

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Third Sunday After Easter, May 12, 2019

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 188:1-4, 189, 190, 199, 188:5-6.
Lessons: Psalm 118:14-24, 1 John 3:1-2, Luke 24:13-36.
Sermon Text: Luke 24:36-49
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In our Gospel lesson you heard what the disciples were talking about. This is still the day of the Resurrection, and so even some of our hymns today speak of the idea that ‘Christ is born today’. Luke’s first report of the Resurrection tells us who told the apostles about the empty tomb. ***“It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.”*** Luke 24:10-12 (NIV)

Then two disciples – not identified as apostles – came back from the road to Emmaus and told them all a fantastical story about Jesus appearing to them and talking about how Jesus himself ***“said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.”*** Luke 24:25-27 (NIV)

Today we see that

THE RISEN JESUS APPEARS TO THE ELEVEN

- 1. The followers of Jesus were startled, frightened, troubled, and had doubts.**
- 2. Jesus proves it is really him, and**
- 3. He talks about the work they have ahead of them.**

“While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.” Wouldn’t you be frightened, too? The man who three days ago died a bloody death on the cross now appears in their midst. Some of them even saw him buried on that same day!

Jesus then asked them: ***“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?”*** He knew they were perplexed, distressed, even filled with fear. Questions were in their minds about what was happening and how this could happen after what they knew happened three days ago.

But he proves that he is alive, and that it is he, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and not someone else who is standing in their midst. ***“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.”*** He is not a spirit that has no body. He is not, to use the word from some translations, ***“a ghost”***. He even extends the invitation to touch him, to feel him.

“They still did not believe it because of joy and amazement.” Their master, whom many of them saw crucified, dead, and buried, was now standing in front of them, in their midst. We must realize that this is the glorified Jesus standing in front of them. This is not the beaten, bloody body they saw die on the cross which is now appearing in front of them. But ***“They still did not believe it.”***

Remember the history lesson of Thomas, who did not believe that Jesus had appeared to them. ***“A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus***

came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'" John 20:26-27 (NIV) On this day he invites all those present to touch him.

But now, on the evening of the day he rose from the dead, they still didn't believe it. Their sorrow was turned to joy but they didn't believe that it was Jesus standing in their midst. They wondered and they marveled at what they now saw and heard.

So Jesus gives them another reason to believe that it is not some kind of spirit, some kind of imposter, appearing in front of them: *"And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence."* He eats in front of them. A spirit would not eat.

Then he reminds them of what he had said when he was still alive. *"This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."* He reminds them of what he'd said while he was still with them before his death. He points to the Holy Scriptures, and not just one little reference. He names the whole Old Testament, as it was known to the Jews: the writings of Moses and the Prophets and what was written in the Psalms. That is the way that the Jews referred to the Old Testament.

He opens their minds: *"He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'" How would anyone else know this was him? He tells them things only they should know about him. This is the way that people sometimes prove their identities even in books and movies. They reveal things that only the closest family or friends would know. These are things that no one else should know, kind of like in a spy or mystery movie or book. But this is not fiction. This is fact and truth. Jesus is really standing in front of them!*

He even refers to what he had told them a number of times, such as we read in Luke 9: *"The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."* Luke 9:22 (NIV)

He assures them that this is truly he, himself, who was crucified, dead, and buried standing alive in front of them.

Then he hints at their calling, their assignment, their commission – what will be called "The Great Commission". And, of course, before he ascends into heaven, Jesus makes this commission the calling, the task of all believers, telling them: *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

Today he tells them that *"repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."* They will preach repentance. And what does that mean? As scripture uses the word in a broad sense, it means first, to recognize your own sins and realize that they are sins, wrong doing, disobeying God, evil through and through and the next aspect of repentance means to be sincerely sorry for them. Second it includes faith in the forgiveness of sins, and then includes turning from our sins, not only the ones that bother us, and that are pointed out to us, but all of them, even our secret sins, those unknown to others and also perhaps even unknown to us ourselves. It includes, as John the Baptist said *"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance."* Matthew 3:8 (NIV)

And then comes the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. God, because of his great love for mankind, sent his only-begotten Son to pay the price for sin. Because of what Jesus Christ did for us, God forgives our sins – and not only ours, but the sins of the whole world.

So the preaching of the followers of Christ is repentance and grace, law and Gospel.

These people on this day had now seen Jesus alive, and could witness, could testify that he was really alive, as Paul assures us: *"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five*

hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NIV)

The people in Jesus’ presence on this day have witnessed it – and that means not only seeing it but witnessing and swearing it is all true. Then we read that he *“he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”*

He assures them: *“You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

He is pointing forward to the future and what they are to do. What a sermon that must have been! And it was the second time the disciples Jesus met on the road to Emmaus had heard him speak this day.

He just opened their minds and told them this is what the scriptures said. He told them first that what has happened was foretold and how it has now been fulfilled.

Now, he tells them about their future calling: to preach the gospel. And what it is that the followers of Christ will preach? That God assures us that our sins are forgiven, that Jesus has paid for all of them.

And Christ isn’t done with them. He will send more help to them. He will give them the gifts of the Holy Ghost, including some special gifts.

That will happen 50 days later, on the day called Pentecost. On that day God sent the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit in a very dramatic way. He sent him with the sound of a violent wind and the appearance of tongues like as of fire. He gave special gifts – including the gifts of speaking in foreign languages they had never learned. He did this so that they could be witnesses, not only in Jerusalem, but also *“in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* Acts 1:8 (NIV)

So Christ isn’t finished with them after this one-time appearance when they heard the Word of God from Jesus himself.

So why is it that many church-goers today are content to only listen to Jesus once in a while? Jesus kept coming to his followers after his resurrection, so that even more than 500 at one time saw and heard him!

You know your own weaknesses. You know the weaknesses of all mankind and can recognize them in yourself. How many times do we have to be taught before we really know something and believe it? How many times does a child have to be taught about addition, subtraction, multiplication and division before he or she “knows it” and believes it? Each year, class after class, teachers and books present simple math facts so that children can really learn them. And after learning those fundamentals of mathematics, there is always more to learn, going on to algebra and geometry and calculus and trigonometry.

So it is with the truth of God’s Word. We must hear it again and again so that we remember it. So that we are comforted by it. So that we can look forward to all that God wants to give us.

And we won’t know Christ is finished with us until death or judgment day, whichever comes first. So too, we don’t and won’t know how all our life experiences up till now have been preparation for us and how we can serve God yet in our lives. Paul encourages us by inspiration: *“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”* 1 Cor. 10:31 (NIV)

The fear in the minds of the disciples of Christ in that room was alleviated when Jesus proved it was really him, with a glorified body, whom they now saw in their midst.

Jesus points to the work they had to do in telling others about him and what he accomplished. For the people in that room, that night, the promise of *“power from on high”* was fulfilled when the Holy Ghost came 50 days later, on Pentecost.

So in this appearance of the risen Jesus to the eleven apostles – and others – we, too, see Jesus Christ after his resurrection. Any fears, any doubts we may have can find comfort and answers in the Words of Jesus. Make your searching of the Words of Jesus a daily thing, so that you, too, can experience the presence of Jesus Christ in your lives every day. Amen.