

“A Historic Moment”
Luke 24:36-49
Third Sunday of Easter
April 18, 2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text, the Gospel reading, which begins, “As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Last week, we considered John’s account of the risen Jesus coming to his disciples in the Upper Room on Easter night. Today, we consider the *exact same moment* as recorded by Luke. I can’t think of any other place in our three-year Scripture Reading cycle in which the same exact event is meditated upon two Sundays in a row. There are occasions in which the same event is broken up into subsequent readings (later this summer, we’ll hear three consecutive weeks from John 6, but subsequent verses, as we progress through that monologue). But not with the birth of Christ, nor the death of Christ, nor even the resurrection itself do we have consecutive Sundays highlighting exactly the same conversation.

But it’s fitting that we meditate upon this encounter two Sundays in a row because such focus exemplifies just how monumental, how historic, this moment is. It’s sort of ironic, that on this April 18th, which marks the 500th anniversary of one of the most significant events in Lutheran history, Luther’s inspiring “Here I

Stand” confession at the Diet of Worms, the text that bumps that from the sermon headlines is a re-run (!) of the first ‘group’ interaction (church assembly) between God and His Church in the restored unity flowing from the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Think of the remarkable nature of this event: this is the first time in the sealed New Testament that God interacts with His Church in full... not just a few frightened women, or two downtrodden disciples, but the gathered assembly, no matter how small and even if missing Thomas... nevertheless, here is God (the risen Christ) appearing to and abiding with His Church for the first time in a restoration and peace not known between God and man since before the Fall, not known since the perfection of Eden!

So then, the perfectly chosen greeting of the most divine import: “Peace to you.” This isn’t merely Jesus wishing a ‘peaceful feeling’ upon them. This is bestowal of objective peace, unknown by any human since Adam and Eve. It’s an objective peace heralded by the angels at the birth of Christ in anticipation of the crucifixion to come: “Peace on earth, good will to men.” But now, it’s a peace accomplished for all and individually bestowed upon the infant Church: “Peace to you.” And, if it’s for the Church, then it’s equally individually bestowed upon you as well.

And that’s an objective peace you need, the disciples needed. For, recall, they had been at a complete loss and in despondency. In fact, the first words of our text – “As they were

talking about these things” – *what* things? They were talking about Jesus appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (that’s the account in the previous verses that lead up to the disciples “talking about these things”)... and, recall how those two disciples had been at a complete loss, empty, hollow, without hope. How often we focus on *Thomas’* doubt; but *Thomas’* doubt is one of rationalism that can’t comprehend the supernatural news of the new creation. But, the disciples on the road to Emmaus – their doubt was *despair*. Their doubt was *despondency*. Their doubt was whether the Old Testament led to a dead-end faith: “The one we thought would redeem us is dead and gone. Now what?! Our hope is lost! Our Scriptures are meaningless! Our faith was in vain!”

That’s how you think in daily life, too, isn’t it? Not necessarily that you voice it that way. You usually voice it as, “Is there any reason to believe in God? Any purpose for suffering when, if I renounce the faith, I could have immediate satisfaction like those around me? Is life vanity? Is eternal life a myth? Is there any end to our misery? Any hope beyond this pandemic or the frustration of American politics or the cultural insanity of re-defining male and female?” And, all of those *felt needs* for peace in the heart (all of that *dialoguing* of the heart, as the Greek says it)... it’s answered by the one truth that objectively brings peace between God and man, that brings forgiveness, salvation, and thus *true life*. And if, in that one Christ, there is objectively – in the heavens – peace and renewed

unity between God and man, then the Church may live in faith, in confidence, in certainty regarding all those felt needs (subjective peace): “Yes, there is reason to believe in God. Yes, there is a better end to our suffering. Yes, life has meaning. Yes, eternal life is our true destination. Yes, there is an end to our misery. Yes, there is hope beyond a pandemic, America’s political suicide, and the foolish wisdom of redefining sexual beings! And my certainty in all of that is Christ’s resurrection. I can live my life in peace not because I have a vaccine or wear a mask or vote for the winning party or pretend that boys are girls and girls are boys. I can live my life in peace because Christ is risen, just as he said... and, with his resurrection, renewed unity between God and man, the pre-fall Eden, objective peace.” Indeed, “Peace to you.”

Now, to confirm all this, Jesus says, “See my hands and feet.” Think on this: the risen Jesus is not in the process of healing. He is the firstborn from the dead; the firstfruits of the resurrection. His body has put on immortality and incorruption and already on that first Easter night he is clothed in, arrayed in, the new creation. His body is more holy and pure than that which Adam was in Genesis 1 and 2.

Thus, he bears the marks *willingly, voluntarily*... not because he’s in the process of healing and moving beyond them, but because in his holiness and purity he always joyfully maintains them. They are permanent and forever marks of your salvation... that every time you

come to him in repentance and he extends his hands to embrace, you may have certainty that he remembers his atoning sacrifice and is faithful and just to forgive your sins. Your salvation is eternally guaranteed because those marks are eternally his: “In the midst of the throne, the Lamb standing *as though he had been slain*,” Revelation tells us. You never need doubt your salvation, for your flesh-and-blood Savior (remember talking about *that* last week)... your flesh-and-blood Savior willingly forever bears the marks of supernatural salvation – a salvation beyond the grasp of *fallen* man – but the achievement of the perfect God-man and therefore the objective peace of eternal life for all who place their sins and hopes at the feet of the crucified and risen Christ Jesus.

