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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
April 14, 2024  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 3:11-20 | John 1:5-2:2

Hymns: 205; 190:1-3,5-6; 207:1, 3-5; 207:2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 24:36-49

Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." <sup>37</sup> But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?" <sup>39</sup> "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." <sup>40</sup> When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. <sup>41</sup> But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" <sup>42</sup> So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. <sup>43</sup> And He took *it* and ate in their presence.

<sup>44</sup> Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." <sup>45</sup> And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

<sup>46</sup> Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> And you are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, Our Crucified and Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Emotions, again.

Humans are very emotional beings. A great deal of our behavior is determined by our emotions rather than the facts. We are too often feeling, rather than thinking clearly, and making dreadful mistakes in life because we behave according to our perception of how we see things, or how we would like things to be, rather than how things actually are.

That is so true with things spiritual. How we think about things, how we perceive things dictates what we believe to be true, but our human perceptions are so limited that we don't know all the facts, and our perceptions are unduly influenced by our sinful flesh. How situations in life impact our emotions often turn things around so that our emotions negatively impact our life situation. It is a vicious circle that is all too often a downward spiral.

That is the emotional vicious circle the disciples were caught in on that first Resurrection Sunday. The emotion that was dominating the situation, that was dominating their lives on that day should have been joy, but they were struggling with human perception of reality, and so rather than joy another powerful emotion was in control, FEAR. What was the truth they couldn't come to terms with? It wasn't that Jesus had died. That was upsetting, but they could understand death; they had all seen death. The truth they couldn't grasp was that Jesus had risen from the dead.

Jesus' resurrection is the most certain truth in the world. It is more certain than gravity. It is also the most powerful truth in the world, more powerful than human emotions, more powerful than human reason. This morning, we are returning to that closed room where the disciples were assembled on that Resurrection evening as the Holy Spirit grants us a different perspective on the same events we considered last Sunday. From John's account of that evening we

learned of the blessings that come to us through Jesus' Resurrection, blessings of peace and faith brought to us by the Holy Spirit. This morning as we review these same events from Luke's inspired record the Holy Spirit leads us to better appreciate --

**THEME: The Power of Jesus' Physical Resurrection.**

One of the main features of Luke's account is the assertion of Jesus' resurrection being **physical**. This truth that is still challenged by many today is central to our faith, and central to Jesus' power and majesty. Luke reveals that when Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of the disciples, they thought they were seeing a ghost. They were even more afraid than they had been before Jesus appeared. Yes, it was sudden, but it was also something Jesus had told them in advance to expect, and it had been reported to them by the women who had actually not only seen Jesus and spoken with Him but had held on to His feet.

That's the way it is with us humans. We are so easily frightened that we fail to see the wonder of what is right before our eyes. This was the greatest wonder of all, Jesus was physically alive and standing right in front of them. It took some convincing for them to believe. Jesus showed them His hands and feet. Jesus invited them to touch Him, handle Him and see that He was flesh and bone, which spirits don't have. The opening words of John's first epistle assure us that the disciples did indeed touch and handle Jesus. On top of that Jesus asked for some food so they could see Him eat, and they brought Jesus some broiled fish and a bit of honeycomb.

Some say it doesn't really matter if Jesus is actually physically risen from the dead, or if it was just His Spirit that lived on, or some would say that it was the idea of Jesus that was resurrected on Easter morning. The Lord would have you understand that it makes all the difference in the world. It reveals the truth about Jesus and the power of His resurrection in our hearts and in our lives as Christians living in a sinful world.

It is the Power of Jesus' physical resurrection that --

**I. Dispels Our Fears.**

What fears filled the hearts of the disciples? They were afraid of what others might do to them. They were afraid of dying. They were afraid that all their dreams about Jesus were lost forever. They were afraid of ghosts. They were filled with fear, and fear was directing their behavior and, at that point fear and ignorance were directing their lives, all of their lives, leading them in the wrong direction.

What are you afraid of? I had a phone call a couple of nights ago from a nonmember who was afraid of dying. Most people are afraid of dying, even the best of Christians can be afraid of dying. It's unnatural, and unknown, so scary. Are you afraid of what others might think of you if you speak the truth or disagree with the world? Are you afraid of failing in life? Are you afraid of sickness and pain? Are you afraid of making a mistake if you try to share your faith with others? Maybe we should be more afraid of what might happen to others we know and love if we don't share our faith with them? It's just so easy to have fear take over our lives.

