

Mark 16 9-20

Luke 24:36-43 & John 20:19-23

Luke 24:36-43

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.

John 20:19-23

¹⁹ Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained."

We need to take the Luke and John accounts together to get the full picture. John tells us this is Sunday evening. A lot is happening very quickly. This has been one of the most remarkable days in the lives of the people present. The reports are coming in so quickly the disciples are probably having trouble sorting it all out. They are probably trying to be wise. They don't want to believe things just because they are things they WANT to believe. So they are skeptical. Now remember, up until waking on Sunday morning, their assumption was that Jesus was dead and was going to remain dead. They went to bed on Saturday evening in a very dismal state. That is very clear by all of the evidence we are given. Then Mary Magdalene arrives all out of breath and reports that the body is gone. John and Peter race to the tomb. John wins. Peter goes in. John goes in. It is confirmed. The body is gone. Then everyone goes back to the meeting place and Peter and John, as well as others hear the women's account of seeing angels and eventually seeing Christ.

The hikers later give us the slant that the disciples probably thought these women were seeing visions. But then the hikers talk with Christ on their walk home. This was probably late morning or early afternoon. When they get home they discover the person they were talking to was Christ. And then poof, He is gone. Now they turn around and walk back to Jerusalem and make it back sometime on Sunday late afternoon or evening. We know this because Luke 24:36 says that “as they (the men from Emmaus) said these things Christ appeared. And John tells us that it is now evening.

What a day these people are having.

John tells us the state they were in.

when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews

What we see here is a clandestine meeting of frightened disciples. News was probably spreading. The fact that the hikers knew so much tells us that the disciples were keeping each other up to speed on the latest events. That is a good thing. The fact that they gathered together was a good thing also. We don't know who all was in attendance at this meeting. But we know who wasn't. Judas wasn't because he was dead at his own hand. And Thomas wasn't for unknown reasons. Thomas was probably a broody kind of person who wanted to deal with this loss on his own. Given that he was the skeptic of skeptics, probably a “glass half empty” kind of guy, he probably wasn't the life of the party. He was likely an introvert. And he certainly had a lot to process. He probably had lots of reasons not to be in church this Sunday. But it was he who missed out.

We also know the hikers from Emmaus were here. There were very likely others as well. It is hard to imagine the women who had been with Christ throughout His ministry and ministered to Him not being there. But we just don't know.

John also tells us that these people were in fear. And it was a very credible threat. The Jewish leaders had just had Christ killed. Now His body was gone. They didn't know what the leaders knew. They didn't know that He was gone under supernatural circumstances. So they likely figured that if Christ's body was gone, they were going to be blamed for it. The leaders would show up at any time with the Roman soldiers and knock the door down. They would want the body back. This would have been very smart thinking. And it would have been very wrong thinking. Isn't that funny how often that happens? We tell God all the perfectly good logical reasons that we have to worry. And what does He say? Does he pity us? No. He just says, Trust Me. And if we continue to worry, it is sin. Nothing more. Nothing less. Just sin.

Now, we can never get the idea that we have to reach some kind of spiritual plateau before God will visit us. God is not waiting for us to climb some spiritual ladder to get to Him. We **do** have to relinquish our right **to have our own way**

before we can grow. But we see here God's standard operations toward people who are not as faithful as they **could** be or as they **ought to** be. These people aren't stubbornly rebellious. They are just simply stuck at a point where they don't believe something that they have every reason to believe.

This should be very encouraging to us. Here in the midst of the disciples fear and skepticism, Christ shows up. Here in the real imperfect lives of the disciples the Savior appears. Don't ever get the idea that you are not spiritual enough for God to move in your life. As long as you do not grieve the Holy Spirit by rebelling against what He reveals of God's word to you, God's Spirit will work in God's people. Christ will show up in your life if you are willing to learn from Him, if you are willing to submit to Him.

If you are knowingly rebelling against God's revealed word, He will require that you do business with that before you can go any further. Don't look for any spiritual progress in your life until you repent of that thing. But if you are mistaken, or taken by a weakness, Christ is very likely to show His presence to you by the revelation of His word, or by the stirring of your conscience, or by the ministry of another believer.

So here is Christ. Poof. He beamed in. He is there with matter in a way that matter cannot perform. Is this a clue to us on what our bodies will be like? Who knows? But here Christ is.

Now why didn't Christ show up at the door? Again, wouldn't this be fun?

Wouldn't it be a blast to show up into the middle of a group of people who are all talking about the theories of what could be happening with you? Christ may have done it to show His lack of material limitations, but He may have just as well done it because it was fun to do.

Now, what does Christ say to them? This is important. What does Christ reveal as the disciples greatest need at that moment? Peace. These people were afraid, they were worried. They were confused. They were disturbed. They were stressed. And what does Christ offer them? What does He tell them?

He tells them both, "**Peace to you**" in Luke 24. And He tells them "**Peace be with you**" in John.

This word for peace took on a meaning with Christ's disciples that was a **bit different** than how it was **commonly** used. It ended up meaning the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ and fearing nothing from God, and **content** with its earthly lot. (Thayers Greek-English Lexicon)

These disciples were anything but peaceful. But Christ told them to have peace. He offered them peace. What a fitting thing to say for the one who just three days earlier said, "It is finished." Christ had removed the source of our enmity against God. He had removed the penalty for every believer's sin. He had died and rose **to give us peace**. Now Christ tells these guys to apply it where the

rubber meets the road. Apply it in their everyday lives. Peace to you, right here, right now, regardless of your circumstances.

How about us? What excuses do we use not to have peace? What reasons are there for why we can't have peace?

Now let's see how Christ's pronouncement was met by the disciples.

Luke says ³⁷ **But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit.** That doesn't look much like peace to me. Again, I think we can be encouraged. Christ was not finished with them yet.

The Greek word for terrified means pretty much- terrified. The word for frightened contains in it the Greek word we get the word Phobia from. They were pretty much scared out of their wits. And this wasn't just an immediate reaction to a scary thing, like when someone or something scares you. No, they were in a state of fear. It was not going away. Why were they in a state of fear? They supposed they were looking at a ghost.

These guys had not connected the dots yet. And they are the dots that **must be connected** for **us** to have the proper view of the resurrection. Christ rose bodily. The way the disciples are viewing this, Christ's body could have been stolen and laying somewhere and Christ's apparition could be here with them. But that is not how it happened. Christ's spirit and body went together. They didn't separate. His body must have been instantly changed, just like ours will be. But Christ was not raised separate from His body.

So, now that the disciples believe this lie, what will Christ do to correct them?

Christ could have just explained it to them. But Christ did more than that.

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.**

Christ said "**Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?**

What a wonderful question. Here is a great topic of self talk. When we get troubled, when our emotions are in a turmoil, why not ask the questions of ourselves that Christ asked of his disciples. Why are you so bent out of shape about this? And why do you doubt what God says? Isn't that the essence of much of our drama? We have talked a lot about the danger of asking God, "Why?" and demanding a response. But it is a very safe thing, in fact a necessary thing, for us to ask **ourselves why** and demand a response. It is good to know why we do what we do. It is good for us to know why we think what we think. It is even good for us to discover why we feel what we feel, which is what Christ is

addressing here. We will find that when we run from those hard questions, when we run from looking at **why we do what we do**, when we run from **why we think what we think** and when we run from **why we feel what we feel**, we never avoid the answers. We only delay them. The Lord will see to it that we do business with the things that drive us. But it will take a lot of courage. Because we will find that we do ugly things and think ugly things and feel ugly things for very ugly reasons. We are not nearly as good as we would like to see ourselves as. Well Christ gets right down to the disciple's problem. And fortunately for them, while they did not have a good reason to fail, the solution to grow in faith was pretty simple. Christ was going to supply evidence that refuted the lies they believed.

First evidence- the wounds Christ suffered for us. Luke says Christ showed them his hands and his feet. John adds that Christ showed them His side. I don't think this is normally how bodies are going to be resurrected. In fact, in eternity I think Christ will be the only one with scars. And His scars will be a reminder forever of the price He paid for us. We are very likely to have our memories of this life grow into distant memories. But every time we look at our Savior we will be reminded of what it took to get us into His presence. We will see the scars and we will know that we put them there. We will remember how much He loved us, even when we were at our very worst.

So Christ showed them the scars. He used this as evidence that He was no ghost. Ghosts wouldn't have scars. These were real wounds.

Second evidence- Christ told them to touch Him.

Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.

He basically wanted them to prove to themselves that He was matter. He could be touched and felt like a normal human being. He was solid with flesh and bones. What changes He had from a normal body we don't know.

Luke tells us that they still didn't believe. **But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled**

Here is an example of something just too good to be true. It is something they didn't think was possible. They marveled. They were looking at something wonderful wondering how it could be true. It was beyond their understanding but they were trying to understand. They were overjoyed at what they were seeing, but they simply could not wrap their minds around it.