And, while this is so marvelous so that – like the ladies at the empty tomb – the disciples and we still doubt and disbelieve at something that seems too good to be true, while still unwilling to risk everything on this risen Jesus, lest we have misunderstood the Scriptures and the promises of God – “Maybe I still need to do my share...earn my part... please God unto salvation” – knowing their inability to put all the pieces together, Jesus says, “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.”

Now, as incredible as is the news of the empty tomb, equally incredible is this statement... and we appreciate this when highlighting three distinct details:

1. He says the entire Old Testament is about Him – the Law of Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms – that’s the entirety of the Scriptures to that point in time. And, he says, “everything written about *me*.”
2. He claims an authoritative word to interpret all of Scripture. He says, “These are my words that I spoke to you... that everything written about me in [the Scriptures] must be fulfilled.” Notice that: “These are my words I spoke” – He says His word is to be remembered just as much as, indeed in defining fashion over – the Old Testament. It’s as if he says, “These are the New Scriptures – my word – and they define the Old Scriptures.” Indeed, friends, from the mouth of Jesus himself you have the chief principle of interpreting the Old Testament – every time you read it, you must see that the Old Testament points to Him and that He has authority over it. We do not hold the Old Testament to be the Scriptures just because “we believe it is” (as if it dropped from heaven), but because the Lord of Life says that it is the Scriptures and says that these Scriptures speak of Him. That’s what he says – in the Old Testament is hidden the New, and by the authority of the New Testament is revealed the true meaning

of the Old. And where is the transition moment between those two eternal testaments? That's the third point to highlight:

3. Jesus himself says, "These are the words I spoke *while I was still with you.*" Things are different now. "It is finished." The cross is perfected history with everlasting result and benefit. Christ is risen: The tomb stands empty and death's power is vanquished. Jesus now resides in the New Creation and, thus, as that resurrection and New Creation is our inheritance, the disciples now live in the New Testament. "While I was with you," Jesus hints... He no longer is: "Where I am going you cannot now come, but I will send another – the Comforter – to bring you into all truth... and I will come again and take you unto Myself, that where I am, you may be also."

Isn't that what he now opens their mind to understand: "Then he opened their mind to understand the Scriptures." ... the Scriptures that all point to Him, the Scriptures that promise them the inheritance of the New Testament, the Scriptures that – spoken for our hearing – bring faith by the Word of Christ, the Scriptures that now stand fulfilled with eyewitness testimony.

That's what Jesus says next: "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." – that's what the Old

Testament Scriptures promise – from Eden, through the prophets, unto John the Baptist. And now, Jesus opens their mind to understand, “You are witnesses of these things.” In other words, “You are witnesses that the Old Testament has been fulfilled. The Messianic mission has been completed. The New Testament has been sealed with my blood, and the New Creation is coming to pass... indeed, its “unlocking” – the repentance and forgiveness of sins – is even now to be preached to all nations, and (Jesus says to the Eleven) you are the ones to begin carrying the benefits of the cross to the nations.”

In fact, to “all nations” – the same phrase used in Matthew 28: “Going, therefore, make disciples of all nations” – bringing them into a divine testament of unity with God, that unity between God and Man that is now tangibly in realtime – for the first time since pre-Fall Eden – that unity that is in flesh-and-blood reality in that Upper Room as Jesus – in perfect glory – stands with pierced hands and feet, showcasing the completed Messianic mission.

Consider how important it is that you have eyewitness records, as confirmed by Jesus’ own word. What did the disciples on the road to Emmaus have? An Old Testament having fallen silent some 400 years before, briefly rekindled in hope, now suddenly seeming to be without fulfillment? What did the women going to the tomb have? The burial spices of bitter disappointment and grief? They had no gospel accounts... no record to put all the pieces

together. *They* had reason to doubt! But you have the entire record – start to finish – because of the eyewitnesses who recorded these things.

And you also have Jesus' own word that his resurrection is not the 'endgame.' His own resurrection is not the 'goal.' Rather, your share in his resurrection is the goal He has for His Church. And, thus, he already – on this very first night of his resurrection – he already has Pentecost and the pouring of the Holy Spirit and the public 'birth' of His Church and the pouring out of baptism and the devotion of fellowship in the breaking of the bread (the Sacrament of the Altar) ... *that* is already what He had in mind on that very first night of his resurrection, when he says, "Behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you (isn't that the promise of the New Testament, brought to mind by the power of the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament)... I am sending the promise of my Father upon you, but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." In other words, "Stay in the city until I act. And, when I act, the New Testament sealed with my blood will be poured out upon my Church."

Look around you, friends. Look at the 2000 years around you. Font, Pulpit, Altar... here they stand before the eyes of all of history. Here is the risen Christ for you... just as He spoke while he was still with them, just as his hands and feet still today promise and His Word and Sacrament still pour forth. It's in that promise of renewed

unity with God you can stand certain... both in objective peace and, thus, also in subjective feelings of peace.

Even if – for the first time in 1700 years –society has so rejected the Gospel that the western world rages against the Church, we nevertheless have the Word of Christ Jesus and the certainty of the New Testament – not like the two forlorn disciples on the road to Emmaus – not like the fearful disciples in the Upper Room wondering whether their hopes were in vain... ours is the certainty of Luther, who -standing on the foundation of Christ Jesus (with the same eyewitness Gospel record of Jesus that *you* have)- Luther could say before the world’s most powerful enemies: “My conscience is captive to the Word of God... Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me.” Or, as the joyous Easter hymn says it,

“The world against me rages, its fury I disdain;
 Though bitter war it wages, its work is all in vain.
 My heart from care is free,
 No trouble troubles me.
 Misfortune now is play, and night is bright as day.” (LSB, 467, 5)

In the Name of the Father
 And of the Son
 And of the Holy Spirit.
 + AMEN +

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