

## Known in the Breaking of Bread

Luke 24:13-35

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As you might imagine, whenever there is something we feel strongly about, someone will always offer us an opportunity to express our feelings by purchasing an item which corresponds to what we're feeling.

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For one thing, it acknowledges the value of mothers and their role in their families. In some ways it balances the variety of responsibilities faced by mothers today and the complexity of what their families need from them.

We’re all aware of the changes in the way our society values women today. We see women less as extensions of their husbands and bearers of children, and more as equals with men in all aspects of society. They’re not where they need to be, and there are plenty of other places in the world where the status of women is still positively medieval.

But tremendous progress has been made in the past fifty years. There are some places in Europe (think Sweden) where there are more women in the legislature than men. Can you imagine what that would be like, ladies?

From the church’s perspective, maybe we’ve started to take Paul seriously when he says that in Christ there is no more male or female, that we are all one in Christ. And if that’s the case, then maybe we should stop asking ourselves about the role of women, and start asking ourselves how to understand and appreciate the unique qualities that women bring not only to their families, but to the workplace, the political arena, and the church.

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Isn't that the way it is with our mothers? Most of us live with them for all of our childhood, but it isn't until we're older that we can really recognize the role they played in making us who we are today.

We're like those two disciples who were trying to digest and make sense out of the fact that Jesus had been arrested and executed, but that he had somehow come back from the dead.

We grow up with our mothers at a time when we are unprepared to really make sense of the world or question some of the values that are instilled in us. When we're young we don't know what to make of the idea of marriage. We don't know what our purpose in life is.

We don't know how to deal with our sexuality. And we certainly aren't prepared for the fact that as we grow up we're coming to a time when we will have to make a living for ourselves and do things for ourselves that our mothers used to do.

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But it does talk about Israel as God's servant being rejected by neighboring nations as weak. In Isaiah Israel is described as being God's whipping boy, taking God's punishment on behalf of other nations. God would show the world God's power and righteousness by disciplining Israel.

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Luke says that Jesus understood those passages in terms of his own life, in terms of what God was doing to save the world. The church pointed to those passages when they tried to explain their claim that Jesus was in fact the Messiah.

Like Israel, he suffered for the sins of others, he gave his life for others, and rather than praise, he received ridicule for his efforts. He was humiliated, mistreated, and blamed for his own demise.

But he was also vindicated by God because he was faithful. Personally, it's hard to avoid the comparisons to the plight of mothers in our society. Like Jesus, they have given of themselves in sacrificial ways for the benefit of others.

They have traditionally given up their dreams and even their jobs so that men could fulfill their dreams and work in their chosen professions. Rather than

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Women who took issue with this arrangement were insulted, criticized, and humiliated. Some were just abandoned. People questioned their sanity, their loyalty to their families, their sexuality, and even their religious devotion.

It sounds insane, but it happened. It probably happened in our own church. But in our context that narrow definition of womanhood and motherhood became obsolete. And we came to believe that those who challenged the traditional image of motherhood in our society were actually right.

We started asking ourselves whether or not women were capable of doing a number of things that they were never allowed to do in the past such as becoming doctors and lawyers and architects and politicians and athletes and – gasp – ministers.

And we realized that many of our assumptions about women's capabilities were wrong. Like Israel's neighbors, like the people of Jerusalem who witnessed Jesus' execution, we later realized that the meaning we had assigned to their lives was horribly misguided.

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As soon as he broke the bread, his disciples at the table with him recognized who he was. And just as the blood drained from their faces, Jesus vanished into thin air. He would be with them forever.

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No, he never felt the pain of childbirth. And there are many things about being a mother that you can't learn from Jesus himself. But for those who have lost their mothers, Jesus' continued presence with his disciples after his death reminds us that the contribution our mothers made to our lives continues on for us.

We still benefit from the lessons our mothers taught us. They were not perfect. There were lessons we sure wish we wouldn't have learned from them. But we pause today to remember them, to thank God for the good things they did, and to pass those lessons on to our children.

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Most of us still remember the way our mothers did something. We remember how they made something or how they dealt with a particular situation. We remember the unique things they said to us.

Every once in a while something happens that brings us back. And while the memories may not always be happy, we're reminded of the distinctive way in which our mothers impacted our lives. Even though, like Jesus in this story, some of our mothers have disappeared from sight, they're still with us. And like Jesus, they always will be.

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For many of us our mothers have passed on. For many of us they were like Jesus to us. They nourished us, nurtured us, taught us about God, disciplined us, taught us what they thought God was doing in the world.

Now you may think that sounds a little crazy to compare Jesus' role in life to that of our mothers'. But back in the 14<sup>th</sup> century an English female theologian came to that very conclusion.

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No, he never felt the pain of childbirth. And there are many things about being a mother that you can't learn from Jesus himself. But for those who have lost their mothers, Jesus' continued presence with his disciples after his death reminds us that the contribution our mothers made to our lives continues on for us.

We still benefit from the lessons our mothers taught us. They were not perfect. There were lessons we sure wish we wouldn't have learned from them. But we pause today to remember them, to thank God for the good things they did, and to pass those lessons on to our children.

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Every once in a while something happens that brings us back. And while the memories may not always be happy, we're reminded of the distinctive way in which our mothers impacted our lives. Even though, like Jesus in this story, some of our mothers have disappeared from sight, they're still with us. And like Jesus, they always will be.

## Known in the Breaking of Bread

Luke 24:13-35

Today is Mothers' Day in our country. For the record this is not a religious holiday, although many of us observe it religiously in appreciation for all that our mothers have done for us.

As you might imagine, whenever there is something we feel strongly about, someone will always offer us an opportunity to express our feelings by purchasing an item which corresponds to what we're feeling.

There are all kinds of things you could get your mother or mother figure, from jewelry to clothes to handbags. But one item aimed at the "mother" market is a wine called "Mommy's Time Out".

The front label of "Mommy's Time Out," an Italian wine sold in red and white, shows an empty chair facing a corner. A wine bottle and glass sit on a table next to the chair.

You can imagine exhausted mothers wanting a few moments to themselves after a hard day of work and/or childrearing. A time out for mothers with a glass of wine is a reward, not a punishment. At least, that's how the folks in marketing want you to see it.

The thing is, that company isn't the only company trying to market wine to exhausted mothers as a way of rewarding themselves for their hard work. A competitor also wants to sell wine to mothers, only this company calls it "Mommyjuice".

The front label of Mommyjuice features a drawing of a woman juggling a house, teddy bear and computer. The back label advises moms to "tuck your kids into bed, sit down and have a glass of Mommyjuice. Because you deserve it."

I don't know about you, but when I hear that name, I envision some mother with her children trying to make sure that both she and the kids have the correct libation poured into the correct glass. You don't want kids accidentally getting the "Mommyjuice."

Anyway, the advent of “Mommyjuice” has sparked a trademark lawsuit from the people at “Mommy’s Time Out.” Clos Lachance winery in California said that the idea of “Mommyjuice” is too much like “Mommy’s Time Out”, and that their trademark has been violated.

Who knows how the court will rule on that claim, but the fact that these wines are being marketed in this fashion says something about the way in which the market is trying to address the stresses of motherhood.

For one thing, it acknowledges the value of mothers and their role in their families. In some ways it balances the variety of responsibilities faced by mothers today and the complexity of what their families need from them.

We’re all aware of the changes in the way our society values women today. We see women less as extensions of their husbands and bearers of children, and more as equals with men in all aspects of society. They’re not where they need to be, and there are plenty of other places in the world where the status of women is still positively medieval.

But tremendous progress has been made in the past fifty years. There are some places in Europe (think Sweden) where there are more women in the legislature than men. Can you imagine what that would be like, ladies?

From the church’s perspective, maybe we’ve started to take Paul seriously when he says that in Christ there is no more male or female, that we are all one in Christ. And if that’s the case, then maybe we should stop asking ourselves about the role of women, and start asking ourselves how to understand and appreciate the unique qualities that women bring not only to their families, but to the workplace, the political arena, and the church.

Traditionally we have relegated women to duties centering on food preparation, home maintenance, and child rearing. Many of us grew up with mothers who held primary responsibility for making sure we got fed.

In the movie “A Christmas Story”, the main character, a little boy named Ralphie tells about how his mother waited on the family at dinner time. In the movie, she serves dinner to Ralphie, his brother and his father. And just as

she's about to sit down and serve herself, one of them asks her to get up and get something else to go along with the meal.

Ralphie observed his mother doing this over and over, making sure her family was set before she got to eat. He quipped that his mother never ate a hot dinner throughout his childhood. Her food was always cold by the time she was done taking care of everyone else.

I personally cringe at the idea that this role has been assigned to someone merely on the basis of gender. In fact, it's simplistic and insulting to mothers these days to see them primarily as cooks and servers.

But that's the point I want to make about Jesus in today's passage. Jesus appears on Easter evening to two of his disciples, neither of them was one of the twelve, but he appears in such a way that they do not recognize him.

Isn't that the way it is with our mothers? Most of us live with them for all of our childhood, but it isn't until we're older that we can really recognize the role they played in making us who we are today.

We're like those two disciples who were trying to digest and make sense out of the fact that Jesus had been arrested and executed, but that he had somehow come back from the dead.

We grow up with our mothers at a time when we are unprepared to really make sense of the world or question some of the values that are instilled in us. When we're young we don't know what to make of the idea of marriage. We don't know what our purpose in life is.

We don't know how to deal with our sexuality. And we certainly aren't prepared for the fact that as we grow up we're coming to a time when we will have to make a living for ourselves and do things for ourselves that our mothers used to do.

That's what the disciples are dealing with here. They don't know how to make any sense of what just happened. And they feel like orphans who have been abandoned by their mothers. I don't know, maybe that's why Jesus first

appears to the women in Luke. Maybe the rest of them needed a little mothering.

Anyway, Jesus explains to them that somehow all of these things which just took place were part of a divine plan to save the world. And as they walked to the town of Emmaus, Jesus went through the Old Testament and pointed out passages which indicated that everything went according to God's plan.

His explanation was different from the one they had grown up with. In fact, there is no place in the Old Testament where it says that the Messiah would be rejected and killed by his own people, or that he would be resurrected.

But it does talk about Israel as God's servant being rejected by neighboring nations as weak. In Isaiah Israel is described as being God's whipping boy, taking God's punishment on behalf of other nations. God would show the world God's power and righteousness by disciplining Israel.

That's how the Jews made sense of the fact that they were frequently brought low by other invading nations. But those passages also held out an unwavering hope that in the end, God would vindicate them and reward them and make them greater than any of their neighbors.

Luke says that Jesus understood those passages in terms of his own life, in terms of what God was doing to save the world. The church pointed to those passages when they tried to explain their claim that Jesus was in fact the Messiah.

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