Have you ever look at what God has done in your life and marveled? Have you ever wondered how God could have arranged the pieces in your life to get you where He has? How he poured out on you His grace in a way you could have never foreseen and certainly would have never deserved? There is much that God is and does that is worthy of this kind of wonder.

Third evidence- Christ did what no ghost could do. He ate.

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.

I doubt that anyone ever watched someone eat so intently. I wonder what they thought would happen? Did they expect it to drop to the floor the moment He let go of the food? Did they think He could lift it with His hands but surely it cannot remain in His body? We don't know. But we can be very glad they were as confounded as they were, because it gives us insights into the risen body of Christ we would not have had, had He not proven these points to his marveling onlookers.

Maybe Christ's followers had rules in mind of what **a spirit was and could do**, and what a **human was and could do**. Maybe this was a litmus test for them. If it ate, it was human and not spirit. I don't know. But Christ ate and finally they seem to be convinced.

Frankly I am glad that a resurrected body can eat. The sensation of eating good food is a blessing, a grace that God has disbursed on both the lost and the saved. It is a wonderful thing. And many good things have happened as people have eaten together. Communion was introduced as a bunch of men ate together. And the greatest party ever held, the Marriage Supper of the lamb will be brothers and sisters eating together. How wonderful that will be. Don't ever get the idea that our eternity will be spent on clouds strumming a harp. We will be involved in the things that are the best of life as we know it. There will certainly be changes. But there will be humor. There will be deep unhindered friendships. There will be worship without the necessity of faith. And there will be meals with friends. There will also be the accomplishment that comes with work. That which is best designed to fulfill the human spirit will be there.

I think it is interesting that Christ ate fish and honey. I don't think it is significant. It just happened to be some of the most abundant food available. He probably would have eaten a snickers bar if they had one. He was just eating to prove a point. Christ resurrected in a body.

John finishes out our narrative this morning.

Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Finally the disciples believed. They had all of their doubts removed. They were convinced by the evidence that Christ graciously provided. Now Christ could have simply shown up and told them to believe. There are lots of people who act like any appeal to the mind is a waste of time. But that is certainly not how Christ acted. He went out of His way to see to it that these men had whatever proof they needed. Now they were just glad. They were happy to see that Christ had really risen from the dead. He had done the one thing He had told them over and over that He would do, but they were just never really hearing Him. They were never taking the one thing He meant literally, literally.

²¹ **So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."**

Now the disciples were **prepared** to appropriate the peace that Christ had provided and personally represented. Their doubts were gone. Their fears were gone. Christ was there and Christ was risen from the dead. That was the source of **their** peace and that is the source of **our** peace. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ puts our lives in the proper perspective. There may be things that will do us great harm, but there will never be anything that takes away our destiny, our hope and our reward.

Then Christ looks at all these followers of his, beyond just the 10 disciples in attendance and says this. **As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.** Now, how did the Father send Christ? From what we know God gave the mission to Christ to come to this planet in the form of a baby, to grow up, teach, preach, do miracles, die, be buried, and rise again. He was sent for the salvation of souls. Now, we are not sent **to die for the sins of others.** We are not qualified. But these followers of Christ would be sent to spread the news of what Christ had done. In the same way that Christ was sent to **provide** our salvation, believers are sent to **spread the news** of salvation.

Now we need to recognize that Christ is doing all of this with absolute authority, but this is going to fly in the face of everything the Jewish people would expect. They would expect anything of spiritual significance to come through the card holding authorities that guarded the access to the temple, the center of Jewish worship. Christ is doing all of this with no regard whatsoever to the current corrupt God haters posing as spokespeople for God. These disciples are being sent by a risen Messiah and they are going to shake things up in a dramatic way. Notice too that this is said before Christ does any business with Peter's failure. It is almost like Jesus is telling them, practice is over now guys. It's game time now. This is what you were trained for. Now I am sending you to do the jobs you were trained for.

Then look what Christ says next.

²² **And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.**

Do you remember the first time God breathed on mankind?

Genesis 2:7

⁷ And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

You could say God breathed spirit into the man.

Again we see God's breath in Ezekiel 37:9 in the valley of the dry bones.

Ezekiel 37:9

⁹ **Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to**

the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' "

And that is what happened. Breath came into these creatures. This appears to be a reference to the Holy Spirit.

So when Christ breathed on them, they would have understood this was a reference to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.

