

April 22, 2012
Easter 3

"Overwhelming Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection"

LUKE 24: 36-49

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."

"While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'" The room in which the disciples were hiding for fear of the Jews is buzzing with conversation. The two disciples on the road to Emmaus have just burst into the room with the report that they had been with Jesus and they told how he opened the Scriptures to them. Peter has just seen Jesus personally and received the assurance that his sin of cursing and swearing that he never knew Jesus was now forgiven. The women have come with the report that they had seen angels at the tomb telling them Jesus was alive. Mary Magdalene first reported that they had stolen the body of Jesus and now she reports that she has personally seen Jesus and talked with him.

These disciples were using the God given gift of speaking and hearing to communicate with each other about these amazing reports that were coming in. All the evidence is pointing to the fact that Jesus is really alive. These are not stories and this is not just an illusion created by some evil spirit to further torment them.

I once visited one of my dad's cousins who shared with me something that was bothering him. I can still hear him say, "Steve, we do not talk enough about Jesus' resurrection from the dead." The Lord allows us to use the gift of speech and the gift of hearing to communicate with each other, but how much do we actually speak about the greatest event in the history of the world, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead? Read the book of Acts and note how often the early Apostles used their voices to boldly witness to Jesus' death and his resurrection.

Where did the disciples get the power to boldly witness to Jesus' resurrection? It came from

Jesus. On the night of his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples and overwhelmed them with the evidence of his resurrection. He tells them, "You are witnesses of these things." Jesus tells us in Luke 6 that from the overflow or abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. When your heart is bursting with confidence and joy that Jesus is alive, it will result in the mouth fearlessly expressing this most important truth. Let's listen and watch as Jesus overwhelms the disciples with the evidence for his resurrection to prepare them for their important job of witnessing to people throughout the world.

The words of peace

Jesus suddenly appears in the room where the disciples were talking about these things and says, "Peace be to you." They were not at peace as they talked about the possibility that Jesus was alive. They had been unfaithful to Jesus and they had to be concerned that he would not take them back and accept them because they had been so weak in their faith. Jesus comes into their midst and says, "Peace be to you."

The night before he died Jesus told his disciples he had a peace to offer them that this world could not give. The world tells us that we can have greater peace in our lives if we learn how to get along better with other people. That's true, but we aren't always very good at this are we? The world even tells us that if we get along better with people, then God will love us and bless us. The Jewish faith blatantly says that if you make amends with someone on the Day of Atonement then God will love you and forgive you and accept you. The world says we can find greater peace in having more money and more things to entertain us. Jesus says, "Look at my hands. Look at the nail prints. Look at how you I have paid the full price for your sins. Peace be to you."

Oh, how much we need Jesus to come into our lives every day and say to us, "Peace be to you." In doing research for this sermon, I ran across a sermon where the pastor said, "Someone has estimated that on the average we commit 12 sins daily. Let's do the math. 12 sins a day times 365 days in the year for an average life span of 70 years. That's 306,600- more than a quarter of a million." I wonder who that person was that estimated we only sin 12 times per day. If we think of only the really bad things we do maybe it is only twelve, but what of all the secret sins that often go unnoticed, and then all the things we fail to when we have the opportunity. As the hymns says, "Foul and full of sin I am, I am all unrighteousness." Our ears listen to risen Savior speak to us, "Peace be to you." We never grow tired of hearing these words, and seeing the nail marks in the hands of Jesus.

The glorified body

It says that the disciples were startled and frightened when Jesus suddenly appeared to them. They thought they were seeing a ghost. A solid can go through a gas and a solid can go through a liquid, but a solid cannot go through another solid the way Jesus did. He suddenly appears to them. Under the glow of lamplight, they think they have seen a ghost.

Jesus joyfully calms their fears. "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. Touch me and see, a ghost does not have flesh

and bones as I have.” Do some people believe in ghosts and spirits? I think they do. Remember the movie “Ghost” starring the late Patrick Swayze. This film is now in the form of a musical that is opening up on Broadway this month. Ghostly pirates come back to life in the movies “Pirates of the Caribbean.” People speak of “grandma” with us in the room at Thanksgiving. You get the impression the disciples have been talking about the possibility that Jesus resurrection is an illusion, a terrible illusion, or even an evil spirit.

Jesus counters all this ghost talk with the words, “A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.” He allows them the privilege of touching his body, his glorified human body, with real skin, and real hair, and a real smile that reflect the oh so familiar love of Jesus. Later John would write, “That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched- this we proclaim to you the eternal life.” Jesus even asks for something to eat to help them because the disciples were overwhelmed with joy and amazement. They gave him a piece of broiled fish and he took it and ate it in their presence. Ghosts don’t eat fish. Ghosts don’t have flesh and blood as Jesus did.

Before you are too critical of these disciples for even thinking that Jesus might be an illusion, recall how Jesus warned his disciples that in the last day there will be false christs going out into the world. Satan has amazing power and cunning to take our minds off of Jesus and make him less than he really is or even offer substitutes for Jesus. In the hard days of life he has a way of blowing up our problems and pushing Jesus’ resurrection into the back ground. He did that with Job for awhile, until Job was able to see his risen Lord and proclaim boldly, “I know that my Redeemer lives.”

How did Adam respond when the Lord brought Eve to him? He said “This now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” Eve was no illusion, no dream too good to be true. She was real with real flesh and blood and real hair and skin just as Adam was. So it was with Jesus. He has our bones, and our flesh, and our skin and our hair with a glorified body. The arms of the shepherd that hold you tight are real arms that will let nothing pluck you from his hands. Jesus said “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” The body of Jesus that you see with your eyes of faith is real, more real than anything you see with physical eyes.

Scripture fulfilled

To make the resurrection even more real Jesus takes his disciples on a journey through the Old Testament Scriptures just as he had done with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. “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 and the Prophets and Psalms.’” Then Jesus opened their hearts and minds to see from the Old Testament how he had to die on the cross and rise from the dead to provide forgiveness of sin.

Oh what a powerful witness we have to Jesus death and resurrection in the Old Testament prophets! Can you not hear our Lord Jesus joyfully quote from the words of Isaiah 53 to show these disciples why he had to suffer on the cross? “We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of

us all.” Can’t you hear Jesus open up Psalm 22 that describes the agony of the crucifixion, “Dogs have surround me; a band of evil man has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.” Did Jesus only point to verses that spoke of his crucifixion? No, he told them verses which spoke of his resurrection. From Isaiah 53, “He shall see the light of life.” Psalm 16, “Because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” The disciples in that closed room experienced what the disciples did on the road to Emmaus, “Were not our hearts burning within us when he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

The skeptic asks, “How can I know the Bible is true? How do I know for sure that Jesus rose from the dead? The Christian is privileged to point the skeptic to Old Testament Scriptures that speak of Jesus death and resurrection and birth and eternal kingdom long before it happens. The Old Testament Scriptures are powerful forensic evidence that Jesus death and resurrection are real for us and not just some legend or nice story that followers of Jesus made up and put into the pages of the Bible.

Help from the Holy Spirit

How do we take what is so real to us and share it with other people who do not believe? Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit. He told his disciples, “You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” “Steve we just don’t talk enough about the resurrection.” What a blessing it is to have the Holy Spirit help us witness to what we have seen and heard from our Risen Lord. Amen.