

Jesus Appears to Disciples

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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

On this third Sunday of Easter, we're continuing the last of our sermon series on our mission statement: ***At Our Savior's Way, we glorify God and make disciples by forming relationships, experiencing Jesus together, and sharing God's love.*** And for the next several weeks, we'll be focusing on this last part – Sharing God's Love – as we hear how Jesus' disciples came to believe that Jesus rose again.

Our text for today comes to us from St. Luke's account of when Jesus appeared to the disciples just after appearing to Cleopas and the other disciples on the way to Emmaus. This passage might sound familiar with last week's Gospel reading in John because this is St. Luke's account of Jesus revealing Himself to the disciples. But it doesn't begin by telling us that the doors were locked. No, St. Luke simply begins by saying that as they were talking, Jesus Himself stood among them, and said to them, ***"Peace to you!"***

Now...I don't know if you believe in ghosts or spirits of dead people, but that's what the disciples thought when they saw and heard Jesus. They knew that Jesus had died, so they believed what they were seeing and hearing was Jesus' disembodied Spirit that had appeared to them. Needless to say, they were troubled when He said to them, ***"Peace to you!"*** But He goes on to say, ***"Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"*** And these might be good questions for

us to ask ourselves this morning as well. What trouble are you dealing with in your life because of fear and doubt? Maybe you're dealing with the loss of a loved one, some not-so-good news from your doctor, or because you're ready for things to be "back to normal" you've become anxious about what the future holds. Sometimes, just being able to accurately articulate what's causing trouble can help you to gain a better understanding that helps you to move forward.

Our Omniscient God already knows what's bothering you and Jesus already knew what was troubling the disciples. And yet, in order that He might graciously help them to overcome their fear, doubt, anxiety, and disbelief, He asks them why they are troubled? He wanted to hear from them because He isn't some kind of ghost or disembodied spirit that was roaming the earth. So, He says to them, ***"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."*** Then He showed them His hands and feet that they might believe He had risen from the dead. And while the text tells us that while the disciples expressed joy and were marveling, it also tells us that they still disbelieved. Why? Because sometimes, especially for those who doubt, the truth can seem to be too good to be true.

Then Jesus said, ***"Have you anything here to eat?"*** And handing Him a piece of broiled fish...He took it and ate it. Now at this point, I'm sure they watched Him intently as He ate, because contrary to what you might've seen in a Ghostbusters movie, ghosts and spirits don't eat food. They have no need to do so because, by definition, they don't have a body to feed or nourish. And yet, having captured their attention, Jesus reminds them of His mission, of the words that He had spoken to them before His crucifixion, what was written about Him in

the Old Testament, and how what was written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms needed to be fulfilled.

He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and dispelling their doubts. He helped them to their mission when He said to them, ***“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. 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.”*** Those who heard were witnesses of these things and yet He told them to wait until the right time, that they might be clothed with power from on high at the coming of the Holy Spirit.

In his book, *“Getting into God,”* Stuart Biscoe, a Christian author, and pastor, once wrote that a witness is someone who by explanation or demonstration provides verbal or visible evidence of what they’ve seen or heard without being deterred by the consequences of their actions. But then again, Jesus didn’t send the disciples out immediately. Rather He told them to wait a little bit longer so that they might be clothed with power from on high. And after His ascension to the Father, He sent to them His Spirit who empowered their witness and opened people’s hearts and minds so that the Gospel message might be heard and believed by many.

I don’t know if you heard it before, but there’s a story of a little boy who was on the witness stand. The prosecuting attorney was cross-examining him as part of a lawsuit. After a minute or two of easy questions, the lawyer decided that he would deliver a crushing blow to the boy’s testimony. He said to the boy, *“Your father has been telling you how to testify, has he not?”*

Not hesitating, the boy said "Yes." "Now," the lawyer rather triumphantly said, "just tell us how he told you to what to say." "Well," the boy said, "He told me that the lawyer would try to tangle me in my words, but if I would just be careful and tell the truth, I could repeat it over and over again..." And in doing so, the boy fulfilled His witness and mission, reminding the lawyer that a witness is called to speak the truth.

Today, having been baptized in His death and resurrection, Jesus calls us to be His witnesses and reminds us to speak the truth of His Resurrection. In order for this to happen, His Spirit gathers us in worship and opens our minds to hear what He has been saying to us all along. That with childlike faith, we might believe, internalize the proclamation of His Gospel, repent of the fear – doubt – and disbelief – that have consumed our conversations, and by His grace, receive the forgiveness He won for us on the cross.

And as we come to better understand the depth of His everlasting love for us, His Spirit also changes our hearts once again, enabling us to share His love at just the right time. When this happens, He increases the effectiveness of our witness and He empowers us to fulfill our mission. *And that mission here at Our Savior's Way is to glorify God and make disciples for Jesus by: Forming Relationships, Experiencing Jesus Together, and Sharing God's Love.*

This is what we do in Jesus' name, Amen.