

God's Word Is True!

³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"

⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things."

How much skepticism, do you think, there is toward Easter today? How many consider us strange, weird, or crazy for celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ? How many believe that the resurrection from the dead is the silliest, dumbest thing they've ever heard, something that you'd only read or imagine in fairy tales.

This skepticism is nothing new. Skepticism of Jesus' resurrection is a common theme and thread throughout the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Just follow this string of skepticism in the gospel of Luke alone:

- Luke 24:4 – When the women arrived at Jesus' tomb and found the stone rolled away and the body of Jesus gone, they "wondered" about what they were seeing. Literally, they were "perplexed" by what they were seeing. The gospel of Mark adds that they were trembling and bewildered.
- Luke 24:11 – When the women told the Eleven disciples what they had seen and been told by an angel, none of the disciples believed the women. It says that **"their words seemed to them like nonsense."** Literally, they dismissed what the women said as a silly.
- Luke 24:17 – When Jesus appeared to two other disciples on their way to Emmaus, Jesus asked them what they are talking about, and it says that those two disciples stood still with their faces downcast. And then when they told Jesus why they were so down and out, Jesus, in verse 25, gently rebukes them and says, **"How foolish you are, and how slow to believe."**

- Luke 24:37 – When Jesus suddenly appeared before the disciples, it says that they were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. And then in verse 38, Jesus gently rebukes them too and says, **“Why are you so troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?”**
- Luke 24:41 – And even after they saw Jesus’ wounds on his hands and feet, it says that they still didn’t believe. Literally, it was just too good to be true.

You see, the skepticism of Jesus’ resurrection today is nothing new. And it wouldn’t even surprise me, right now, if there is some skepticism in this room. Doubts of who Jesus is and what he has done is an all-too-common issue of ours. The question is: What are we going to do about this skepticism? The answer is: Nothing, but Jesus will, and he will use Holy Scripture to do so.

What you and I want to notice in our text today is that the deciding factor, the difference maker, for the disciples on Easter was not the fact that Jesus stood right in front of them, was not the fact that they saw his hands and feet, and was not even Jesus eating a piece of broiled fish. The deciding factor, the difference maker, that removed the disciples’ skepticism and convinced them that Jesus is alive was Holy Scripture. It was Jesus teaching them again what was promised and prophesied in God’s Word concerning himself.

And I pray the same miracle happens here today. I pray that all your minds are opened wide on this Easter Sunday to see, to know, and to believe that GOD’S WORD IS TRUE and everything that we believe about our Savior, Jesus Christ, according to God’s Word, is true. Then, Lord-willing, at the end of this sermon, you will know exactly what Jesus meant, when at the outset of appearing to the disciples, he said, **“Peace be with you.”**

Every one of us would like to convince ourselves that if anything would alleviate or take our doubts away about Jesus, it would be if we could see Jesus in person. But what if Jesus all of the sudden appeared, right here, right now? Would that really make the difference? If you actually got to see the scars on his hands and feet, would that make the difference? If you got to touch those scars, like doubting Thomas did, would that make the difference? If you got to enjoy a fish fry with Jesus, would that make the difference? To think it would is naïve and foolish. The honest truth is, if that happened right now, where Jesus all of the sudden stood in front of us, all of us would either think we were looking at a ghost or we’d be thinking this is too good to be true. And the honest truth is that the guilt of our sin would come rushing to the forefront of our minds in the presence of our holy Lord. For sure, we would be startled and frightened, and for sure, Jesus would have to say to us, **“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?”**

So again, what’s going to make the difference? Going back to Holy Scripture, just like Jesus did with the disciples in verses 44-47, and seeing from Holy Scripture that everything that was promised, everything that was foretold, was fulfilled in Christ – his life, his death, and his resurrection.

It literally means going back 700 years before Jesus was born, to Isaiah 42:1-3, and read: **“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A**

bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,” and then to see such tenderness to sinners like the paralytic in Mark 2, to whom Jesus said, **“Son, your sins are forgiven,”** or to the adulteress woman in John 8, to whom he said, **“Neither do I condemn you,”** or to the thief on the cross in Luke 23, to whom he said, **“Today, you will be with me in paradise”** – then you and I must know according to Holy Scripture, that it’s true, it’s absolutely true, that **“God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned”** (John 3:17-18a).

It literally means going back, again, 700 years before Jesus was born, to Isaiah 53:5, and read: **“But he was pierced for our transgressions, and he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed,”** and then to see Jesus nailed to that cross, to hear his cry, **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,”** and three days later to see him alive with the scars of the cross – then you and I must know according to Holy Scripture, that it’s true, it’s absolutely true, that **“the blood of Jesus, [God’s] Son, purifies us from all sin”** (I John 1:7), that by Jesus’ wounds we are healed, that in our place Jesus received the punishment for our sin, and his sacrifice satisfied his Father’s wrath.

It literally means going back no less than 2,000 years before Jesus was born, to Job 19:25, and read, **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth,”** and then to see Jesus, the one who paid for all our sins on the cross, standing right in front of the disciples, even eating a piece of broiled fish – then you and I must know according to Holy Scripture, that it’s true, it’s absolutely true, that **“we are more than conquerors through him who loved us”** and **“nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord”** (Romans 8:37, 39) – not even death. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Do you need any more convincing than what has been promised, foretold, and fulfilled in Jesus Christ according to Holy Scripture? I pray the Holy Spirit has opened all of your minds to say, **“No, I don’t need anything more,”** and to see that the greatest miracle on this Easter, after Jesus’ resurrection, is your faith in Jesus, your Lord and Savior.

May the Holy Spirit open your mind and heart to see, to know, to understand, and to believe that:

- Because Jesus lived, died, and rose for you, your greatest need is secure: You are forgiven of all sin. When Jesus died on the cross, he said, **“It is finished (literally, your debt of sin is paid in full),”** and when Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, the Father said, **“Yes, it is.”** You do not need to carry around the guilt of your sin.
- Because Jesus lived, died, and rose for you, your greatest fear is conquered: Death does not have the last word in your life. Jesus, who said, **“I am the resurrection and life, the one who believes in me will live, even though they die”** (John 11:25) – HE has the last word.

Think of what you have heard today from God’s Word. Think of what you have learned today from God’s Word. Now listen to Jesus first words to his disciples after he rose from the dead: **“Peace be with you.”** Now you know exactly what Jesus meant when he said it. All of salvation has been fulfilled in Christ. God’s Word is true. I pray it burns brightly in your heart. Happy Easter! Amen.