

Written Copy: Luke 24:38-44 “News that Just Keeps Getting Better”

3rd Sunday of Easter

Sunday, April 14th, 2024

Text: Luke 24:38-44

³⁸ And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them. ⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

The text’s intent

Set Jesus appearance to His disciples Easter evening in the context of the capstone revelation in a series of revelations about His appearing to followers throughout the day. He proves to them that He Himself indeed is resurrected body and soul who can be seen, touched, and who can eat. He shows them it is His body that was crucified which has been raised back up and glorified. He explains that all that has happened including His life, suffering and death, and His bodily resurrection is all part of the Father’s will and plan as laid out progressively in the Old Testament Scriptures of redemption and renewal of the perfection of Creation ruined by the Fall. He comes to make them His eyewitnesses who will share this wonderful Gospel news in Jerusalem and out into the rest of the world through the gift of the Holy Spirit whom He will give them soon on Pentecost.

Focus Statement:

Jesus comes to us with the witness of His bodily resurrection so we can know and have the hope of our own earthly bodies resurrected, restored, and made perfect to live in the restored Garden of Eden that will be the New Heaven and Earth. Jesus earned this for us as witnessed by the nail marks and spear wound from His suffering and death. He gives Himself to us as our atoning sacrifice in our baptism as He makes us precious children of the Heavenly Father who will be equipped on Resurrection Day to enjoy a perfect life with Him and one another forever.

Function Statement:

Why it’s important to know:

We sometimes devalue our earthly bodies as a precious gift from the Father since they get sick, grow old, and eventually die. Or we can overemphasize our love of our life now by keeping them as perfect as possible, losing sight of the joy and hope of our life with Him now and our resurrection to come.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Join with the Spirit’s ongoing work of restoring our souls and keeping us as God’s precious children so that we will enjoy the eternal paradise Christ won for us. Built up in this faith we are to be His eyewitnesses of the Spirit’s work of repentance to the world around us.

Subject Sentence: Jesus Resurrected Body witnesses our own

Introduction

There was once a man who had a day to be remembered forever, but not in a good way. He woke up only to discover he had lost power in the middle of the night and had overslept. He was already an hour late for work. He tried to call them to tell them he was on his way, but his cell phone didn't charge and was dead. He got ready as quickly as he could, with no hot water to shower with. As he went out to get in his car, he saw he had a flat tire. By the time he got the emergency spare put on and got to work he was now three hours late. His boss called him into the office and informed him that he missed an important meeting with a client that morning, causing the company to lose that client's business. His boss told him that since his client was gone, he might as well be gone too, and fired the man. As he drove home, wondering if the day could get any worse, he was rear-ended by a car that didn't stop for the light he was at, injuring him and sending him to the hospital by ambulance.

Maybe you've never had a day quite as bad as this man, but I'm sure you can relate to how sometimes the hits keep coming and misfortune piles upon misfortune.

But while this man was in the hospital things began to miraculously turn around for him. He got a call from his car insurance company that they had totaled his car. Because he had selected full coverage and was not at fault in the accident, they would pay him enough for him to buy a new car, one that was better than what he had. Right after he hung up the phone the doctor came into his room and told him that his injuries were not as bad as previously thought. He was expected to completely recover and should be able to return home tomorrow. No sooner had the doctor left than his sister called. He filled her in on the terrible day he had. She told him to cheer up, she had stopped by his house and the power was back on. And he had lost almost nothing in his fridge or freezer. After he had hung up the phone with her, his roommate, who had heard his tale of woe, asked him if he was looking for a job. When the man said yes, his roommate introduced himself as the owner of a company in competition with his former employer. The owner said he would like to hire the man. The amount he was willing to pay was almost double his original salary.

After bad news upon bad news upon bad news, now the opposite: good news upon good news upon good news. You've probably never had a day quite like that, with one blessing heaped up upon another. But imagine if you did. You would definitely feel joy and happiness. But maybe included in that would be wonder and amazement at all the blessings the Lord has poured out upon you. Perhaps you and I should feel like that every day no matter what else has gone on in our lives.

Jesus Unbelievable Appearance to the Disciples

The disciples in our Gospel Lesson have had experiences similar to each one of those stories all in a very short period of time.

