

Jesus, Our Confidence!

by Mark Jarvinen

The Gospel Lesson – Jesus Appears To His Disciples

³⁶ As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷ But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. ³⁸ And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ 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.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate before them.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “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.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ 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.”

INTRODUCTION

Today’s text opens by reaching back into the previous context of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance to two lesser-known followers of Christ, as they were returning to their hometown of Emmaus, located about 7 miles from Jerusalem. They had witnessed the events of Passover weekend and were downcast because of the “**crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth.**” As they discussed this between themselves, Jesus joined them on the road, but they were kept from recognizing Him. Jesus asked them what they were discussing and

they couldn't believe He didn't know. The two told Jesus about Jesus, calling Him ***“a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people,”*** who had been crucified at the hands of the chief priests and rulers of the Jews, after they had turned Him over to Pilate who sentenced Him to death. These two had hoped that Jesus was the one who had come to redeem Israel. They continued by saying three days had passed and now it was being reported that Jesus' body was missing. At this point Jesus chided them for not knowing that the prophets had spoken of the Christ as one who would ***“have to suffer these things and then enter his glory.”*** Then, beginning with Moses and the prophets, Jesus told them about Jesus, explaining to them ***“what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Him.”*** If they walked 15 minute miles, that could have been as much as a 1hour and 45 minute Bible Study. Arriving at Emmaus, the men invited Jesus to stay with them. Sitting down to eat, the two men recognized Jesus as He broke bread with them. In an instant Jesus disappeared. Without delay, the two men hurried back to Jerusalem and found the Eleven, who told them the Lord had indeed risen. Then the two told them that they also had seen Jesus on the road and in their home. It is here that today's text opens with the words:

“As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you!’” (v.36).

Think of how much more this standard Hebrew greeting meant to those gathered in light of the resurrection! Today's theme is ***“Jesus, Our Confidence.”*** May the Holy Spirit strengthen our faith as we are strengthened from the Word of God by the fact that Jesus is indeed our confidence.

I. WE ARE MADE CONFIDENT BY HIS RESURRECTION.

We don't know for sure about the two men from Emmaus, but we know that likely John and a number of women had seen the reality of Jesus' death on the cross. Later, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had laid Jesus' cold, stiff, body in a tomb. Reality tells us that death is final, yet now this reality was being challenged. From our text we learn that when Jesus stood among those gathered, ***“they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.” (v.37).*** The risen Lord saw that they were troubled and had doubt. But notice how Jesus gave proof after proof that He was risen from the dead and was not a ghost or a figment of their imagination. He speaks to them, offering them His shalom. Then He invites them to look at the nail marks in His hands and feet. He allows them to touch Him, assuring them that He is not a spirit. He even eats a piece of fish so that they see that He has bodily risen from the dead. His resurrection is real! Imagine how their confidence grew with each passing moment!

Jesus did this for those gathered, but He did it for us as well. All too often we become distracted from the reality of our risen Christ. We become preoccupied with the world's version of the good life. We focus on the next thrill or adventure that awaits us, as though that is all there is, forgetting that these things are phantoms, mere mirages that can never satisfy, leaving us thirsting for something more. We suffer from what Paul Tripp calls ***“identity amnesia,”*** losing sight of who we are in Christ, who rose from the dead to give us a new life that is eternal. Scripture reminds us that the death and resurrection of Jesus comprise the foundation of our faith, upon which our true

identity and confidence to face the challenges of life is built. If Jesus didn't die on the cross, we would be left to pay for our own sins in hell for all eternity. If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead, then we would simply die and go to hell, a place of eternal suffering and separation from God. Thank God that in Christ, our eternal destiny and well-being is secured, and in this we can live confidently, without the fear of death.

II. WE ARE MADE CONFIDENT BY HIS PROMISES.

In our text, Jesus makes the connection for his disciples between what He had said to them and the fact of His death and resurrection. In v. 44, it is written:

“Then he said to them, `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.”

In other words, Jesus had clearly taught His disciples when He was with them, what would happen, and now, just as He had said, it indeed had happened in accordance with God's will. What was it that God's Word had promised? **Verse 46** states it clearly –

“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ...”

This was God's promise going back to **Adam and Eve** when He promised in Genesis 3 that the offspring of the woman would crush Satan's head. It was the promise to **Abraham** that one of his offspring would be a blessing for all nations. It was the promise pictured in the **Passover** and the **sacrifices God commanded at Mt. Sinai**. It was the promise to **King David** that his seed would reign forever. It was the promise spoken through prophets, like **Isaiah**,

who in **chapter 53** of his prophecy, spoke of the suffering of the Savior and his glory. All these OT promises have been fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus, giving us even today, tremendous confidence that what God has said through the generations of His people, is still true for us today. This is vital for us to remember when the sadness and pains of life seem so real and so unbearable. Jesus rose from the dead and won the ultimate victory over sin, death, and the powers of evil, thus validating His promises to be with us, to help us, and to make all things work together for our good. As the Gaithers wrote so long ago,

**“Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future.
And life is worth the living just because He lives.”**

Finally, ...

III. WE ARE MADE CONFIDENT BY HIS FORGIVENESS.

The greatest promise Jesus makes to us is the promise of His forgiveness. The purpose of His death was to take away our sin. The purpose of His resurrection is to proclaim full and free forgiveness. In **vv. 46-47** of our text, Jesus tells his disciples that God’s Word teaches that not only would Christ die and rise again, but also that -

“repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

Thus, Jesus’ disciples were to be witnesses of this truth and the Father would give them the Holy Spirit to furnish them with the power and authority necessary for them to do so.

Thus, through the witness of Jesus' original disciples this same Good News has come to us today. What is this **“forgiveness of sins?”** It isn't a cheap forgiveness, that says “don't sweat the small stuff,” suggesting that sin isn't all that bad. It isn't a forgiveness that suggests that Jesus is our buddy who overlooks our mistakes and is fun to hang out with once in a while. Nor is it a forgiveness that affords us the luxury of choosing what's right and wrong for ourselves. Real forgiveness is a valuable commodity, because God takes sin seriously – so seriously in fact. that His Word says, **“the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23)**. But sin, being as serious as that, required a sacrifice from someone pure enough and powerful enough to overcome it. Thus, in love, God sent to us a precious gift, His only Son, Jesus, whom He loved, who was without sin and therefore was pure enough to shed His blood and die for us; and yet as God's Son was powerful enough to overcome sin, which He did through His death and resurrection. Thus, through the death and resurrection of Christ we are reconciled with God.

CONCLUSION

Today, so many voices and ideas vie for our allegiance and commitment, yet they are, according to Scripture, like shifting sands that change over time. Putting our confidence in them will only prove them false and our lives to collapse like houses built on sand. Jesus is our rock. When our confidence is built on Him, no matter what storms of life we go through, even when our calamity is of our own doing, Jesus will not fail nor forsake us. As we repent and believe the Gospel, our confidence for a bright and forever future is ours.

A-men.