

EASTER & THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW

“Jesus Appears to His Disciples”

Siblings of Christ, have any of you ever gotten a hurt that left a mark? Can you point to that scar easily? Sometimes the scars we have or the wounds we have can express something about us or tell a story. For example, I have this deep scar in my right foot from stepping on a large piece of glass while running barefooted in the grass when I was small and didn't listen to my mom when she told me to put shoes on. Every now and then, I get a little twang

After Jesus rose from the dead, on Easter morning, do you remember who discovered the empty tomb? Yes, the women. Then Jesus did appear a few times to some people like Mary and other disciples. Today in our gospel Jesus appears to the disciples who are worried and scared and wondering what to do now that Jesus has risen from the dead. He comes to see them and one of the first things he does he show them his hands and feet because they had the wounds from dying on the cross. Then they knew it was him! I find that interesting because most of the time I recognize people by their faces. But Jesus showed them his hands and his feet as a way to say who he was and to tell the story of his death and resurrection. Just like the scar on my hand tells a story. Our hands and feet can tell other stories too, like when our fingers turn colors from dying egg or coloring with markers. Or when we get blisters from walking a long time in our shoes. Our hands and feet also help us to tell the story of Jesus because we use our hands to help others and our feet help us go new places. So when we are hurt or when we are with other people who are hurt we can remember that Jesus used his hands and feet to show us how much he loved us by dying on the cross and then rising from the dead to show the whole world God's love.

Let us pray: Jesus, Thank you for your love and for your scars. Help us to use our hands and feet to show people we know your love. Amen.

Remember what Jesus says to his disciples: *Do not be afraid and peace be with you.*

Monday, 19 April 2021 - Read Luke 24:13-49; Matthew 28:16-20; 1 Corinthians 15:1-7

Tuesday, 20 April 2021 & Wednesday 21 April 2021

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

We are still looking at events surrounding Jesus resurrection. We shouldn't be surprised, for this is, on the one hand, the foundational event for Christian faith, on the other hand, it is the most unbelievable event. We should meditate upon it every day, not just every Sunday. Blessed are the hearers and doers of the Word!

This week's devotion takes a look at how Luke describes what happened on resurrected day, when Jesus rouse from the dead, and how it helps us to understand what it means to be a Christian, what we as Christians (disciple) are supposed to do. Luke spends the entire chapter in his gospel account describing what happened on the third day. It is also good for us to see, how Jesus disciples were struggling to come to terms with what had just happened – **the resurrection**. Of course it was, and still is the most unbelievable event!

As Christians, we have nice conversations with non-Christians talking about what Jesus taught us, what a nice and loving person He is, and what a great example is provides for loving unconditionally. We can learn so much from Him. And people desire to understand it and they really do appreciate our witness: great principles for everyday living and wise counsels for dealing with the cahllenges of this world.

But, what happens when we want to talk about Jesus death and resurrection? Many people roll their eyes. Resurrection?! Some one dead come's back to life?! Like in a movie?! Wow! You poor Christians, really believe those ancient bible stories? Aren't you living in the 21st century? How could you still take seriously these bible fairy tales? Common! Grow up! Sure there are many good things to be saide about Christianity. But could you could get rid of these unbelievable stories about the resurrection of the dead and just begin to live following Jesus example. That would be great.

That is how non-Christians often perceive Christianity. That Christianity is basically a set of principles teaching how to be a good, moral person, but, it contains those ancient myth about the resurrection and miracles. These non-believers are right, partly. The Bible reveals God's wisdom. It reveals God's design for our lives, and when people try to live according to these guidelines, they flourish. That is how Christianity created the Western world. Living guided by the Creator's wisdom. If only you follow God's guidelines, God's commandments, it will make your life much, much better. It will make you wiser, it will prevent you from harming yourself and others, everyone wins. This is what people can understand. For this is about principles. About laws that govern our lives. But this is not what Christianity is about. The very essence of Christianity, the very heart of Christianity is the message of Jesus' resurrection.

This is what Christianity truly is. We are people of the risen Lord. Take it away and we are left with a set of nice principles, which we can only partly follow, because there is something basically wrong with us. Enter in the resurrection. How can we still believe it? Are we still as irrational as those early Christians, who believed that Jesus actually rouse from the dead? The answer is, yes, we are. Except, they, just as us, are not irrational. They understood the great truth of this world, even better than we do. To tell someone that a certain man has risen from the dead sounded to people at that time as irrational as it sounds to us today.

