Sunday, May 4, 2025 - Meditation

“O God, whose blessed Son made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread: Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold him in all his redeeming work.” Our collect for today sums up what we need when we come together to worship. That the eyes of our faith may be opened to behold him in all his redeeming work. And it goes to the heart of the scripture readings: In Acts chapter 9 Jesus makes himself known to Paul as he is traveling to Damascus. In the gospel reading the risen Lord makes himself known to his disciples when they take in a full catch of fish after a night of empty nets. In Revelation, Jesus makes himself known to John in a stunning vision of heaven.

The BCP has some of the finest prose in the English language. The words were chosen very carefully. In this collect we’re reminded that Jesus made himself known to his disciples in the breaking of bread. That means he makes himself known to us, too, whenever we come together and share in the eucharist. So, what is our response to that? We are to put ourselves in the place where we can know him and receive him – by praying that the eyes of our faith may be opened, that we may behold him in **all** his redeeming work.

That brings us to our reading in the Book of Revelation. The apostle John has been taken into heaven, and he says: “At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.” And surrounding the throne he sees the hosts of heaven crying out in a loud voice, “Worthy is the lamb, who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!” John is beholding Jesus in ALL his redeeming work.

What John experienced is exactly what we’re praying for ourselves, that the Holy Spirit would open the eyes of our faith that we may behold Jesus in all his redeeming work. We can’t expect to have the same experience John had - at least, not on this side of heaven. But there are touch points for us, moments when we are in direct contact with the living God. One of those moments is the eucharist. That’s where Jesus makes himself known to us. There are other touch points too. Notice that the collect doesn’t ask for “the eyes of faith,” but for “the eyes of our faith” to be opened. Our faith isn’t

something we just come up with on our own - it's something we've received. It's a shared faith, handed down through generations, rooted in history and tradition.

And it's all laid out for us on page 358 of the prayer book:
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.
[We have the incarnation]
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
[We have the crucifixion]
On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
[We have the resurrection]
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
[His ascension and glorification]
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
[His coming again to rule for eternity]

There it is for us. This is the story of our redemption in a nutshell. This is our faith. It sums up all his redeeming work.

Jesus makes himself known to us in our liturgy. Why do we come here to this sanctuary? To have the eyes of our faith opened that we may behold him. There's a reason the Book of Common Prayer keeps that word - behold. It's so much more powerful than just "see." Behold goes back to the old English *bihaldan,* which means to hold, keep or protect, to cherish, keep watch over. It's about holding something in your gaze, not just glancing at it. The difference between seeing and beholding is like the difference between eating and savoring. Eating is just going through the motions, but savoring means you slow down - you stop and really take in the fullness of what you're experiencing. God wants us to savor Him. To have our eyes opened we need to slow down. So when we recite the words of faith, are we just eating, or are we savoring? When we celebrate the Eucharist are we eating or savoring? When we sing our hymns, are we just

singing, or are we savoring? We can come here every week and go through the motions, or we can slow down and stop and savor.

This may be one of the few times in our week when we have that opportunity. Why would we pass it up? It's all here for us: In the liturgy, in the symbols surrounding us in this beautiful space. It's in the words of scripture. God's blessed Son has made himself known to us. So let's pray, "Dear God, Open the eyes of our faith, that we may behold you in all your redeeming work."s