

Luke 24:36-49
"Filled with Christ's Touch"
Third Sunday of Easter (B)

April 14, 2024
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, West Salem, Wisc.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Jesus says to His apostles: ***"Peace to you! 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"*** (Luke 24:36, 38-39a).

Much of today's Gospel lesson seems like a repeat from last Sunday. Much of it seems like a re-run. We've heard this before! A re-run already! Today, we have the same proclamation of peace by Jesus. We have the same showing of His hands and His feet. We have the same touching of Jesus. Could Luke be retelling the events of Easter evening and of the events eight days later from John 20? Maybe. It is certainly possible. Yet, the emphasis of Luke's Gospel is different, and it is this difference that we are focusing on today.

This morning, we continue the celebration of the Resurrection of Our Lord! Now, the fallen world may celebrate Easter for one day with its bunnies and eggs, but we continue this celebration with our triumphant cry: **Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

One day is not enough to celebrate the joy of the life and salvation of our risen Savior, because this is Good News that needs to be shared! Just as we share what happened to our favorite sports team, television show, or premium live event, what Jesus has done is far more important! Jesus has defeated the powers of death, hell, and Satan through His death and bodily resurrection!

As important as Jesus opening the grave and rising to life, today on this Third Sunday of Easter, He opens the minds of His apostles ***"to understand the Scriptures"*** (Luke 24:45). This too, is Good News, for without this opening, the open tomb would be of no benefit to them. They needed their minds opened to the Word of God in order to believe and understand the Good News of the open tomb. Jesus opened their minds so that they – *and us* – could always touch Jesus.

Jesus opened their minds. Now, this is far different from the worldly idea of “open-mindedness.” To the fallen world, to be “open-minded” means to be open to all kinds of thinking, to all kinds of opinions, and to all kinds of views. From this way of thinking, there is no truth, but only different interpretations and judgments, which only lead to confusion and doubt. Not knowing what to believe. Not knowing truth. This is *not* what Jesus is doing.

Instead, Jesus is cleaning out all the junk that fills their minds. He is cleaning out the cesspool of filth and falsehood and fear and all kinds of wrong thinking and ideas and is filling their minds with His truth and His wisdom. It is only Jesus who can open the tombs of our minds and fill them with the light of His Word and Truth, with repentance, faith, and forgiveness, as we may know Him and believe and be saved.

And this is what the risen Christ is still doing today, here, in this place!

But first, just like last week, we need to know who Jesus is. Just as the apostles were, we are. We are troubled and full of doubts. So, what does Jesus do? He shows them Himself! He says, ***“See My hands and My feet, that is I Myself. Touch Me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have”*** (Luke 24:39).

You see, the apostles were convinced that they were only seeing a spirit – *a ghost!* Even now, there are many people who are convinced that Jesus only rose from the dead spiritually. These people say that the spirit is more important than the body. In the early church, this is what the Gnostic heretics believed. They believed the spirit was good and the body was evil. And this heresy remains today through the transgender movement.

But here, Jesus is proclaiming that to be human is to be both body and soul. After woman was created by God in the Garden of Eden, Adam – *after the rib was taken out of his side* – said, ***“This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”*** (Genesis 2:23). He didn’t say, “Ahh, she is only flesh,” “Ahh, she is only spirit,” or “Ahh, she is only bones.” No, Adam said, ***“[She] is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”***

As it is with Jesus, so it is with us, we are flesh and bones, we are body and soul. To be complete, we are never only one and not the other.

By His physical presence, Jesus stands among His apostles after having overcome everything: sin, death, and the devil. Jesus is standing among them as the Resurrected Crucified One.

The apostles had fears and doubts, just as we do. We pretend to be bold and courageous, but Jesus sees right through us. He knows every one of our doubts and fears. Just like the apostles, who witnessed miracles and signs, we too, hear of Jesus through the Word in the Divine Service and at Bible studies, but we still don't fully believe and trust. To that, Jesus says, *"Touch Me and see! I'll show you that My resurrection and My living body are for real!"*

So, this is precisely what Christ does with His apostles. Yes, they see Him, and they touch Him, but is it really *Him*? To this doubt, Christ says, ***"Have you anything here to eat?"*** (Luke 24:41). They gave Him a broiled fish, and He took it and ate. ***Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!***

Jesus is no spirit! Spirits are not flesh and bone. Spirits cannot chew, swallow, and digest. Jesus is fully man with body and soul!

Now with that assurance, Jesus not only opens their minds to His presence, but He also opens their minds to His Word. 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"*** (Luke 24:44). Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

First God acts and we receive, then we act. For just as children learn how to speak by being spoken to, and learn to act by first imitating their parents, so do we as children of God. It was only after Jesus opened and cleaned out their minds by filling them with the Truth, that Jesus calls them to be eyewitnesses: to speak of what they have seen and what they believe. And through the work of the Holy Spirit, they will speak just as they were spoken to, to love just as they have been loved, to forgive just as they have been forgiven, and thus to open minds, which are filled with confusion and doubt, filled with sin and death, so that the light of Christ's cleansing forgiveness might shine on them and all people.

Yet even though the apostles – *and you and me* – are doing this work, it's not really us doing it, it's the Holy Spirit working in us who gives us the courage and strength to tell of Christ and welcome others here to receive His gifts of Word and Sacrament.

Yet even though the Holy Spirit is working in us, this doesn't mean that when we speak of Jesus that everyone will listen. I wish that was the case, but Satan has blindfolded so many people from the light of Christ. Worldly wisdom, false gods, and false truths of the prince of this fallen world cloud so many hearts and minds in order to deceive them and mislead them into false belief, despair, and other great shames and vice. We too, can easily become deceived by this fallen world.

So, how do we not become deceived by this fallen world? Well, we must open our minds to understand the Scriptures! We must be filled week in and week out with Christ's touch. But we appear to be at a disadvantage. Today, we don't have the privilege of seeing Jesus face-to-face. But is that completely true?

Remember last week when Christ appeared to His apostles in the locked upper room? What did Christ prove by His appearance? He proved that His kingdom on earth is no longer bound to this world. His kingdom is no longer limited to place, space, or time.

Christ is here! You may not see Him just as the apostles did, but He is here. He is always where He promises to be! Today, we see the Crucified Jesus through our Holy Spirit-created faith. Today, Christ is here as He fills you with His gift of His Word. In His Word, we see the Crucified Jesus through Scripture. In fact, we not only see Him, but touch Him. There in that Book, we feel Christ and hear His Word, cover to cover, as He says to us: ***“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”*** (Luke 24:46-47a).

Christ is here to also fill us through His Sacraments. He is here to forgive you of your doubts and give you peace. He is here to fill you with His life-giving body and blood, that once received, you go and share this good news with others! You share God's good news with Christ's words, His truth, His love, and His forgiveness.

Through the Means of Grace – *Word and Sacrament* – the Holy Spirit is working in you and through you as you speak His Word, as He opens the Scriptures to you, as He works in you to open the Scriptures to others, as He opens and fills hearts and minds in the crucified and risen Jesus. Through Word and Sacrament, Christ fills us with His touch! **Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!** Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +