

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Mark 16: 12-14

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. Today, we'll continue to read Mark chapter 16, verses 12 to 14.

The events following Jesus' resurrection are only briefly recorded in the Gospel of Mark. If you only read Mark's Gospel, it's difficult to understand the full sequence of events and the spiritual significance behind them. Therefore, we must refer to the other three Gospels to reconstruct the entire story and grasp the spiritual implications and applications for today. For example, Mary Magdalene witnessed Jesus' resurrection firsthand. Mark only briefly mentions this in three verses, focusing on the disbelief of the other disciples in Mary's testimony. Mark seems to emphasize that believing in Jesus' resurrection is not an easy matter; it requires a manifestation of Jesus Christ Himself to truly convince the disciples. Saints should keep this thought in mind as we read today's scripture; we will repeatedly come back to this theme.

Verse 12, 13: “After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either.”

Here, Mark mentions two disciples leaving Jerusalem and heading to the countryside, where Jesus appeared to them on the way. They saw Him and understood that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. They returned to Jerusalem to testify to the other disciples, who still did not believe. Mark emphasizes the disbelief of the disciples. First, we need to reconstruct the process of this event, which is detailed in the Gospel of Luke 24:13-35. Emmaus is a small town about 12 kilometers northwest of Jerusalem, and walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus would take about two and a half hours. Two disciples, who were originally followers of

Jesus, witnessed His mockery, crucifixion, and burial, which led them to leave Jerusalem and go to Emmaus feeling disheartened. However, they couldn't shake off what had happened, so they talked about it as they walked. Surely, they must have had various complex emotions, including regret, disappointment, anger, and sorrow.

In the midst of their conversation, Jesus joined them on the journey. Perhaps Jesus' appearance was different from before, as they did not recognize Him. Jesus asked them what they were discussing. Their response is recorded in Luke 24:19-21, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." In their understanding, Jesus was a prophet who was supposed to help revive the nation of Israel. Now, He had been condemned to death and crucified by the Jewish authorities, and their hope was shattered, leading them to leave Jerusalem in disappointment.

They continued, saying, "Moreover, certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early morning and did not see His body. They said they saw an angel and was told that He was alive. And certain of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; that they did not see His body." Clearly, these two disciples did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus, which is why they left Jerusalem in disappointment.

Jesus continued to accompany these two disciples who were retreating, and His words to them are recorded in Luke 24:25-27, "Then He said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Jesus unlocked the Scriptures for these two disciples, starting from Moses and all the Prophets, explaining to them the prophecies about Himself throughout the Old Testament. Unfortunately, these two disciples did not record Jesus' words, which would have been an incredibly rich and profound message. Jesus spoke with them for nearly two hours, until they reached Emmaus.

These two disciples were so engrossed that they urged Jesus to stay with them. By that time, the sun was almost setting, so they sat down to eat with Jesus. During the meal, Jesus took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them. Surely, during Jesus' prayer and breaking of the bread, there were some familiar sounds and movements that touched them, just as when Jesus called Mary in the morning, their eyes suddenly opened, and they recognized Jesus. Then, Jesus immediately disappeared. The purpose of Jesus appearing to these two disciples was to restore them, to reveal Himself to them in their discouragement, and they recognized Him. Jesus' purpose was fulfilled, so He disappeared.

After realizing that Jesus had indeed risen, these two disciples, filled with excitement, immediately left their meal and rushed back to Jerusalem, covering the same two-and-a-half-hour journey they had just made. It was now the evening of the day of Jesus' resurrection. Although they had broken bread with Jesus, they did not partake it because they needed to be with the other disciples in Jerusalem. Sharing the bread was a symbolic act of God's children coming together to remember the Lord, and it couldn't be done alone. Upon their return to Jerusalem, they found the other disciples gathered together and shared with them the news of Jesus' resurrection. According to Mark's account, the other disciples did not believe them.

Verse 14: “Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.”

According to Luke 24:35-36, as these two disciples were recounting how they recognized Jesus during the breaking of the bread, suddenly Jesus Himself appeared and stood among the eleven disciples. This completes the second part of the Lord's Day breaking of bread. In Emmaus, Jesus broke bread but did not eat with the two disciples. It was only when these two returned to Jerusalem and gathered with the disciples that Jesus appeared to them again, greeting them with peace. However, the disciples were initially startled and frightened, thinking they had seen a ghost.

Jesus showed them His hands and feet, perhaps still bearing the scars of the nails, and invited them to touch Him, assuring them that ghosts do not have flesh and bones.

Remember on that early morning of the same day, when Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, He said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father." Now, Jesus invites the disciples to touch Him, indicating that He has completed His secret ascension and has returned to be with them for forty days. The first thing He does with the disciples is to ask them if they have anything to eat. On the evening of the day of His resurrection, Jesus gathered with the disciples to enjoy a meal. This is why the church chooses to celebrate the Lord's Table on Sunday, to commemorate the day of the Lord's resurrection, the day when Jesus shared a meal with His disciples and when disciples around the world can come together in joy.

In John 20:19-23, we find another account of the same gathering, and John's narrative brings out a deeper spiritual meaning. It says, "Jesus showed them His hands and His side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" This is a momentous event, dear brothers and sisters, as Jesus breathes on the disciples and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

In Genesis 2:7, after making man from the dust of the ground, God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being, which was Adam. This represents the old creation. However, we know that later on, men sinned and fell short of the glory of God, causing the man's spirit to no longer fulfill its intended purpose adequately. But now, on the evening of Jesus' resurrection, Jesus breathed on the disciples, and they received the Holy Spirit once again. This Holy Spirit is the Comforter repeatedly promised by Jesus in the Gospel of John, also known as the Spirit of life and the Spirit of truth. On the one hand, it provides us with life, and on the other hand, it leads us into all truth. This Holy Spirit is also meant to be an indwelling Spirit, residing within every true believer in Jesus and never leaving them.

For Jesus' disciples, Jesus spent forty days training them to experience His invisible presence through the Holy Spirit. This indwelling Spirit is different from the Spirit poured out at Pentecost; that event occurred after Jesus' public ascension, where the disciples, after ten days of prayer, were prepared to receive the Spirit's outpouring. They were ready to bear the responsibility entrusted to them by Jesus before His ascension, to be witnesses for Him in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth, as mentioned in Acts 1:8. With the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, they would receive power to begin their ministry; this is an empowering Spirit, enabling them to carry out the work of God's kingdom.

Just as Jesus began His ministry at the age of thirty, first receiving the baptism of John the Baptist, after which the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove. Let's revisit the later part of Mark 16:14, where, in contrast to Luke and John, who record these events in a positive aspect, Mark focuses on the negative aspect. He highlights Jesus rebuking them for their unbelief, saying that their hearts were hard and they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. Because of their unbelief, Jesus had to personally appear to them before they could believe. The account in the Gospel of Mark seems to particularly emphasize the importance of the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, dear brothers and sisters, Jesus died for our transgressions and raised from the dead three days later, is the most fundamental truth in Christian faith. And Jesus' disciples, including Mary, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and later the eleven disciples, all needed the manifestation of risen Christ in order to transform the truth of His resurrection into their subjective experience. This seems to indicate that for some challenging truths in the Bible, transforming these objective truths into our subjective experiences, the manifestation of Jesus Christ is crucial. Without the manifestation of Jesus Christ, it is difficult for us to turn objective truths into subjective experiences.

You may not have had an experience where Jesus appeared to you in the same way as He did to His disciples, but perhaps in your life, you've encountered Jesus in your reading of scripture, in your prayers, in your worship songs, or even amidst difficult circumstances. You may have received words from God that helped you understand

that everything you've been through was specially arranged by Him. Despite the unchanged environment and ongoing challenges, you found peace and joy that cannot be explained. Knowing that God is with you, guiding you through, even if you don't know the final outcome, allows you to rest. This is how God reveals Himself to you. It's only through God repeatedly revealing Himself to us that we can understand His timely guidance in our lives. And as God continues to reveal Himself to us, these revelations form a vision that guides our entire lives.

Dear brothers and sisters, if you haven't had many experiences of God's revelation in your life, I encourage you to humbly come before God and ask Him to reveal Himself to you personally. Especially when you find yourself in challenging situations and don't know how to proceed, believe that God has a special purpose and arrangement for you. Surrender yourself to Him and let Him speak to you directly, helping you understand His guidance in your life. I believe that as you understand God's guidance for you, His guidance will ultimately become His commission to you, and these entrusted commissions will ultimately shape the direction of your entire life.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, on the day of Your resurrection, You appeared multiple times to the disciples. Though they doubted, it was through Your appearances that we truly believe in Your resurrection. Lord, have mercy on us, for like those disciples, we too are of little faith and greatly need Your manifestation. We ask that in my daily life, in my prayers, in my reading of the Scriptures, You would personally speak to me, especially through the words of the Bible, to remind me once again and help me understand Your will for me. Enable me to humbly submit and obey Your guidance in my life, so that my daily living may please You and bear witness to Your goodness. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!