

Scripture Reading:

Luke 24:31 "Then their eyes were opened and they knew [Jesus]; and He vanished from their sight. 32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" 33 So they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread. 36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." 37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." 40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. 41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" 42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. 43 And He took it and ate in their presence."

"The Disciples Are Troubled"

From the sound of the title, some may think this is NOT going to be a very uplifting sermon! Actually I hope that just the opposite will be true: It is at the very time that the disciples are troubled that our Savior comes to ask 'why are you troubled' and to give them great comfort.

- Comfort that should be ours today as well!

For those who have been with us from the beginning of our journey through Luke's orderly account for his friend Theophilus, we are nearly to the end of the Gospel portion and I believe this is the 100th sermon in the series.

- I could have combined this week and next to make it an even hundred, but this portion is very rich and timely for where many are at today
- So we will take our time, and Lord-willing next week will bring the final message from Luke's Gospel.

As Jesus comes to meet with His gathered disciples we should again review what Luke is explaining to his friend in this orderly account?

- Jesus has come to save His people from their sins

He has left His throne to become a man and submit Himself to the shame and suffering of being the one great sacrifice for sin

- Jesus has come to establish His Church with these chosen people who will be His body; His bride.

Jesus has promised to be their shepherd & to send the Comforter as we see in the early chapters of Acts

- The Kingdom of Jesus is going to fill the whole earth as He reigns from His Father's right hand

It is the Church that will carry out this mission as they obey the great commission Jesus gives them before ascending to His Father...

- Words that we read often here at Church of the King, remembering our marching orders:

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." [Matt. 28:18-20]

Now it is important to review and remember all of this because it sets the context of this first post-resurrection meeting of Jesus with His disciples. Jesus has now accomplished the first task, crying it is finished on the cross and confirming His victory in the power of His resurrection. Now He gathers His church and teaches them the lesson Peter and the other two disciples experienced earlier in the day:

- Jesus has won the victory: All is forgiven

The disciples are rebuked for unbelief regarding the witnesses who had brought the Good News, but not a word is said about all their failings of the past few days...

- J. C. Ryle put it well in his commentary on Luke’s Gospel: “[Jesus] ‘delighteth in mercy.’ He is far more willing to forgive than men are to be forgiven, and far more ready to pardon than men are to be pardoned.”
- Jesus comes to them and says, Peace to you!

Many take this as the normal greeting of the day the way we might say ‘good morning’ or ‘I hope all is well’ However, I think it is much more:

- This is Jesus greeting His new Church with peace from God as we see the Saints greeted over & over again in the New Testament...

In Romans, Paul sends this greeting: “To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul gives the exact same greetings in both letters to the Church at Corinth: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The brothers at Corinth had more than their share of problems and the Saints at Galatia were toying with heresy, and yet in all THREE letters addressed to these Saints, Paul says, “Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ”

In Ephesians we read again, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

To the Philippians Paul writes, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The letter to the church at Colossi begins with these words, “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

It is here in the first chapter of Colossians, that Paul more fully explains why this peace from God is much more than just ‘peace’ [*showing the peace sign*] that we might use today...

Col 1:19 “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled.”

- **Jesus is going to calm the troubled hearts of these disciples by showing them they have forgiveness and reconciliation in Him!**

Paul continues the pattern with his letter to the Thessalonians: “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Repeating these words in the 2nd Epistle: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul begins the letter to his young disciple: “To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. And in the second letter he says: “To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Titus is addressed as “a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.”

And it is not just Paul who has this habit or who sees the importance of the peace we receive from God: Peter begins his letter to the pilgrims of the Dispersion by addressing them as “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. We find similar words in his greeting in the second letter: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord”

John’s second letter begins, “Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” In John’s 3rd letter we find the greeting at the end where we read, “but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.”

Jude begins his epistle, “Mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.”

Finally even in the Book of Revelation we read, “John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne”

I John & Hebrews have no greeting but even Hebrews ends with the often used benediction: Hebrews 13:20 “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

That leaves out only James, who begins his Epistle by reminding us to count it all joy when we face trials, so maybe Luther was right about that being a ‘right strawy epistle’ *[just kidding]*

It is Paul in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Philippians who sums up the importance of these greetings, including the one that Jesus gave to His disciples in the midst of what has been a very hectic and confusing day, coming after a very hectic, confusing and VERY disappointing week!

Philippians 4:6 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

- So I think you can see that Jesus saying “peace to you” was much more than Jesus just saying ‘hi, how are you doing?’
- Jesus was giving His new Church the greeting that would continue throughout the New Testament and all of Church History.
- Jesus gives His disciples, and US, a pronouncement of peace...
- We have PEACE with God because of what Jesus has done

This is a pronouncement that is included in almost all the benedictions given to us as we prepare to be commissioned and go out to serve the risen Jesus:

- A peace that we must KNOW that we have if we are to serve Him faithfully and well.

We should not see this greeting of His disciples as odd, but encouraging... It is easy to see this rag-tag band of deserting and denying disciples as pretty hopeless...

- Certainly NOT where we would establish a Church that is going to take the Kingdom to the four corners of the world.

But Paul tells us that God delights to use the weak things of this world and he teaches the church at Corinth about this in the context of the Resurrection Power that Jesus now greets His disciples in...

