
Luke 24:36-49. 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."

The Risen Lord Jesus Keeps the Easter Conversation Going.

- 1. The LORD Jesus stands among his disciples and adds his own special assurances.**
- 2. He stands among his disciples and deepens their understanding of Scripture.**
- 3. He stands among his disciples and promises to send them out to the nations with this saving message.**

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How long ago was Easter? It has only been a few weeks after Easter, but after visits with family and friends, maybe a trip or two, multiple April snowstorms, a canceled service, it sure seems like a long time since Easter. However, here we are again gathered before the cross and the empty tomb and it is already three weeks, 21 days after Easter. But here we are again still talking about the events of that day.

How long ago was Easter, that is, the first Easter? An educated estimation puts it at 1985 years ago, and so if you do the math, $1985 \times 365.4 \text{ days/year} + 21 \text{ days}$, that would come out to something like, 725,340. Divided by seven-day weeks we could say we are observing 103,620th Sunday after Easter. Now, there may be some holes in my math, but I would hope you get the point. The events of Easter are so significant, that we are still talking about that day, that week, that changed everything, even though it has been nearly two thousand years since that first Easter.

In our day to day lives we are trained to move on from even those things that are billed as big events. Birthdays, anniversaries, celebrations and milestone events are planned out and talked about for weeks, maybe even years, and then they are reached, but then we move on to the next thing. In our culture there are frequently events that are billed as big events, that take up our time and attention, but when they are done, we move on. For example: Who won the Super Bowl this

year? Even though it happened just a few months ago, it takes you awhile to remember, doesn't it? For weeks upon weeks this was the event that people around here were talking about. Hosted in Minneapolis it was the big story, the big event, and in the end, it turned out to be a pretty good game that some people in Philadelphia will be talking about for a while. (You can stop trying to remember who won, it was the Philadelphia Eagles.) But for many of us this news has been passed over as we move on to the next thing, or the next big story, or we move on to simply the little next thing that we have to take care of in our lives.

There is a temptation to do that with Easter, to just move on. The morning breaks upon the tomb, we get up early, we have our Easter breakfast, we get together with loved ones, we enjoy the festivities, the meals, the events, and the day might stretch into a week or so. But what now? Is it over? Do we move on?

Dear friends, Easter holds a message that is absolutely vital to our faith, to our lives, to our eternity; and therefore, to dwell on this message our whole life through is indeed good and right, and salutary. And so, it is, that the Risen Lord Jesus comes, and he keeps the Easter conversation going. As the Easter morning stretches into glorious day and then into the evening hours the LORD Jesus stands among his disciples and keeps the Easter conversation going as he adds his own special assurances. He stands among his disciples, and he opens their minds and deepens their understanding of Scripture. He stands among his disciples and promises to send them out with this saving message so that the Easter conversation would continue throughout all of time.

As Luke recounts the events of the resurrection of our Lord he stretches out the happenings of the glorious first Easter day across what we know to be Luke chapter 24. Luke begins this chapter by saying, "on the first day of the week, very early in the morning". And then he recounts how the women traveled to the tomb, the stone was rolled away, the angels proclaimed their message, Mary and the women delivered the news to the disciples. Peter got up and ran to the tomb and saw the strips of linen. And on that same day, Jesus would appear to Mary, to Peter, and two the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Luke recounts how those two disciples were having their conversation about all these things that happened in Jerusalem. And we hear how Jesus came to them and navigated their conversation through all of Scripture and opened the eyes of those disciples and set their hearts on fire with understanding of how Jesus had to come and die and rise again. And then, even though we know it was getting late in the day, we hear how those disciples, after they recognized Jesus went quickly on their way back those seven miles to Jerusalem to share this good news with the disciples. When the Emmaus disciples arrived, they found the disciples who were gathered in Jerusalem talking about how all these things were true. They were speaking about how Jesus had appeared just as he had promised to Simon. And these two, who had just come from Emmaus added their own account. That's where our lesson for today begins, with these words: ***"While they were still talking about this... Jesus himself stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'***

Jesus was there to make sure that Easter conversation, the conversation about his death and resurrection would continue with clarity and understanding. Maybe because it was now late in the day or even night they thought he was a spirit, a ghost. Because of all of this was so much to process, so much to take in, so wonderful, so significant, they were still struggling to understand, comprehend, and believe, even though he was right there among them. And so, he speaks to them with words of peace. He speaks to them not to scold them, but to challenge them with questions

that would grow their faith and that would move them from apprehension and doubt to confident belief. He says to them, ***“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?”***

As we come together, another week, after that first Easter, isn't it amazing that we are still talking about all those things that happened in Jerusalem so long ago? The sinful world around us would have us move on from this story, what they would call a fairy tale, a fable, a myth. The sinful flesh would have us get bored and leave all of this behind for 'more important things'. But Jesus, our Good Shepherd, in his great love comes to us today and continues that Easter conversation. He leads us to the living waters of the Word as he challenges any doubts that might rise in our minds he brings us peace and a deeper faith. These things happened just as the Scriptures had promised. These things are true just as the Word of God had foretold. The fact that so many are still talking about these events that happened so many years ago testifies to the sheer magnitude, the utter importance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is not merely history, or something that just happened a long time ago, but it has eternal significance.

