cause it? Were they too stricken with grief to see him? Or did Jesus somehow look different after he had been raised from the dead? I don't know for sure, but do we not also at times suffer from the same inability to see and believe Jesus is with us?

Of course, they were grief-stricken. Their Lord Jesus had been crucified, died, and was buried. Now, because of his death, and because of their sadness and grief, they were not expecting to see him. I think the same thing happens to us around our dinner tables, and in other times and places in our lives.

For example, maybe we are struggling with this pandemic, with the death of a loved one, or with some other hardship in life, so that we cannot see, nor do we expect to see, Jesus walking with us. Maybe we even pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest," and we still can't see he's there, risen, present, and walking alongside us.

A young girl was alone in her hospital room. Her mom had been with her the previous two nights, but on this third night she had to go to work. The girl was nervous when the room was dimmed and she settled in to go to sleep, so she said a prayer. It was simple request, "I'm afraid Jesus, please be with me."

This girl remembered as an adult a warmth that came over her body after her prayer, and that she felt surrounded by a presence. This feeling did not go away until the next morning, when her mom arrived at 6:30am after working night shift. She said, "I told my mom that Jesus was with me all night long."

Is this the subjective feeling of a young girl, or did she experience the real and risen presence of Jesus Christ? In faith, I will always side with the adult woman looking back at her experience. Jesus was there for her, in her hour of need. Yet, on that same night Jesus was there for many other people too.

How can Jesus be present with a little girl and with many other people at the same time? The simple answer is, "We don't know." But in fact, we see this same thing in the Gospel. When the two men finally recognized Jesus risen and present at their dinner table, they ran all the way back to Jerusalem to tell others.

This was seven miles. If they were in good shape, it maybe took about an hour. But, when they got there to tell all the disciples about their exciting encounter with Jesus, they found out that Jesus had been very busy that evening, visiting Simon Peter, and very likely, a lot more of his followers at the same time.

So, here's the good news. The risen Jesus is Son of God. He is divine. This means he can be with Charlie Murphy in heaven, with Helen Murphy as she grieves Charlie's death, as well as with each of us in our own homes or apartments, as we struggle with this pandemic, or anything else that's going on in our lives.

Therefore, we proclaim, the risen Jesus never leaves us. In fact, Jesus ascends to the right hand of God not to get away from us, but rather, so he can be with each one of us, all the time, in every hour of need. This is the "stuff" of divinity. We mortals cannot do this, but with the Son of God all things are possible.

Therefore, not only is this possible, but it's actually happening right now. Wherever you are, people of God, when you believe in Jesus Christ, he is always there with you, wherever "there" is. You are not alone at home or anywhere else, to face the days of your life, because the risen Lord Jesus is walking alongside you.

So, ask him to be your guest throughout your life. Pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, be my guest," and trust that even if you cannot see or feel him, that he, the risen Lord, stands with you and walks alongside of you, to help you. Some days he will be obvious to you, some days he will surprise you, but he's always with you.

I proclaim to you this morning that Jesus is with you right now, that Jesus is with everyone of you right now, wherever you are hearing this, and he's walking through your life with you. Really, there is no escape. But why would you want to. This Jesus who is with you right now, he loves you, and he saves you in every way.

Today and always – Amen.