

The Third Sunday of Easter

Text: Luke 24:26-49

³⁶As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" ³⁷But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹See 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." ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate before them. ⁴⁴Then 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." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Theme: Is It too Good to Be True?

There are times in life when we experience something that is unimaginably good. We just can't believe that something this good is happening to me. It might be something small, like the day when you finally catch a foul ball at a Brewer's Game. It might be when your name is called for the big grand prize or something really big, such as a wedding or anniversary celebration. But imagine if you saw a loved one die a tragic death. You went to the funeral, and witnessed the burial. Then a couple of days later he is suddenly standing right in front of you. That would seem too good to be true.

I. The resurrection of Jesus was unbelievable to the disciples.

They witnessed the Lord's arrest, and they all ran. John was there to watch the Lord die on the cross. They all knew where He was buried. On Easter Sunday several people had already told them that they had seen Jesus, but who would believe such a thing?

Suddenly Jesus is standing among them. He greeted them with the words, "*Peace be with you.*" They were terrified and thought that he was a ghost. They couldn't believe that He had really risen from the dead. Jesus did many things to prove that He was really alive. He showed the wounds in His hands and His feet, which showed that He was crucified. He told them to touch Him to prove that He wasn't a ghost. When they still couldn't believe it, He asked for a piece of fish. He took it and ate it in front of them. It seemed too good to be true that Jesus was alive, but He proved to His disciples that He had really risen from the dead.

II. The Gospel is often seems almost too good for us to believe today.

Jesus says that repentance and the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations. When our consciences are burdened with guilt, this is a hard thing to believe. Thoughts keep reoccurring, "How could I have done that?" "How could I have been so stupid?" The hardest person to forgive is often ourselves. Those words, "Your sins are forgiven," often seem too good to be true. How could God and those whom I wronged forgive me for what I did?

Jesus' greeting, "Peace be with you," is also hard to believe. Did you ever have a time when you were worried and anxious? Other people told you to calm down. They told you that things will work out. You wanted to tell them, "That's easy for you to say." There are times in our lives when it is difficult to see the light at the end of the tunnel. How can we find any peace when our life is completely unravelling?

Jesus' resurrection is the assurance of our resurrection and eternal life. But in this world we grieve and mourn when we lose loved ones, even the strongest of Christian. Jesus Himself wept at the grave of His friend Lazarus. When our last hour comes, I have seen over and over how people fight for their last breath on this earth. We confess that we believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting, but we still feel a lot of grief when we remember our loved ones whom we have laid to rest.

III. There is only one way that we can have the peace and joy of the disciples of our text.

That is when Jesus opens our hearts. We call it the "peace that passes all understanding." In Eph. 3:19 Paul writes that the love of Christ is beyond our comprehension. We cannot grasp and believe in the love of God on our own. That is why Jesus opened the minds of the disciples that day, so that they finally understood the Scriptures. Paul also speaks of this when he writes in Ephesians 1:18 that he prays that God will open our hearts to know the hope that we have in Christ. God's love for us in Christ seems too good to be true, but the Holy Spirit is the Power from on high who opens our hearts and minds to believe the Gospel.

He gives us faith in two simple words, "**for me.**" We sing about that, "Chief of sinners,, though, I be, Jesus shed His blood **for me.**" We celebrate it in the Lord's Supper with the words, "Given and shed **for you** for the forgiveness of sins." When we are weak and struggling, we remember Jesus' words to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient **for you**, for My power is made perfect in weakness. " (2 Cor 12:9) Jesus promises, "In my Father's house are many rooms, 'I am going to prepare a place **for you.**" When Jesus returns, He will say, "Receive the Kingdom which is prepared **for you.**"

Those words "for you," invite each one of us to believe the Gospel, that Jesus came for me. In the *Small Catechism* Martin Luther writes about who is prepared to receive the Lord's Supper with these words, "**Fasting and bodily preparation are certainly fine outward training. But that person is truly worthy and well prepared, who has faith in these words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins."** But anyone who does not believe these words or doubts them is unworthy and unprepared, for the words "**for you**" require all hearts to believe.

God's love for us in Christ sometimes seems too good to be true, but Jesus is calling each of us to trust in His love for us. His death on the cross is the proof of how much God loves us, and His resurrection is the assurance that His love for us is forever sure. Don't think that it's too good to be true! Trust that Jesus died and rose for you, and He comes to you as your Savior today. Because He is risen, we have a sure and certain hope in Him. Amen.

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