They watched as their beloved Rabbi went from being welcomed as King by the crowd in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to being tried and convicted by the Religious Leaders for blasphemy, because He told the truth, that He indeed is God. They in turn convinced Pilate to sentence Him to the horrible suffering and death that is crucifixion, falsely charged with revolt against Caesar. They watched Him die on the cross, and with Him died their hopes and dreams of the new kingdom of the Jews. Now they hid behind locked doors fearing they would be the next ones to be put to death.

But then, they begin to hear some amazing news. It's so amazing that they cannot believe their ears. Three women of their group went to the tomb early that Sunday morning. They found no corpse, but instead found an angel who told them Jesus had risen from the dead! Then on their way back to Jerusalem they claimed that Jesus Himself met them! Of course they were imagining things! No one can raise himself from the dead, not even Jesus, could He? But then Peter shows up claiming that he himself met the risen Christ! Then two of Jesus followers joined the disciples in the room where they were gathered with their own amazing story. They claimed that headed out of town on the road to Emmaus they met and walked with a man who turned out to be the risen Christ! He explained to them that all that happened to Him was to fulfill what the Scriptures had prophesied about him.

This was a lot to take in, one amazing and impossible story after another. As they are discussing these things and trying to make sense of all this, Jesus Himself appears to them, right there, right in the midst of them in that room where the doors were locked. He just appeared, as if out of thin air.

What we have here in Luke's Gospel is the same Sunday evening account presented in John's Gospel last week, but with a different emphasis and from a different point of view. Here we see just how upset, fearful, and confused the disciples are at Jesus' appearance. They see Him standing there, or at least what looks like Him standing there. Except in their minds that just can't be possible. So just as they did another time when Jesus was doing what was humanly impossible; when He was walking on the water, here now they believe him to be a spirit, a ghost.

Jesus has come to them as more than a disembodied spirit, and it's important that they know that. Jesus has been resurrected body and soul, and He comes to prove that to them. He tells them to go ahead and verify it's Him resurrected using their eyes; see that He has a flesh and bones body just like they do. "Go ahead and touch me!" He tells them. And then He does something that no disembodied spirit ever could do: He eats. He comes to prove to them that He has been resurrected in the very body that He was crucified in. It is that body that has been raised up from death, glorified, never to die again. And the greatest proof of that is the nail marks in His feet and hands, and the mark of the sword on His side.

The Marks on His Body Speak to Our Spiritual Restoration

That these nail marks and wound from the soldier's sword are visible on Him are important for several reasons. First of all, they speak to the reason why He came and declared "Peace be to you" when they were all feeling the total opposite of Peace. These marks are proof positive that even though they sinned by abandoning Him in His hour of need, even though they denied Him and doubted that He rose again just as He told them He would, there is no wrath to be poured out on them. These marks are the witness that God's wrath has already been poured out upon Him in their place. He took their sin, their shame, their suffering, and their death. And not just theirs but took these things for all mankind. No one should ever suffer the wrath and punishment their sins earn for them, Jesus took care of that for all. He comes to these assembled in that room to declare them no longer just disciples, but to be those who, through faith, are declared to be precious children of the Heavenly Father.

Jesus came to them in the midst of their really bad story, when they were filled with guilt, shame, doubt, and disbelieving wonder, but He didn't leave them there. He first sent them witnesses to His resurrection, and then finally appeared to them in person. He breathed on them the Holy Spirit, giving to them the power and the Person by whom they would have and hold His resurrection and all that it meant for them the rest of their lives. He used all that had happened to them to increase their joy and wonder in His resurrection, and so they could see just how much everything has changed everything for them. There would be days ahead that produced more bad stories of hardship and struggle, sin and doubts. Jesus would soon ascend to the Father's side. But the Holy Spirit would never leave them. He would make their eyewitness testimony the power of God to change everything in the lives of others. Good news that just keeps getting better.

Jesus may not have come to you or me and show us personally His hands, feet, and side. Instead, He came to you in your baptism through the presence of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit takes the Apostles eyewitness testimony and makes it for you through the faith He creates in your heart. He came to you right where you were at, in the midst of all the bad news that this life has to offer all of us. He came to you in the midst of your sin, doubts, and worries. Through the eyewitness testimony of these Apostle's that we have in Scripture, the Spirit points to Jesus wounds as proof positive that God's wrath over your sinfulness has been dealt with. He comes to you today to be with you in the midst of all your bad news and struggles. He comes to use it all to keep you in repentant faith, to keep you always looking to Him, witnessing to you that despite how things may look sometimes you have been and are today declared to be precious child of God. He gave His life for you, and He's not about to let you go. Good news that just keeps getting better.

Marks Speak to Our Bodily Resurrection

But these marks on His body and the Apostles testimony to them speak to a much greater news, a much greater hope that is to come, one that we can sometimes lose sight of. That hope has to do with what happens when you die. Many hear and believe that there is a life to come, but as they approach that time of their death they begin to wonder and worry if they are good enough to make the cut. The marks on Jesus body and the witness of the Holy Spirit confirm in our hearts and minds that while in our lives lived out in this world our words and actions were never good enough to earn for us life in the hereafter, Jesus' words and actions and life was. Through your baptism He gave you His goodness, His perfection, and took from you anything and everything that would disqualify you from what God has in store for you.

But those marks also witness to something even greater, that life God will give you for eternity. Many inside and outside the Church think of "Heaven" as being "up there", in the clouds, behind the "Pearly Gates" where we and our loved ones who have gone before will live as "Cloud People" doing cloud bowling, or cloud golf or playing harps. If not the cloud imagery, many see that place we will go when we die as being "up there" and far away.

Jesus came to give us the witness that He was resurrected in the very body He was crucified in. That very body was raised and made new again, glorified, never to die again. And that is the witness and message He brings to you and me. When Resurrection Day comes, the very body that you have now is what will be raised from the grave. Your body that you have now is a precious gift from the Heavenly Father, as is your soul. Even though our sin and the brokenness of the fallen world takes its toll on it in the form of disease, cancer, sickness, and finally death, it is still a precious gift from Him.

Just because your body dies in this world doesn't mean our Lord is done with them, just as when your soul departs from your body at death the Lord isn't done with you. Your soul goes to rest comfortably in His presence, waiting for the most glorious day to come. On Resurrection day the Lord Jesus, returning in all His glory, will bring with Him your soul, as well as all the souls who have died in faith and have been resting in His presence. He will raise up your body from death, the very one you have now. And He will make it perfect. He will restore it to a state even better than your best day in this life. He will restore it to be what God always intended your life to be before sin worked its toll on it. You will be raised to a glorified and perfect body, with all the things that trouble and plague your life now gone forever. This body you have now will be recreated good enough and healthy enough to live forever.

Jesus will restore our physical bodies because He has something better in mind for us than a life lived as cloud people in a place far away. He has in mind a life lived here in the New Heaven and Earth. He will restore all Creation to its original pristine state before Adam and Eve fell into sin and dragged all Creation down with them. It will be life on here on earth, but it will be nothing like we've ever experienced. It will be a world where all the dysfunction is gone forever. No more natural disasters or extreme weather conditions. No more pollution. No more diseases and sicknesses. No more hatred, war, or crime. No more worries about the depletion of the ozone layer.

All things, all animals, and all of us people will live together in a peace and harmony that is beyond our understanding this side of eternity. We will all live together, including those loved ones of yours that have gone on before you who died in faith. They will be restored to us and us to them. And in those perfect glorified bodies we will enjoy God's gift of eternal life as He originally designed and created us to. And we will enjoy it in the real presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ whose death and bodily resurrection made it all possible. That is your future that He reveals and promises to you now in His bodily resurrection.

Conclusion

We will have those days on this earth when it seems bad news upon bad news keeps hitting us like huge waves on a beach slamming into us and knocking us over. But that greatest news, the Gospel Message, the Apostles' testimony of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is like great news upon great news that more than counteracts the bad. No matter how bad things are in this world, you and I have peace with the Creator and ruler of all things, and Jesus' death and resurrection is the proof of that. He blesses us with good gifts now that we sometimes lose sight of in the midst of the bad. He blesses us with His Spirit who is at work even now to keep us in faith, even working through the bad news that comes, so that our eyes remained focused on Jesus' death and resurrection as our truth for this life now, as well as the life to come. If He loved you enough to suffer and die for you, He's going to make sure He doesn't lose you in this life now. He will use everything that happens to you now to keep you in repentant faith to enjoy life everlasting with Him. Amen.