

Luke 24:36-49

Easter 3; April 14 & 15, 2024

A man was walking along a railroad track on a very dark night when he came to a bridge. He had gotten halfway across on the bridge when he heard a train whistle up ahead. He began to walk faster, but soon could see the light of the oncoming locomotive approaching. With nowhere else to turn, he got down and lowered himself over the side, hanging onto the trestle as the train thundered past above him. However, after the train had passed, he found that he hadn't the strength to pull himself back up. He called out for help, but there was no answer. He hung there all night, terrified that he might slip and fall into the abyss below. As day broke, he looked down below him to see a drop of only six inches. His perspective had changed in the daylight.

Today, Luke writes the words of our text with a different perspective than the other three Gospel writers. Luke was a doctor, and a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. Luke was a non-Jewish author, making it the only Gospel with a Gentile writer. This unique background allowed Luke to approach the story of Jesus from a different cultural and historical vantage point. Luke was known for his meticulous research and attention to detail. Since he was a Gentile writer, he knew that his words would also be read by Gentiles. Therefore, Luke wanted to make sure that his Gentile readers to know that Jesus had come to this world for them as well.

It is Luke who gives us details that the other Gospel writers don't. Luke wants to make sure that his Gentile readers could trust the words that he would write. Luke says at the beginning of his Gospel: **"I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."** (Luke 1:3-4) It is Luke who traces the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam. It is Luke who gives us the account of the angel appearing to Zacharias and Mary. It is Luke who gives us the most details of Jesus' birth. It is Luke who challenges prejudices of people and calls for love and care for one's neighbor, regardless of their background. He is the one who records Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. It is Luke who tells the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus so that people would know that our getting into heaven has nothing to do with what we have; It has to do with faith in Jesus.

It is Luke who speaks of the visit of Jesus to Jerusalem at the age of 12. It is Luke who portrays Jesus the Savior of all. It is Luke who communicates that Jesus has come for people from diverse backgrounds, including Gentiles, women and social outcasts. The message of God's free grace and salvation are available to everyone, transcending cultural, social and religious boundaries. Therefore, it would be only fitting that Luke would add the event

The events of our text take place on Easter Sunday evening. You might even have recognized that these words of Jesus sound very familiar. Last Sunday, we heard John's account of the events of Easter Sunday evening. But it is Luke who is the only Gospel writer who gives us the details of the two disciples of Jesus on the road to Emmaus in the verses right before our text. It is hard to miss Luke's emphasis on the physical nature of Jesus' resurrection. It is also hard to ignore the disciples' difficulty believing what they saw.

As a doctor, Luke wanted his readers to know that Jesus was physically raised from the dead. Notice all the physical details he includes. It begins with Jesus' own words: **"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"** (verse 39). Then, Luke describes Jesus' actions: **"And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet."** **If simply hearing from Jesus and looking at His body were not enough, Luke goes on: "[Jesus] said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate before them"** (verses 41-43). Luke's message is clear. The body that had died was now alive once again – even a little bit hungry.

Our sins are completely and totally forgiven in the blood of Christ. Early last week, over 30 million Americans experienced a total solar eclipse in what was know as the *"path of totality."* Yet, even though we didn't live in the path, many of us were caught up in the excitement. We got our glasses. With them, we watched the eclipse happen. As we counted down the hours and then minutes until the eclipse, we found ourselves fixated on the word *"totality."* Why? We like that word *"total."* A total eclipse is, in fact, very absolute; those in its path experience a complete shift in reality in just a few seconds.

Outside of death, such instantaneous and total changes are rare in this life. Because, for the most part, change either takes time or it is the type of change we dread. Lose ten pounds, start a new career, find a spouse, move across the country: each of these has measurable progress over a period of time. Yet, we often experience many unwanted changes: broken relationships, health issues, pain and suffering. When change is quick, it is often those kinds of changes. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that the status of their sins had changed in that one moment on the cross. With his death, Jesus wants us to know that our sins are completely and totally forgiven. That is what Jesus wanted his disciples to know when he said to them: **“Peace be with you. “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 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.”**

If our sins are completely forgiven, that means our perspective of this life changes. It is the resurrection of Jesus that brings certainty into our lives. Luke knew how important that is – to keep our eyes on Jesus. For three years, Jesus told his disciples that he was here to forgive the sins of the world. He gave them promises like no one else. He promised them forgiveness. He promised them hope. He promised them peace. He backed up those promises with action. Think of how many miracles he did. Think of how many times he just had to say the words, and things began to happen. But the biggest action didn't happen until he came out of the grave. If Jesus' bones would turn to dust, then every single word that Jesus spoke would not be true. If you think about it, there is a lot riding on the Resurrection. Our whole eternity is at stake with the empty grave. If Jesus' words are not backed up with action, our faith goes right out of the window.

On that first Easter day, the disciples were so filled with fear and doubt behind those locked doors. The two disciples who had been on their way to Emmaus had just ran back to Jerusalem and told them a story that was hard for them to imagine being true. Jesus was alive. It seemed almost too good to be true. They wanted it to be true. Yet, they were startled and frightened. Jesus wanted his disciples to know the certainty of the Resurrection. Now it would be their turn to take that message out to the world. They didn't have to do this alone. He would give them the tools to accomplish that work. They had his word on it. Therefore, **“you are witnesses of these things.”** We are his witnesses as well. He's given us everything we need to accomplish that task.

Let's give thanks to God for changing our perspective with his death on the cross. The physical resurrection assures us that our sins are totally and completely forgiven. That changes our perspective for all eternity. May God grant it. Amen.