I am going to guess that you are thinking that Jesus' resurrection has little or nothing to do with some of the possible fears I just mentioned. Let's address that. Let's start with the assertion that Jesus dispels our fears. Our biggest fear may be the fear of death. Jesus died; He rose again. He was "*the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*" (1 Corinthians 15:20) That means two important things: Jesus was the first of many, and the best of many. As the best of many His resurrection empowers your resurrection. Faith in that truth of Jesus' physical bodily resurrection dispels the fear of death and the grave. For the believing child of God death is no than the body resting in the grave waiting for the resurrection at the Last Day while the spirit is with the Lord in glory.

Afraid of God? In a resurrected Jesus we know God as our Savior who loves us and sent His only begotten Son that we should live through Him. We have peace. Jesus' resurrection dispels our fears if we but focus on the truth of His resurrection.

Why should we fear what others might think when we know how the Lord thinks of us as His children whom He cherishes? How

can we be afraid of failure when the Lord has made us and redeemed us and given us purpose and power to live to His glory.

And yet so often in the weakness of our flesh we still fear. Luke's account of these events reveal for us the solid rock --

## **II. Foundation of the Christian Faith.**

*“Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”<sup>45</sup> And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.”* (v.44-45)

There are many so called holy books out in the world, supposedly sacred scriptures for Islam, and Hinduism and even Mormonism. Many people will say there is truth to be found in them all. Half truths are sneaky lies. There is one divinely inspired Book that reveals to us the true nature of sin as the source and cause of death, and the hateful power of the devil to deceive and destroy, and one book that reveals the only true God the ONLY true God and His plan His Promise to deliver us from sin and death. Jesus said to His heavenly Father, *“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* (John 17:3) All the Scriptures are focused on this truth of Jesus Christ: how and why God directed the course of this world as He did, how God provided salvation for us undeserving sinners, and how all that was written in the Old Testament Scriptures found not only its meaning, but its perfect fulfillment in Jesus!

What a powerful statement is made here, that Jesus *“opened their understanding so they might comprehend the Scriptures.”* (v.45) We are not self-enlightened. It is the Holy Spirit working with this gospel of Jesus our Risen Lord that turns on the light on our dark hearts. If we struggle with some passage or another truth of God's Word, let's turn to the Lord in prayer seeking Jesus' power and blessing upon our study of His Word. If we pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen us in faith and life, it will not be denied. Jesus will enrich us with His power and blessing.

The teaching of the cross is offensive to the unbelieving world. They see it as unnecessary, gruesome that we should treasure the cross of Christ. The world is quick to talk about man's works of righteousness punching holes in the dark sky and shining as stars, or a man's military service meriting eternal life, especially if that service man or woman was wounded or killed in battle. Children are still taught in a popular organization for youth that you are fully capable of doing your duty to God, if one but does a good deed every day one surely might attain God's favor. Many popular Christian churches even in our own community focus their message on what we can do for God, rather than what the Lord has done for us. People are easily misled into then seeing that as the foundation of the Christian faith.

What did Jesus say on that first Easter evening? *"Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.'"*

(v. 46-48)

What was necessary for our salvation was done, all done by Christ our crucified and risen Savior. It was necessary for the Christ to suffer to atone for our sins. Jesus suffered for us: *"By His stripes we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5). It was necessary for Jesus to die, for *"the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:23) It was necessary for Jesus to pave the way through death and the grave for us and our salvation. So, it was necessary for Jesus to physically, bodily rise again on the third day that we might know the victory over death and the devil is complete. Our salvation is assured. We are justified and live in the hope of the resurrection to eternal life. Jesus did all that was necessary for us and our salvation. And so we sing, "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord!"

That power of the resurrection, the physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead, is indeed the foundation of the Christian faith. It is the Rock that stands up to the storms of life and even the specter of death. And so, it is necessary, **it is necessary** that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in Jesus'

name to all nations. The disciples were eyewitnesses of these things. Now we also who have this hope alive in our hearts, who know the power of Jesus to save, we are His witnesses to the world. That again could strike fear in our hearts! Who am I that I should tell the world about Jesus?

You are one of the blessed, one of the Lord's disciples, and yes, we also know the blessings that the Lord imparted to the Apostles as the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them on Pentecost. *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."* (v.49) The blessing that comes to us from that outpouring of the Spirit is the confidence that what we have been given in the New Testament Scriptures is the Word of God. We also can speak with confidence that these are the words of truth. These are the words that profess Jesus and His gospel of a crucified and risen Savior. That message is still accompanied by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit. Know, be confident that the power of risen Christ abides with us in all our ways, to the praise and glory of His name.

**AMEN.**

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans15:13)