I Corinthians 1:22 “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;
23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,
24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. **26** For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. **27** But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; **28** and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, **29** that no flesh should glory in His presence. ”

- Jesus knows that He has chosen those who are weak by the world’s standard...
 - not a university degree in the entire group...
 - no vast store of wealth with which to build a kingdom

But God has chosen these disciples and all who follow “to bring to nothing the things that are, **29** that no flesh should glory in His presence.” These weary disciples have been subjected to much confusion and disappointment and now Jesus shows that He understands the state they are in:

Jesus goes on to ask them, “Why are you troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts?”

Just as we saw last week on the road to Damascus, where Jesus knew what the disciples were talking about when He asked, so here in this case, Jesus knows what troubles them...

- He understands where they are at and wants them to grow in the peace He has spoken to them
- As we see how Jesus deals with these troubled disciples, we must remember that He often does the same with us when we allow our selves to become troubled or allow doubts to arise in our hearts.

In the Christians life, it is NOT a question of IF these things will happen to us, but when...

- **BUT we need NOT remain troubled or in doubt if we are willing to accept the Lord's help as these disciples do.**

Jesus did not just leave these weak men in their weak state:

- **Over the next few weeks we will see Jesus give them evidence... give them instruction... And give them power!**
- **ALL things that we have available to US week after week!**

We begin this week with the evidence: This evidence comes in two ways...

As I mentioned, Mark tells us that Jesus gave them a rebuke for not believing the witnesses who had come to them about the resurrection

- **WE are under obligation to believe the witnesses of the resurrection that have been left for us to hear!**

They are given in these Gospel accounts and summarized by Paul in I Cor. 15:

“3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.”

- **IF we don't believe the witnesses then we do not believe that Jesus has risen from the dead and we are still in our sins... A very troubled state indeed.**

Jesus goes on to provide even more evidence for His disciples and a greater witness for all of us as to what has happened

- **Jesus had come, virgin born to a woman, to be the great sacrifice for sin and He went to the cross to be that sacrifice.**
- **As we have studied... Jesus was crucified, dead buried.**
- **The disciples had witnessed all of this so believing that much was not a problem...**

NOW, someone who looks like Jesus, who they assume to be a spirit, stands before them expecting them to have believed the reports that He had come back from the dead!

- **How can they be sure it is not a ghost or illusion?**

Jesus invites them to touch Him and see that He is real, not only is He flesh and bone, but the same flesh and bone that went to the cross as evidenced by the wounds He still bears.

In verse 41 we see more marveling, which is a good thing, and Luke says they could not believe for joy!

- **This goes along with the witness of this day that we have seen: They believe, they doubt, they can't believe for joy, they believe!**

The skeptics take all the pieces and try to find contradictions, but those who see with eyes of faith confirm the joy and confusion of that first Easter that has been faithfully preserved for us in the Gospels!

- **Such feelings of disbelieving joy need to be ours as well if we truly believe the Gospel...**

There are times during our covenant renewal worship where this needs to overwhelm us if our relationship with the Savior is sincere, **IF** we have heard the Shepherds voice...

- When the minister declares that our sins have been forgiven after we have confessed them... We should sometimes struggle to believe it, because we are SO overwhelmed with joy!
- At times when the Word is expounded we need to be over-joyed with what we are hearing to the point where we can't believe what we are hearing is true!

Certainly, as we bring our gifts, offer our prayers and approach this Table we must do so in awe of the fact that Jesus has brought us into His very presence, accepts our gifts and prayers and feed us at His Table!

Jesus having them touch His body and observing the wounds has brought them to this joyful point, but Jesus is now going to confirm what their eyes and hands have shown them: Jesus says, do you have any food... He takes some fish and honeycomb and eats in their presence.

Your homework can be to read the rest of I Corinthians 15 to see what Paul reveals about our glorious bodies and we can carry on discussions about how Jesus moved about and whether He needed to eat, but we must not miss the central point of what He is doing here:

- He is confirming to the disciples, **AND US**, that He is before them as the same incarnate Son of God that they have walked with these past three years.

Jesus, as we confess is “perfect both in deity and in humanity; truly God and truly man, with a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father according to His deity, and consubstantial with us according to the humanity; like us in all respects, sin only excepted.”

- So Jesus has brought great joy, confidence and comfort to these disciples who were troubled and doubting.

This is the same comfort and joy that Jesus offers to all who are anxious or troubled. And yet there are times, in all our lives where we do not receive or even seek this joy and comfort.

How can this be?

- The reason is that such joy and peace, the comfort of the Lord comes at a cost
- It requires a change of direction, **IF** we have been going the wrong way

In conclusion I want us to return to that passage in Philippians chapter four, beginning again at verse six: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;”

- First notice that we must turn to God with our requests...

7 “and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

- This is the peace that Jesus offers, but we will not know it if we continue to be distracted by all the cares of this world...
- Paul says our new life will be different...

8 “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. 9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

It is a very simple trade:

We give God all the anxieties of this world and focus on good things!

However, if we continue to dwell on and involve ourselves in things counter to this new calling, that peace will escape us.

We can't continue in gossip or the latest fads or be so involved in our latest updates that we don't have time to actually talk to anyone.

If the things that take up most of our time are not true & noble; pure and lovely, things of good report that are virtuous and praiseworthy, then we simply will not know God's peace.

We will be filled with anxious thoughts and the cares of this world

Paul says we are to follow his example, what he learned and received and heard and the things we see in him...

Then the God of peace will be with us and we will know His comfort!

Communion Meditation: Colossians 3:

“12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”