Look at how Luke described that day. First, women went to the tomb. They found it empty. Two men in dazzling cloth told them that Jesus has risen, as He Himself has foretold. As Jesus Himself had told it many times. Go and tell the other disciples! So they did. But for the disciples, "these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them." (Luke 24:11) For how could you believe that someone has risen form the dead, right?

Peter went to the tomb. It was empty. So "he went home marveling at what had happened." (Luke 24:12) Rember the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus joins them. They converse about what has happened to Jesus. They couldn't make sense of it. Some women, who went to the tomb, had told them that Jesus was alive, which obviously couldn't be true. Only when Jesus had explained to them from the Scriptures that this was exactly what had to happen, the eyes of these two disciples were opened and they recognized Him, the risen Jesus. So they went back to Jerusalem and shared it with others. Then, a little later, "Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

As we can see from Luke's account, all disciples, women and men, were strong believers – that there is no such a thing as the resurrection from the dead. They thought that such a thing is not possible. It didn't matter that Jesus had spoken about it before, again and again. It didn't matter that He had said that He will rise again on the third day. It didn't matter that the tomb was empty. It didn't matter that angels spoke to women and sent them to the disciples. It didn't matter that Peter had found the tomb empty. It didn't matter that Jesus had revealed Himself to the disciples at Emmaus.

When He shows up in their midst, they still couldn't believe. They thought He was a ghost. Jesus had to do everything to persuade them that that was Him. The same Jesus. Risen. Alive. Exactly as He promised. "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, it is I myself. Touch me, and see." "Have you anything here to eat?" Give it to me, and see, that's me, Jesus.

Then He reminded to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Thursday, 22 April 2021 & Friday, 23 April 2021

Jesus disciples were anything, but naïve when it came to believing the resurrection. We can see how hard it was for Jesus to persuade them. It is difficult to believe something that goes against everything you know and everything you have experienced. Later, Jesus' disciples, the apostles, sacrificed their lives testifying to others about their risen Lord. They didn't do it because they were such naïve people. They did it because they had seen Him. Because they had touched Him, because they had eaten together with the risen Jesus. They knew that as Jesus was risen, He will also raise them. And He will also raise you in new bodies, to be with Him forever.

Now, what does it mean for us as Christians? These words are the key. “It is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations. You are witnesses of these things.” You are witnesses of these things. This is what you are. Witnesses. It has very practical implication for our lives. You all are chosen by God. Think about it. That’s a rather big deal. That’s why you are here. God comes to bless you.

This is why John wrote: “Beloved, you are God’s children now, and what you will be has not yet appeared; but you know that when he appears you shall be like him, because you shall see him as he is.” (1John 3:2) What a wonderful words! You are God’s children, and there is so much more to come for you. So much more, that we can’t even comprehend it. But you can be sure that when Jesus Christ appears, you shall be like Him, because you will see Him as He is.

Whenever God calls someone, He calls them so that He can send them. He has called you to be with Him, but also to send you. To do what? To be His witnesses. What exactly does it mean? What does a witness do? They testify about what they have witnessed. We just read what Peter was preaching in the temple. He simply told what had happened and said: “To this we are witnesses.” (Act 3:15) Thus Peter said in every sermon.

What was Peter doing? Was he presenting some kind of a new teaching? Some new principles for better living? No! He was simply witnessing to what had happen. He was witnessing about the event of Jesus death and resurrection and it’s place in God’s plan for us. It is exactly what we are called to do, when we are sent to share the Good News about Jesus. We are not sent to share ourselves or to show that we are somehow better than others. There are so many moral people who have not yet come to Christ and there are many really broken people whom Christ has already called to Himself.

We are sent to be Jesus witnesses. Sure, none of us have seen the risen Jesus with our own eyes. But we have received these testimonies about Him, from those who were as skeptical as we could ever be. The risen Jesus overcame all their doubts, He made sure that they could fully experience the reality of His resurrection, so that there were no doubts left anymore. So that they could go and be Jesus’ witnesses, even if their lives were at stake. They called others to continue to witness, and they others, and others. That’s what the Church is. Jesus’ witnesses. That’s what it means to be a Christian. A Christian is someone who testifies about what the Triune God has done in our history. It is a very serious task. It means that we all need to know well what God has done in our history. We have to be able to witness as well as possible. For God uses us to call others to Himself, when they learn about Jesus Christ, about what He has done and is doing for us.