And so, the Risen Lord comes, our Good Shepherd comes and he continues the Easter conversation, and as he does he pushes back on the doubts that creep into our hearts and then he reaches out with his added assurance and gathers us to himself with a personal touch. ***“Look at my hands”, “See my feet”*** he says. The flesh and blood that God bore for sinners, now bears the scars, the nail prints, that testified of his suffering for our sins. ***“See my hands, my feet”*** And then Jesus takes the time to show them. And hearts and minds that just a few hours ago were filled with such terrible grief were now filled with overwhelming joy and amazement, so much so that they still struggled to comprehend, to believe, this could be true. And so Jesus, in such a simple and meaningful way calms their fears and grows their faith as he asks for some food and eats in their presence. A flesh and blood Savior, the Jesus who lived perfectly among them, and ate with them, and taught them, and prayed with them, now stands among them, risen and alive and he is doing those same things once again. He stands among them so that they may understand and share this good news.

Through the power of the word he comes to us and gives us special assurances as well. The Word of God tells us that: Our Friend, our Savior, Our Redeemer lives. The Lamb of God has paid for our sins. We are peace with God. Jesus our Savior, our compassionate friend, desires to be a part of our lives. He promises his abiding presence, now and forever. Heaven is open to us. Death has been defeated. And the Good Shepherd is there to lead us through the dark valleys of life to the eternal pastures and the joys of heaven.

It is all included in this loaded conversation, that continues to this day, for it is was not just for those crowded together in that room or in Jerusalem, at that particular time. But this was the way of salvation that God had promised since the beginning. This is the way that the LORD would pay for our sins and would heal our broken relationship with God. This is the way that God brings sinners to an eternal paradise in the presence of a Holy God. This is the way that God had promised to Abraham (roughly 2000 years before Christ), and through Moses (1500 years before Christ), and in the words of David and the psalms (1000 years before Christ). This was just as God had promised some 700 years before through his prophet Isaiah. God promised that the suffering servant, our Savior Jesus would be pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment that brought us peace would be upon him, and by his wounds, we are healed. ***“See my hands, my feet.”*** Our crucified and risen Lord says to his disciples then and now.

With a personal touch he strengthens and grows our faith, as he continues that Easter conversation, as he opens the Scriptures to his disciples. As he does this he opens our minds each day, as he reminds us of how all of God's Holy Word fits together and hangs on his saving work, his death and resurrection. In this marvelous way, he comes to his disciples, he makes his presence known, and he continues the conversation that went back all the way throughout history, throughout Scripture, to the beginning. With a personal touch, with compassion and care for future generations, for you and for me, the Risen Lord keeps the Easter conversation going as he sees to it that this all-important message of his death and resurrection would be shared and talked about for all time as he sends out his disciples to be vessels of that message. 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.*** The promised Holy Spirit would come, and the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name by those first disciples and that message would go out to all nations. In his great love and care for us all Jesus sees to it that the Easter conversation would go out from Jerusalem, so that sinners, in Flora Twp and Danube, MN, some 1985 years, and 6400 miles away, would know and believe in their living Savior, who took on flesh, and suffered, and died, and rose again, to give us the undeserved gift of forgiveness of sins, to give us peace with God that goes beyond understanding, and with this living and enduring gospel that grows and strengthens faith.

And now here we are still talking about all these things that happened in Jerusalem so many years ago. Through the power of his Holy Spirit, working through the Word and the sacraments he makes his presence known among us in public worship. Here we are blessed with the opportunity to come together and learn how God's Word, Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms, and all of the New Testament points to this saving message through worship and Bible Study. And in his goodness and grace Jesus promises that where two or three are gathered together in his name there he is with us. And so, he blesses us with his presence and keeps the Easter conversation going in our homes as a husband and wife read God's Word together. As grandparents shares their faith with the grandkids, as a mother teaches her children, as a father leads a family devotion at the dinner table or as the kids settle in for bed - by God's grace the Easter conversation continues. And through his Word the risen LORD, our Good Shepherd, strengthens and grows our faith.

And so it is only right for us to ask how can we help? How can that conversation be shared among ourselves and with others? Can we invite a fellow member of the congregation over for dinner and include them in our family devotion around the dinner table? Can we invite that unchurched neighbor to Sunday worship or Bible Class? Can we pray and support local and world missions so that this Easter conversation continues throughout time and eternity and to the ends of the earth? I think these are all good and fitting questions for us as believers to ask, because one thing is for certain our Savior will see to it that he keeps this Easter conversation going, and he desires that his disciples, that we, would be a part of this enduring conversation.

How long has it been since Easter? The numbers will change each day but because of our Savior's great love for us we will continue to talk about these things for our Risen Lord dwells among us through his Word of peace. Praise Be to God! Alleluia! Amen!