Now, does this mean that this is when the disciples get the Holy Spirit? That would cause a very big theological problem. Christ referred to the disciples as His own and made reference to them in a way that one must conclude that they are already right with Christ. They are already in the faith. And since this faith is something that comes through the work of the Holy Spirit, this cannot mean this is their first encounter with the Holy Spirit.

Well then, were they filled with the Holy Spirit? Probably not, as we see that happen at Pentecost. That is when the Holy Spirit is poured out on the earth in a remarkable and visible way. The Holy Spirit is given to accomplish the mission that the new church is given to fulfill.

So what is this?

It is very likely a symbolic gesture that represented what was going to happen to them at Pentecost. Christ was breathing His Spirit upon them with real breath but they were going to receive this Spirit of God with great force very soon.

Now, the next thing that is said is easily misunderstood, but to great peril. It is one of the foundations of the Roman Catholic church, but it does not stand the test of good scholarship in the way that they use it.

²³ **If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained."**

This is where the doctrine of confessing to priests to have your sins forgiven came from. But among the many problems, one of them is that Jesus said this to everyone in the room, which probably included far more than just the 10 disciples. We know it included the 2 Emmaus hikers.

So what does this mean?

Jesus was describing, in one of many ways, the ministry that the disciples, and **all followers of Christ** were going to have. Let's look at a couple of other scriptures to get some context.

First we find in Mark 2:7 and Daniel 9:9 that only God can forgive sins.

Mark 2:7

⁷ **"Why does this *Man* speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"**

Daniel 9:9

⁹ **To the Lord our God *belong* mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.**

There are other passages that could be used to make this point. Only God can forgive sins. We do not, in some ways, forgive sins. But we do pronounce God's forgiveness of sins.

Christ said it a different way in Matthew earlier. He said:

Matthew 16:19

¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

But Matthew 18:15-20 gives us the best explanation of how this work gets done.

Matthew 18:15-18

¹⁵ "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that *'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'* ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Do you see what that is talking about? It is talking about dealing with people who are sinning. It tells us how to minister to them with the appeal that they drop their rebellion against God and submit to God. All church members are to be about the ministry of reconciliation. We are to be about the business of talking to people in an effort to get them to get right with God, in an effort to convince people to trust Christ to forgive their sins.

Now sometimes we do that to people inside the church. Then we are dealing with behaviors or attitudes that are sinful. We are calling them what scripture calls them and telling people to do with them what scripture says to do with them.

Sometimes we minister to people outside the church. Then we are calling upon people to call upon Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. We can assure them that if they truly will, Christ will surely forgive their sins. If they will not, we can assure them that their sins are not forgiven and never will be under their present state. So we are pronouncing God's forgiveness of sin. And we can do that based on God's Word with great authority. But it is not something that is mystically happening in us. It is simply recognizing the wind of the Spirit blowing in a person's life in a very predictable pattern. When a person confesses their sins and trusts Christ as Savior and Lord and then obeys Christ, we can be sure that a miracle has happened. Over time we can read the evidence pretty accurately. And depending on a person's response, we can quote from scripture God's verdict. That is what I believe Christ was talking about.

But what a wonderful ministry God has entrusted to us. We have the glorious privilege of representing God to men. Us peons, who deserve nothing from God, are given the most important responsibility on this planet. Think about that. What can President Trump do that will forever change the life of a human being? Nothing. At best he can make life more pleasant for a lot of folks. But in one sense, his job is too small. It changes nothing forever. It is limited to the vanity of this life. But every believer has a job much bigger than his job, much more important than his job. You and I are sent into the world of people with a message that can save people for eternity. That is what Christ entrusted us with. What do we do with it? Do we regard it as significant enough that we will tell everyone who is interested? Do we pray and look for opportunity daily to tell someone this great news? That is what you do with good news isn't it? You tell it?

We have plenty of application points again from this scripture.

Will we trust Christ with the things that we fear, like these disciples had to do.

Will we apply peace in the areas that we have no peace?

Are we thankful that Christ comes to meet us where we are? He does not require perfection. He knows we are dust. But if we are not in rebellion against Christ, He hears our prayer and will meet our needs.

In our points of turmoil in our lives will we do business with this hard question?

"Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

Will we set ourselves like a hound on this trail and not be satisfied until we know the answer. Because it is only then that we can replace the lies we believe with the truth that God says.

Do we really, in our heart of hearts, look forward to an eternity in a new resurrected body? Do we set our sites there?

And finally, do we really regard the message we have been given to spread as the best news humanity has ever been given? If we do, no one can stop us from telling it.