

This Week's Thoughts For Study
Luke 24:13-35

Stop and Smell the Pot Roast

It's been a traumatic week and two of the disciples are heading home. They are discussing, sometimes heatedly, what has taken place in the last few days. Jesus approaches them in what is his first post resurrection appearance in Luke, although the disciples don't recognize him. Mysteriously, he is in human form but somehow changed in appearance. Jesus asks them about their discussion, and they are brought to a halt. What has happened in Jerusalem has brought an end to their hope. Cleopas says, "Are you the only one who travels in Jerusalem and doesn't know the things that have happened in these days?" He says, "What things?" It is inconceivable to them that this stranger doesn't know of the things that have happened and so they begin to tell him of Jesus. They tell him of the women at the tomb, of their wild tale, but it is obvious that they are baffled and don't know what to believe. The last thing they expect is a resurrection. Up to this point these men are just like us. They have heard the things we have heard, the reports of the eyewitnesses. Like us, they are, however, pragmatic people. It will take more than an empty tomb to make them believe; it will take a physical manifestation of the risen Christ. Jesus calls them foolish and slow of heart to believe and so he begins to explain the promises of Jesus to them and, when it appears that he will go on when they prepare to stop for the night, they invite him to stay and share their meal. Then and only then, as he breaks the bread and blesses it at the table, is Jesus revealed as the Lord they knew and loved. He's risen; he's alive; he's there! And then he vanishes!

It is no accident that Jesus is revealed as he sits having table fellowship with the two disciples. The table was the place for fellowship in the ancient world. Here family and friends gathered to share time with each other, here ideas were shared and discussed. The table was the place where the family renewed the bonds of support and caring that bound them together. It was also, as we see in scripture, the place where many of the saving acts of God were taught, shared and remembered. The table was the place where Jesus shared himself most intimately and came across most clearly.

According to the last figures I saw, which are probably higher now, every person in the United States spends \$376.23 a year on fast food; that's 100 billion dollars in 1998, up from \$6 billion in 1970. Americans now spend more money on fast food per year than they spend on higher education, personal computers, software, or new cars. They spend more on fast food than they spend on movies, books, magazines, newspapers, videos and recorded music combined! Cooking in the kitchen, because of the way we live, has now become a hobby, not a duty. In 1987, 43% of all meals contained at least one item cooked from scratch; that figure dropped to 38% in 1997. We love eating, we just want someone else to do the cooking. Even when we eat at home, we increasingly get takeout or HMR's (home meal replacements) to the tune of 100 billion dollars a year. Think about it: how many grocery stores, gas stations, etc. now have takeout food? You don't want to know how many young women I talk to can't cook and don't see it as a problem! I'm not getting a percentage of Betty Crocker cookbook sales, but eating meals together, the shared supper that someone has taken time and labor to prepare, is important both practically and spiritually. With all the time saving gadgets, it still takes time to make a home cooked meal. That means that someone or several "someones" had to be home to prepare it. Spending time they could have been elsewhere. The first concomitant of home cooked meals is that it forces a slowdown in our schedules, a reduction in the hectic pace of dance lessons, committee assignments, or wherever else we are rushing. Studies show that the odds that 12-17 year olds will smoke, drink, or use marijuana rise as the number of meals they have with their parents declines. I've listened to kids groan over the years when their parents insisted they be home for supper, but only 6% of kids who eat meals with their parents 6 or more times a week smoke, compared with 24% for those who eat twice a week or less. For marijuana use it's 12% compared with 35%. That's not brain surgery; parents who eat with their kids

normally know where they are after school, and on weekends and know what they're involved in. These figures incidentally are from Jos. A. Califano's book, "A Weapon in the War on Drugs: Dining In". Parental involvement and religious activities are the two most effective protective factors for teens. Remember the old sampler in your grandmother's kitchen? "Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener in every conversation." Jesus spent some of his most intimate moments eating with his disciples, the best example of which is The Last Supper. We can share in that intimacy and scripture says we should. The Bible talks of 3 kinds of table fellowship that Jesus keeps with believers: daily fellowship at the table, the table fellowship of the Lord's Supper, and the final table fellowship, the messianic banquet in the kingdom of God.

You miss a lot when you skip supper. The challenge for us is to slow down enough to make connections with Christ and with each other. Let me suggest some helps. Schedule a meal during the day that you as a family consistently share together; it may be breakfast rather than supper, but schedule at least one. Resist fast food. Sometimes it's necessary, but major in food that must be slow cooked (it sets the stage for a slower pace) and has to be dished up out of a common bowl; in other words, that has to be shared with a group sitting down together. Demand the time to actually eat a meal (rather than stuffing it in your mouth on the way out the door). Meals should be well cooked, well served, well-paced. Ask yourself some questions: Is whatever I'm rushing off to all that important? (How long will it be before your kids are gone or your parents deceased? This is precious time.) What about my schedule can I change to allow me to eat a family meal and still do the things I consider really important. What kind of statement am I making to my family when I bolt a meal or don't eat with them at all? Selfishly, what is this lifestyle doing to my health, physical, emotional, spiritual? The reality is that we reveal ourselves and Jesus is revealed to us in the midst of the most basic activities and moments of life. He is the Lord of every moment and we meet him (and recognize him) in these intimate places.

Going back to our scripture for the week; remember I said the disciples were in heated discussion (evidenced by the words chosen in the original texts). They are troubled and upset; their hope in Jesus died on the cross. Jesus engages with them in the most commonplace of acts, the breaking of bread and the sharing of a meal. Notice that there is something calming and soothing about the very act. It is then, when the rush of the day is left behind and the pace intentionally slowed that they recognize Jesus (not that he changed or was revealed, but that they recognized him!) Luke's gospel time and again lifts up the importance of breaking bread together; some of the most successful real estate agents today will have a loaf of freshly baked bread in the houses they show, knowing the aroma sets a mood. Isn't it time we got the message? Stop and smell the pot roast and meet again those you love as well as your Lord. Amen.

For the Week Ahead

How do you spend the majority of your time? If your answer was work, how do you spend the majority of your 'free' time?

How much time do you spend with your family? What do you do together? Is any of your 'together' time spent on or on faith based issues? Do you worship together, pray before meals, pray together at all?

Are there issues which you cannot discuss as a family? Is there any issue that would exclude a family member from your gathering? How do your actions and attitudes mimic those of our Lord?

Pray without ceasing!