

Luke 24:36-49

Theme: Peace be with you

Peace to calm our troubled hearts

Peace to share Jesus with others.

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ 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." ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence. ⁴⁴ He said to them, "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." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ 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."

Part One: Peace. To calm our troubled hearts

"Peace be with you." When Jesus spoke these words to the disciples on the evening after his resurrection they were anything but at peace. Just two days earlier they saw Jesus— their beloved Lord and Savior, brutally beaten, scourged, crucified, and a soldier's spear thrust into his side. They saw Joseph and Nicodemus prepare Jesus' body for burial. Jesus was dead, and with him their hope.

But now, on this Sunday, the tomb was empty. Women claimed to have seen him, Peter spoke with him, the Emmaus disciples travelled with him. He appeared and disappeared throughout the day. . . Could it be true? Could Jesus be alive? But how? It doesn't make sense. And so with hearts full of joy and fear, hope and skepticism they talked and talked. . . and then Jesus appeared - right there in the middle of them; in a room that was locked tight. He simply appeared *and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

The disciples *were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.* Now before we condemn them for their superstition and unbelief - considering that Jesus showed himself alive all day - let us be honest about how we would have reacted. Jesus was dead, and now he appears right in their midst, in a room that was locked tight? What other explanation could there be?

Well, Jesus has the right explanation: *He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ 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."* ⁴⁰ *When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.*

Jesus was no ghost. He was really, truly, alive. It was he himself and he had the wounds to prove it. His hands were real hands. His feet were real feet. We can imagine that disciples holding his hand, patting his back, and hugging him in amazement.

And yet, it still felt too good to be true for the disciples. We can't imagine the roller coaster of emotions they were feeling. Jesus was dead - they saw it. But now he is alive? How can this be? And yet he is right in front of them.

In order to calm them down and reassure them that he was not a ghost, *he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"* ⁴² *They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

⁴⁴ *He said to them, "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."* ⁴⁵ *Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.*

Jesus points to the real proof that He is alive: the Scriptures had foretold it. Jesus accomplished everything God prophesied concerning him in the Old Testament - the very things Jesus told his disciples he would accomplish on numerous occasions before his crucifixion: that he would suffer, die and rise again to win our salvation. He explained to his disciples how he won peace with God for them. He dispelled their troubled hearts.

"Peace be with you." How often aren't our hearts like those of the disciples: anxious about something, wondering what will happen in the future. We know God's promises and yet, we doubt. We wonder if God can really forgive our sin. We wonder how God can work in this or that situation for our best. Locked tight, deep in our hearts where no one can see, our thoughts are in turmoil. We are not at peace. We don't know what to do, and simply pray: Lord, help me.

And then Jesus appears. As we meditate on His word and his promises, He simply appears in our heart with his message: "Peace be with you, brother. Peace be with you, sister. See the nail marks on my hands and my feet? It is I, your Savior. I have suffered and died to reconcile you with my Father. All your sin has been paid for in full. See my hands and feet? They tell you it has been done. My Father has accepted my sacrifice on your behalf. See, he has raised me from the dead. Peace be with you - my Father loves you. Peace be with you - you are forgiven. Peace be with you - God will work in all things for your good, to bring you to himself in heaven and grant you eternal life. Peace be with you - because I live you will also live. Peace be with you."

And then, as we read the Scriptures, Jesus himself points out all these promises to us in his Word. He gives us understanding as we meditate on His great and glorious work of saving us. And the more we meditate the more peace our troubled hearts enjoy.

Part Two: Peace to share Jesus with others

The peace that Jesus gave his disciples was not just meant to be kept locked up in their hearts for themselves. Jesus intended it to be shared with the world so that all who would believe in Him would have eternal life.

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Jesus' death and resurrection had a purpose: to reconcile the world to God. And reconciled we are, but this reconciliation does not do a person any good unless he believes it. And how can a person believe it, unless he is told? And who will tell, unless they are sent? And this is where the disciples come in: the Lord chose them to be his witnesses. He chose them to tell the world what they saw and heard: Jesus lived, died and rose again. And why? To reconcile us to God, so that whoever repents of his sin and turns to Jesus in faith will have eternal life.

And this duty was not only given to the disciples, but to each of us as well. When the Lord called you to faith, he called you to be his representatives before the world. He came to bring us peace - the forgiveness of sins - but he never intended for us to keep this peace to ourselves. He wants you to share it with others that they too might repent of their sin and believe in Jesus for forgiveness.

And how do we witness Jesus to the world? The same way the apostles did: by sharing the Scriptures with others when given the opportunity. Just as God's holy law convicted us of sin and convinced us that we cannot save ourselves, so will it do the same for those we proclaim it to. And just as the Gospel news of forgiveness gave us great joy, so it will offer the same joy to those we proclaim it. Why? Because the Gospel points to Jesus and his work for us, that those who believe in Him for forgiveness might not perish but have eternal life. This is the peace Jesus gave us and this is the peace he wants us to share.

But what do we say and how do we say it? The prospect of confessing Christ to others is scary. But it is not any more scary than it was for the disciples. Think about it for a moment: realistically, the worst thing we face when witnessing is a person getting upset with us and telling us to be quiet, or making fun of us for being a Christian. What the disciples faced was persecution from the Jews - arousing anger so hot, that their very lives would be in danger. The thought of unlocking the doors and going out into the hostile world was scary for the disciples. This is why Jesus told them:⁴⁹ *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.*"

As Jesus promised before his crucifixion, so Jesus promises again: He would not leave the disciples as orphans, but would send them the Holy Spirit after his ascension, who would instruct them in all righteousness and empower them to

witness boldly before the world. God the Holy Spirit would be their armor, shielding them from every evil attack of the devil and the world which would try to prevent them from witnessing Christ.

And guess what, Jesus has promised the same Holy Spirit to be with us as we witness Christ to the world. He is the one who opens the Scriptures that we might understand them and see Christ on every page of the Bible. He is the one who points us to Jesus for forgiveness and strength. He is the one who empowers us to proclaim the Gospel to our family, friends and neighbors. He is the one who guards and protects us from every evil attack, and works in all things for our eternal good. He is the one enables us to convey the message: Peace to you, from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace be with you. This is not only Jesus' message to his disciples, it is also his message to us when our hearts are in turmoil. In the Scriptures, he stands holding out his hands and his feet - showing the marks of his crucifixion - that we might be reassured that our sins are forgiven; that we are at peace with God. And not only does he stand before us, but he also stands with us as we share the message of salvation with our family, friends and neighbors, who are caught in anxiety and sin. He stands holding out his hands and feet to the world through the Gospel we proclaim, that those who hear us might see Him and repent and believe in forgiveness, peace and eternal life He offers to all. Amen.