

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**First Sunday after Easter, May 1, 2011**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 193, 202:1, 188, 198, 196:1.

Lessons: Ezekiel 18:20-32, 1 Peter 1:1-16, John 20:1-10.

Sermon Text: Luke 24:9-12

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

We do not have a day-by-day, hour-by-hour recorded history of events after Jesus' resurrection. Such a history would be helpful in examining the exact sequence of events but what we do have written is all we need. Near the end of his gospel, John records by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "*Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*" John 20:30-31

Today let's piece together what Scripture tells us about

**PETER AND THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS**

1. **He rushed to the tomb to see if it was true. Would there be forgiveness for him?**
2. **At first Peter wondered and didn't believe.**
3. **He did come to believe, and Jesus personally assured him of forgiveness.**

These are the women we heard about last Sunday. They went to the tomb and found it empty, and Luke tells us about the message of the angels to them. We read "*When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.*" They were following the directions of the angels as recorded by Mark: "*'Don't be alarmed,' he said. 'You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'*" Mark 16:6-7

The angel doesn't just tell them Jesus has risen from the dead. His message continues: "*tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'*" The angel says to tell his disciples that he will meet them in Galilee. Do you also notice the concern for Peter? Peter is singled out in this message. Peter, who denied his Lord, and went out and wept bitterly but still believed that Jesus could forgive this terrible sin, is named in the message of the angel. This means that no sin is too great for Jesus to forgive. Just as Peter repented, we, too, can and must repent of every sin. Jesus died for ALL sins.

Notice that Peter was one of the first other than the women who ran to the tomb to see if it was true. From the way John records this, we have reason to believe that John was the other. You heard in our gospel lesson that "*Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to their homes.*" John 20:4-10

Peter didn't waste any time. The last time Jesus communicated with him was a look! That was the admonition for Peter's denials. Then Jesus was found guilty by the Sanhedrin. Pontius Pilate sentenced him to death, he was crucified, dead, and buried.

Have you ever wondered why Peter was so anxious to see if Jesus had risen from the dead? Have you ever wondered why Scripture records that he was the first – other than the women – to go into the tomb and see for himself why the tomb was empty? We know that every word of Scripture is inspired, and written for our learning. Scripture tells us what we need to know and doesn't tell us what we really don't need to know. Scripture does not always tell us "why" and our human reason often wonders why.

But we can ask what Peter was looking for at the tomb. Was he looking for the assurance of forgiveness for his sins? Was he looking for Jesus alive so Jesus could tell him personally that his sins were forgiven? We don't know what Peter was thinking, except for what Holy Scripture says in the Gospels, in the book of Acts, and in Peter's letters. He didn't find Jesus in the tomb.

Let's look back a few days and see why Peter would be so anxious to see whether or not Jesus was really alive. On Maundy Thursday when Jesus had celebrated the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper with his disciples, he had warned Peter ***"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." But he replied, 'Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.'*** Jesus answered, ***'I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.'***" Luke 22:31-34 Notice that Jesus does not call Simon Peter by the name Peter, which he had given him. Peter is a name that suggests rock, the solid rock of Jesus on which Peter had made his confession.

In his haste and excitement and enthusiasm to defend Jesus after people came into the Garden of Gethsemane to capture Jesus, Peter had even taken out his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus had to reprimand him: ***"Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him.***" John 18:11-12

That is the last recorded conversation between Jesus and Simon Peter before his crucifixion. You remember, of course, what happened in the courtyard of the high priest. Peter denied three times even knowing Jesus, with oaths and cursing. You remember how Luke then tells us: ***"The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.'*** And he went outside and wept bitterly." Luke 22:61-62

So Peter had good reason to wonder what had really happened to Jesus. The last thing he had done to his Lord and Master before his crucifixion and death and burial was to deny even knowing Jesus. How those sins must have weighed on Peter! How his conscience must have been tortured! And the Lord had looked at him. That look no doubt contained admonition and rebuke, sadness and hurt, and even an appeal to repent. It touched Peter deeply, and he went out and ***"wept bitterly."*** And then his Lord was dead. He had no chance to repent personally to him, to express his contrition and ask for forgiveness.

But we hold Peter up as an example of one who believed that no matter how great his sins, Jesus could forgive his sins. Peter is in contrast to ***"Judas, who had betrayed him, [when he] saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. 'I have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood.'"*** Matthew 27:3-4 Judas was sorry, and tried to make it right. He didn't want the money any longer. He threw it back at those who had paid him for his betrayal of Jesus. But the chief priest and elders didn't offer any absolution to him: ***"What is that to us?" they replied. 'That's your responsibility.' So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself."*** Matthew 27:4-5 In this we see that Judas did not believe that Jesus could forgive his terrible sin. Judas had no faith in the forgiveness of sins. Peter, however, did. But in his running to the grave, to see if Jesus was still dead, he was looking for personal assurance of the forgiveness of sins.

Peter ran to the tomb which he had heard was empty. ***"Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened."*** He had to see for himself. And he did see. And he was wondering – this Greek word means that he was amazed, astonished – that Jesus' dead body was not in the grave.

Then Peter, and the other disciple went back to be with the others. Then follow a number of appearances of Jesus to his disciples. Jesus appears to the two disciples walking to Emmaus, they return to Jerusalem and tell their good news. Jesus that same evening appears to the disciples behind locked doors in Jerusalem. Jesus

appears a week later, and Paul in 1 Corinthians reports that Jesus *"appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time"*. 1 Corinthians 15:5-6 John records that it was a week later that Jesus appeared to Thomas who was with other disciples. Then later we read in John 21:1-7 *"Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water."*

Peter couldn't wait to get back to Jesus who was standing on the shore. After John records the great catch of fish, and the fact that Jesus prepared a meal of fish and bread for his disciples, he tells us *"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."* John 21:15-17

Finally! Peter had wept bitterly when he denied Jesus. He believed that Jesus, the very Son of God, could forgive his sins, but he anxiously was waiting, even running to the tomb when he heard it was empty. There is no record of Peter being alone with Jesus until this time in which Peter could repent personally to Jesus and receive a personal absolution, forgiveness for all his sins. Even now, the other disciples were also present to hear and see Jesus. But we do have this record of Peter's public "reinstatement". Peter was reluctant to be too proud and boastful in his confession. He didn't use the same Greek word for love, meaning "really love with all your heart and soul and mind" that Jesus used when he asked him *"do you truly love me more than these?"* Peter used a word twice that is a less strong love. The third time Jesus uses the word Peter answered with the first two times. But notice that each time Jesus gives Peter the command to serve as a shepherd.

Peter was sincerely sorry for his sins – contrition. He had faith in the forgiveness of sins – repentance in the narrow sense. And we know from New Testament history as recorded in Acts that Peter brought forth in his life fruits of faith. We know from Peter's inspired letters in the New Testament that he proclaimed the Word of God, too. So the horrible, wicked Peter who publicly denied that he even knew Jesus shows repentance in the broad sense: contrition, and faith in the forgiveness of sins, and fruits of faith.

We may not have everything written in scripture that we want to know. *"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."* May all the words God has written lead us all to eternal life! Amen.