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St. Luke 24:36-47

The Peace Only Jesus Can Give

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St. Luke 24:36-47

Dear Friends in Christ,

Here's an insight you might want to consider - the author is unknown:

"Death seems to have a mysterious air about it. Some people fear it, others are ready to die...but not yet, and of course there are those who wish death would knock soon. The certainty that someday we will die and the mystery of how we will die generates fear.

"Publius (a member of the ancient Roman Consul) wrote in the first century B.C., 'The fear of death is more to be dreaded than death itself.' He had a point."

Has the coming process of dying and death ever hit you that way? You know, "I'm ready to die. I just don't want to go through it." For most it's surreal. Some insist there's *nothing on the other side*. And that might work - until a person has to face it and find they're in the "nothing on the other side" - and fully aware of it - forever!

I recall a news reporter saying of the present, "we're living in an upside down world." That's an understatement. We've entered what Jesus said would happen: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be (Mt.24:21)." We must pursue . . .

THE PEACE ONLY JESUS CAN GIVE

I. Peace.

Our text begins:

As they (i.e., the two Emmaus disciples who had earlier met with Jesus but were now meeting with the other disciple) were talking about these things (their experiences), Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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 (vv.36-39)."

What a powerful statement Jesus makes to these men: "Peace to you." This isn't peace with this world. Remember that three times Jesus informed them of His death and resurrection. All they heard was the "death" part. He prophesied they would deny Him. And then, those words of Peter: "Though they all fall away because of you, I never will...Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same (Mt.26:33-35)."

And we know the outcome: they all denied him and ran away. They deserved death and hell. Jesus gives them His peace; namely forgiveness of sin and eternal life and the promise to be with them in the midst of this world's tribulations. It's the love and forgiveness Jesus gives the heart broken by sin and guilt.

Recall these words of Jesus: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid (Jn.14:27)." What does the world really give? Hatred of Christ - war - lawlessness - growing antagonism toward those who value life, traditional family, decency. The world is obsessed with reducing everyone to total dependency on man's fallen wisdom. And look where this has brought us! It's always been this way.

Most everyone here is struggling with something personal, something that pulls at the heart. We can't ignore Jesus' words: "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world (Jn.26:33b)." Are any of us living in the delusion that human wisdom will make this a perfect world? Let's hold to this Word of God - tightly!

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil.4:4-7).

II. In His Word. vv.41-45

Our text goes on to report, "...he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and marveling, he 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." This was too good to be true. They disbelieved yet were filled with joy. "He ate before them in order to assure and strengthen them.

Do we understand this? We're told, "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 (vv.44,45).'" *The Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms* refers to the Old Testament Scriptures, the Word of God.

I'm thinking most everyone here is, and I would pray that all, are familiar with these words of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...(Jn. 1:1,14a)." Surely we understand this? *The Word was God and the Word became flesh.* The Word is Jesus which is underscored in the words of Thomas after he touched the resurrected Christ, "My Lord and my God. (Jn.20:28)."

Please keep all this in mind. I'm backing us up to the first meeting of Jesus with the two Emmaus disciples:

When he was at table with them, he took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Do we see? The Word made flesh spoke the Word. The Word opens eyes to see and know the love, forgiveness of sin and assurance of eternal life. He gives the visible Word of Baptism in which, as Peter declared, "Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sin and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)."

Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will guide you into all truth...he will take what is mine and declare it to you (Jn. 16:13)."

A little later Jesus prayed to His Father, "I do not ask for these only (the disciples who walked with Him) but also for those (including us) who will believe in me through their word [that's called the Scriptures) (Jn. 16:20)."

And then, in His Supper He gives us His body and blood for the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life.

Do we see and touch Him? We do. Again and again, we see and touch Him through the Means of Grace; the written and spoken Word and the visible word of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We touch Him and He touches us His with love and forgiveness!

III. Forgiveness. vv.46-48

...and (He) said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (vv.46-47).

Repentance. Luther's Small Catechism states, "Repentant believers are those who are sorry for their sins (contrition) and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior (faith)." As the Psalmist declares, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (51:17). Repentance is always there and receives the promise of forgiveness. David said, 'I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not cover up my iniquity; I said, ' I will confess my transgressions

to the Lord,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Ps. 32:5).” And it was John the Baptist God used to direct those who live in repentance, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance (Mt.3:8).”

We've listened to the tiresome charge that the traditional Church is boring - it's always the same old message and worship. But you know what? That criticism is absurdly boring! It's the same old world; the same news items reporting cruelty, brutality, intrigue, tragedy, perversion, gossip and slander with rare moments of something nice - the same promises of good things that quickly come and go.

And listen please: It's the same generational thinking that it has discovered something new and wonderful and will solve all problems. And yet, it's still the same worries, troubles, fears, dying, and death! The same cycle of living and dying. All of it is the result of sin! It's always the same old, “Things will get better!?” Really? For how long?

I'll take the same “old” Gospel message, if you don't mind. I want worship with confession and absolution, the reminder of sin and God's forgiveness - worship packed with Scripture, and I want hymns that speak and teach the Word - Jesus - that the Gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes in Christ - **The Peace Only Jesus Can Give!** The peace that opens the door to Everlasting Life in Christ!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott