

*April 15, 2018*

*St. Luke 24:36-49:*

***“Joy in Repentance for the  
Forgiveness of Sins”***

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In our Gospel lesson for this morning, we are told that the resurrected Jesus interrupted the disciples while they were gathered together to talk about the events that had happened on the very day when the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead. Now think about that for a moment. Peter had seen Jesus and he was amazed. Two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus had seen Jesus, and they marveled. And now, all of the sudden, Jesus is standing right in front of his disciples. "Peace Be With You!" Jesus says. We are told that "they still disbelieved for joy."

It is a fascinating expression, but before we get to it, let's go a little further. Can you imagine what it would be like to see a deceased loved one back from the dead? I think back to people who have meant a lot to me, and I try to imagine what would be going on through my mind if one of them came back from the dead. I mean death is final down here. The resurrection of someone has never happened to any of us. I suspect that like the disciples we would be "startled and frightened." I think I would start to slowly but surely back up. We would probably question if it was really happening.

The closest way I can get to the feeling is that I have had extremely vivid dreams where I am with a deceased loved one and I am overjoyed until I realize in the course of the dream: "Hey, wait a minute, that person is dead." Every time I have had a dream like that I wake up immediately with a knot in my stomach, tears in my eyes, and a joy for at least having had the experience of seeing them as I remember them, even hearing their voices as they sounded in life. But, I quickly realize it isn't so. That's a real downer.

Well, there is certainly a difference between a vivid dream and being wide awake as the disciples of Christ were. Also, a dream is an individual thing. This was not a vivid dream, but a group experience for the disciples who were chosen to be there. It doesn't say in the text, but I imagine they started looking at each other to see if everyone was seeing the same exact thing. Luke records:

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." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were 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.

The first thing that Jesus did was to prove that he was not merely a spirit. He is no spirit being walking around without a body. Christ has risen from the dead and is standing right in front of them and speaking.

So, what does it mean that "they still disbelieved for joy?" To begin with, they are so overwhelmed with emotion that they can hardly wrap their minds around the reality of what is right in front of them. Not only that, but we are to further understand that a high powered emotion that does not grasp the historical happening, with a proper interpretation of that historical happening, and what it all finally means for the

person receiving it, is insufficient for faith (certainty). We have the expression: "He or she was caught up in the moment," or we might say, "He or she was caught up in the emotion of the thing." Blind emotions do not lay the proper groundwork for faith. Much more is involved in certainty other than what we may or may not feel in any given moment. Besides, we all know how our emotions can shift like the sand. In the course of day we can go up and down like a yo-yo.

Scripturally speaking, faith is the movement of the Holy Spirit who sets before us and convicts us of the truth of an historical fact in Jesus, and how that historical fact pertains to us. There is **Joy in Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins**. The historical fact of the death and resurrection of Christ is a changing fact when the Holy Spirit touches us personally with his death and resurrection so that we die and rise with him in repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus offers proof to the disciples that he is bodily present as he eats a piece of broiled fish so that they may begin dealing with their faulty conclusions. We are blessed to see through their eyes in the Biblical record. The disciples are wrong to assume that this is merely a spirit before their eyes. This is without a doubt real, and it should be real to us through what is recorded. How then does Jesus further deal with their disbelief for joy and turn it in to a **Joy in Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins**? Luke writes:

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." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And 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."

As you can see, pure emotional disbelieving joy doesn't cut it. Their minds had to be opened in order to understand the Scriptures. Only in the purpose given in Scripture will they know and believe what all of this means for them. Jesus takes them to the testimony of the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms so that they might know, understand, and believe. The Old Testament is all about Jesus, and here he is - The embodiment of the Old Testament standing right in front of them - the law and gospel.

What has happened is the fulfillment of the old covenant and very real, but it is real for them personally and collectively with the words of Scripture. With that, Jesus states the bottom line. The suffering of Christ and his resurrection from the dead on the third day had to be and is for repentance and the forgiveness of sins, and furthermore, for the proclamation of his saving name to all nations. That's you and me! The testimony of the Old Testament and the eye witness testimony of the apostles in the New Testament will grant the necessary believing joy for us as well - the **Joy of Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins**. In John 15, Jesus says in the context of the parable of the vine and the branches: "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

The joy of Jesus is in his death and resurrection and is given to us (Hebrews 12:2). He tells us the truth, a truth that is always connected to his death and resurrection for our repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Connected to the vine, who is Jesus, there is this communication of his joy that may be in us - that through his death and resurrection we might have everlasting life. This is the **Joy of Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins** - a real, believing joy that bears fruit. We did not chose him, but he chose us, Jesus says in the vine and branches - appointing first the disciples to believe and bear fruit, and through their message we believe and bear fruit with them. And, there is no greater fruit that we can possibly bear other than to take the believing joy that has been given to us and give it to others. It is no wonder then why John writes the way he does in his first epistle:

the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us - that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete (1 John 1:1-4).

Whatever might be disbelieving joy in us, our Jesus deals with by the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes in the testimony of the Old Testament and the testimony of all those who in the New Testament saw the resurrected Lord and wrote down his words for us. In these words, we die and rise in him for the forgiveness of sins and we rejoice.

What a precious gift it is that our minds have been opened to the Scriptures! And, even though he doesn't stand in front of us and eat, he nevertheless appears to us in the Supper. Through the eyes of faith we see our resurrected Lord and the life he gives. He proclaims his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins. The resurrection of Jesus is for our believing joy. He who is dead is alive! At the Lamb's high feast, on this side of eternity, our Lord Jesus says, "Peace be with you!" And that is no vivid dream or fantasy. It's as real as it gets until we see him face to face. Until then, John writes in our epistle lesson: "And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." Such is the **Joy of Repentance for the Forgiveness of Sins!**

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott