

Known to Us

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Seeing is believing.

The way our brains are wired, there is no substitute for certainty.

For holding the evidence in our hands. Real and tangible.

I was driving home from the grocery store last week when I saw a familiar exchange. I stopped at a crosswalk, where a mother was desperately trying to grasp her child's hand before they walked out across road.

The child, of course, did not want their hand held, and worked to avoid the embarrassing grasp.

Now, I was stopped short of the crosswalk, and had been sitting there, she'd seen me.

There was nobody coming from the other direction, as far as the eye could see. It was a pretty quiet street.

And yet she was insistent.

Now perhaps she was just sticking to her guns, having said “hold my hand” she wasn’t going to let her kid get off without it.

But I realized that her need to hold her child’s hand was not about the child’s safety alone.

Sure, that was a big part of it.

But maybe even bigger, it was for her own piece of mind.

So that she could walk, and know. Know that her child was right there. Safe.

We want to know. To be sure. To have the truth that all is well pressed unmistakably into our own palm.

To be able to squeeze tight, and know, know, that everything is ok.

It is for this reason that my Mother will never deposit a check using her mobile phone or even an ATM. She needs to hand it to a teller and watch them run it through the scanner. So that she knows.

When I give her a hard time about this, and show her how easy it is to snap a picture of the check on her phone her response is always the same.

But how do you *know*.

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It was a mere three days after Christ had been crucified, and the disciples were walking along the road. It was Easter, late afternoon.

A stranger approached them. And they did not realize it was Christ.

He asked them what they were talking about and they told him what they had heard.

Jesus, a prophet mighty in word and deed had been handed over to death.

Yet some of the women from their group had just come back from the tomb with startling news, his body was not there, and angels met them, and said he had risen.

Yet they seem skeptical. Reporting it as something that “people are saying” rather than something they know for sure.

And I wouldn't hold it against them. Could you have believed such a thing?

As it grows late, they insist that this traveling stranger come and eat with them.

I have to imagine that Jesus smiled a little bit, seeing that his work had paid off, and these followers of his, even after her was gone, were still offering hospitality to strangers, and looking for a chance to share their table.

It might have seemed odd to them that their guest reached for the bread to offer the blessing, but when he broke the bread and gave it to them their eyes flew open. They saw him, but now they really saw, *him*. It was Jesus. It was true. He had risen.

Then he vanished.

And they went and told everyone they could find, that he was made known to them in breaking bread.

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This morning we will celebrate communion. Which most directly commemorates the last supper, but which is also a ritual with roots in this story.

For this is what we are seeking in this morsel of bread and juice.

We are seeking for Christ to be made known to us.

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Most of our journey of faith is spent on the road. Traveling along with people who have heard the same story we have and who want, desperately, to believe it is true.

And we do believe it. Right? Somewhere deep down, are hearts burn in recognition of God.

Yet we cannot just grab God by the hand for that reassuring squeeze.

We cannot really know. Not in the way we wish we could.

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There has long been a great debate in the global Christian church about communion. Particularly, the question is, how is Christ present?

Perhaps you have heard the word “transubstantiation.” This is what the catholic church believes. That the bread and wine quite literally change from one substance to another, from bread to flesh, from wine to blood.

Lutherans came up with the idea of consubstantiation, saying that the actual body and blood of Christ mixes itself in with the substance of bread and wine, so they are both there together.

Catholics say that the doctrine of consubstantiation is heresy.

Inpanation is another theory. Like in-car-nation is Christ taking on a carnage human body. In-pan-ation is Christ taking the form of bread. So the substance doesn't change, but Christ is in it. So the difference between regular bread and communion bread is the difference between, a regular person and Jesus. The substance is the same, but the spirit is different.

Inpanation has the distinction of being called heretical by *both* the catholics and the lutherans.

There are other theories too, although I can already see eyes glazing over, and people nodding off.

Transignification, Real Presence, Pneumatic presence, sacramental union, memorialism, suspension, the list goes on and on.

Now if you can't tell, I find these sorts of fine points of distinction to be a little silly.

Frankly, I find them to be an expression of human hubris. That we could come to understand and a molecular level how this great mystery unfolds.

I prefer to simply say what the disciples in our story today proclaim.

Christ is made known to us in the breaking of bread.

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This meal is God made known.

It is a sign and seal of God's presence and love that doesn't float about in lofty words and pious notions, but rather it is pressed into our hand, it melts on our tongue. It feeds us and refreshes us.

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When those disciples had the bread that Jesus broke. When he was suddenly revealed to them then vanished, they did not ask each other how exactly it happened.

Did he pass through the wall or dissolve into the air. Had he really been here or was it an image, or our imagination.

No.

They didn't try to work out the details. They proclaimed the simple truth. He has been made known to us.

That is the invitation and the offer at this table. Christ made known. In a mystery.

God's presence made as tangible as our daily bread. As familiar as a sip of juice.

The fullness of mystery.

Broken and poured out for you to taste. And see.