It means, we need to read, to study, to memorize, to meditate upon God’s message. To take it in, so that we can share when opportunity comes along. This is what it means to be a Christians. One who is Jesus’ witness. Now let’s do it. How? Each of you, think about a person, whom you know well enough, and who don’t know the truth about Jesus and His resurrection, and about the forgiveness and eternal life that is being offered to them in Jesus name. Choose someone. Pray so that the Holy Spirit would open for you an opportunity to witness them about Jesus Christ. Pray for God’s wisdom to do it well.

You can discuss with other how to do it. You can talk with Pastor Clarissa, lay servant speaker, Ms. Ellen Johnon, or other committed Believers who will be happy to help you with all that they know. Have this as your mission, for this is your mission. This is what God has called you to do. To witness about Christ. “That all has happened as it was written. That Christ suffered, rose from the dead, and now repentance and forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in His name to all nations.”

Jesus Christ has introduced this new reality. He is the predecessor of the new creation, the new heaven and new earth, where there is no more death, nor pain, only peace and joy in God’s presence. You are witnesses of all these things. Amen.

Saturday, 24 April 2021

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Where were Cleopas and another disciple going when Jesus appeared to them on the road?
2. Did they recognize Jesus at first?
3. What did Jesus explain to them?

4. When did the disciples recognize it was Jesus?
5. What happened next?
6. Who did the two disciples tell about this event?
7. What happened while they were explaining this to the other disciples?
8. How did Jesus prove to them that he was raised from the dead and not a ghost?
9. Which two of the 12 wasn't there when all this happened?
10. Did Thomas believe them - that Jesus appeared to them?
11. What did he say he needed to see before he believed?
12. How long did Jesus wait to appear to Thomas?
13. What miracle did Jesus repeat for Peter and some of the other disciples?

Talking to Our Heavenly Father - *If we have faith, our prayers will be answered.*

You're Not Alone, Let Us Pray with You & For You

- Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, prayers for successful upcoming surgery and containment of growth; Mr. Alan Kempf for strength as he's provided times of rest and refreshment; alankempf33@gmail.com; 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- Bro. Martin Martinelli, healing and restoration after open heart surgery and rehab after Ischemic stroke; 659 South 14th Ave. West Bend. WI 53095
- Mr. Ted Meilahn, restoration of strength and courage as he lives into his "new normal"; 1085 Fondu du Lac Ave., Box 23, Kewaskum, WI 53040
- Ms. Vivien Loomis, healing and strength after surgery; 1119 Schmidt Road, #1, West Bend, WI 53090
- Ms. Julia Stettler, strength and ability to meet the challenges and changes that will occur during the next few months; 107 Cedar Ridge Dr. #N313, West Bend, WI 53095
- 5th Avenue UMC's Laity, Laity Leadership, Pastor & Bro. Martin – Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.
- Bro. Bob Krell, continued prayer for healing; 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- The welfare and security of the United States of America and democracy itself.
- Mr. Roger Sacia, prayers for healing; Mrs. Nobi Sacia words of encouragement and prayers for healing; 502 Crocus Court, West Bend, WI 53095
- Ms. Nancy Whitson, healing and strength after hospitalization; 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- Mr. William (Bill) Hornung, in inpatient rehabilitation; Mrs. Ginger Hornung, strength and courage; W193 N16339 Lea Fon Circle, Jackson, WI 53037

Let us pray: Almighty God, we praise and thank you for making us children of God, not through our own power and piety but through our baptism into crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ. We turn daily to you, and in that turning we find peace, courage and purpose. Make your whole church a witness to the great good news of Christ's resurrection. God of the risen Jesus, hear our prayer.

Breathe your Spirit upon each of us;

your humble Pastor-servant leaders,

Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martin

Answers to study questions:

1(Emmaus); 2(no); 3(beginning in the Old Testament, he interpreted the Scriptures regarding the Messiah and his coming); 4(at the dinner table that night); 5(Jesus left them immediately); 5(the other disciples); 7(Jesus appeared to them all); 8(he ate with them); 9(Thomas and Judas); 10(no); 11(the wounds in Jesus' hands, feet, and side); 12(a week); 13 he helped them catch a miraculous catch of fish after they had been fishing all night and didn't catch anything)

