

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 26, a.D. 2009

Luke 24: 36 – 49

It must be a dream. It's too good to be true. If I didn't see it for myself, I don't know if I would believe it. These are the words and thoughts that pour through the battered minds of the disciples as they witness yet another appearance of the Risen Christ.

When Christ appeared in the middle of the huddled disciples and said, "Peace be with you," it was pure Gospel for them in that, the risen Jesus stands before them in the fullness of God's love. Jesus brought them the gift of everlasting life, salvation, and forgiveness, victory over death and keeps giving them these wonderful gifts.

Too good to be true. Maybe he's a ghost and we are just imagining that all this is true. It looks like the same Jesus. The disciples touched his resurrected body. Saw the scars where the nails of the cross, pierced him. They even saw him eat a piece of broiled fish. Not because he was hungry, but to prove to them that he was not a ghost. It was really he and not another.

For in heaven, there is no more hunger or thirst. He ate the fish for the sake of his disciples to show them that their master and Lord was here. Herein lies what was different about Jesus although it was the same Jesus. Same body, eats the same, yet he is back from the dead and can appear here and there, vanish from his tomb, show up in the middle of a locked room, simply because he wants to.

This is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. His scar-marked body, back from the grave now stands before his beloved to give them peace and hope in God.

Jesus thinks about his beloved and what they need the most. He knows what you need the most even when you are so confused and beaten down by life's worries that you cannot make any sense of your life, or if you are convinced you know what you need the most and it's not in line of what God says you need the most.

Jesus opens the mind so that his living words are believed. All holy Scripture points to him for he is the living Word of God that had to come to suffer and die and rise again so that repentance and forgiveness of sin will be proclaimed to the ends of the earth.

The death and resurrection of Jesus had to happen because God said so. But when it did happen at first, the disciples thought that it was the end of their Lord's life, the end of his ministry, the dashing of all their dreams and that all hope was lost. It did look that way. But faith is never founded upon sight. It comes from hearing. And now the disciples heard that the death and apparent defeat of their Lord on the cross is the very way that God dealt with their sin and was the exact way that God gives his kingdom of grace away to undeserving people.

If God's word is true about the death and resurrection of Jesus, then it proves that all of his words are true. And he still stands in our midst to give us the Father's gifts and the Father's kingdom.

Repentance and forgiveness is to be preached beginning in Jerusalem but taken to the ends of the earth. This Kingdom, this Lord is for the Jews first, but also for all people.

And so Luke's gospel comes to an end as it began. It is a message of repentance and forgiveness beginning with the birth of John the Baptist. John's message was for the Israelites and to return their hearts in repentance to God. Now the Gospel reach was to broaden from Jerusalem and touch the whole world with the scars of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus.

You too are witnesses of these things. All you saints of God, who are baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus, carry with you his death to sin and his new life, which is a hope of heaven to come. You are not afraid to confess your sins because Jesus stands before you with a message of peace and forgiveness.

This is true as this service began in confessing our sins on bended knee and receiving the peace of the risen Christ. "But our churches teach that private Absolution should be retained in the churches, although listing all sins is not necessary for Confession." Augsburg Confession Article 11.

The stranglehold that your worst sins have in choking out your hope of pleasing the Lord, is no match for the power of the risen Christ who sends you a pastor in his place, whose hand is placed on your grieving head and gives you the Lord's forgiveness

Too good to be true? No, Jesus is good and his words are true.
Peace be with you!