

**Luke 24:36-49**

**While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”<sup>37</sup> They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.<sup>38</sup> He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?<sup>39</sup> 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.”<sup>40</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.**

**<sup>41</sup> And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”<sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish,<sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate it in their presence.**

**<sup>44</sup> 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.”<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.<sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,<sup>47</sup> and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.<sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”**

Dear people in God's Kingdom

Have you ever wondered why God used four different writers to record the life on Jesus in the books we call the Gospels? Why have Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each record the life of Jesus? Wouldn't it have much more simple to put it all into one book? Today we will look at this and many other things as we dig deeper into the death and resurrection of Jesus.

I enjoy watching TV shows that would fall into the heading of crime shows – like Criminal Minds, Castle and others. These types of shows seem to be very popular right now. Why do you think that people like watching these types of shows? I think that these types of shows draw us in as we try and solve the mystery of a death or crime. Witnesses are interviewed. Evidence, facts and clues are collected. These shows are fun as you think you know what happened and who did it, but then they present another fact or clue which throws your whole plan off. Finally at the end after all the clues are gathered and all the facts are sifted through and every witness is interviewed, the ending becomes crystal clear. But even then, how many times have you caught yourself saying, I didn't see that coming? That is probably how the disciples felt in our text for today. They thought one thing and by the end of this Sunday they were saying to each other, I didn't see that coming!

But the real question for us today is, How do you know what is true and real and what is not, especially these days when the truth is hard to find? For some people the words of our text today about the bodily resurrection of Jesus takes us into an area which seems difficult to understand. That is why there is so much confusion and so many attacks by the devil and this sinful world on this very important teaching about the Resurrection of Jesus. We are going to use these words from the Gospel of Luke to see that we can place our trust in the physical, tangible proof we need to be sure of what is true. Believing in this

teaching of Jesus' death and resurrection is no wild leap of faith on a bungee cord that will snap or stretch too far. Nor is this a blind leap of faith into the uncertain world of feelings and emotions. Like the mountain climber whose rope is secured firmly in a solid rock, our faith and hope is secure in Christ and his bodily resurrection from the dead. So this morning, using the many clues from this text, let us:

**Theme: Look At the Easter Evidence!**

- 1. Found in Jesus' body**
- 2. Found in God's Word**

Some of you might be thinking to yourselves that Pastor Gartner must have messed up. If I am not mistaken, I think he preached on these words last Sunday. While this is not exactly correct, it is very close. Last Sunday, we used the Gospel of John to see what John recorded for us about that first Easter evening. Today we are looking at Luke's inspired recording of this same account. You might be whispering to yourselves, why do we need to hear this again since we heard it last week?

That is a valid question. Today, I pray that we will see why it is good to look at all of God's words to note the similarities and the differences between the different Gospel writers, even in the accounts which are recording the same events like our text for today. The similarities are that Jesus disciples were huddled together for fear of being captured by the Jewish leaders and put to death just as Jesus was. The women came running with the reports of an empty tomb and the angel who said, "He has risen!" Peter and John came running with their report that the tomb was empty and the grave clothes left behind neatly folded. Luke adds how the two disciples on the way to Emmaus came running and told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them. And just as they are taking all of this in and processing it, suddenly it says, **"Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be to you.'"**

We talked last week about what a wonderful word Jesus spoke as he said **"Peace by with you."** We will not spend too much time on this other than noting that it was the true peace of Jesus' death and resurrection that was what they needed to hear.

What I want to do is to start piecing together the clues that Jesus was putting before his disciples to build up their faith and to eventually build up the faith of those who would hear it from the disciples – which is us. How did they react to Jesus sudden appearance in their midst? **"They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost."** Jesus loved his disciples. He confronts their worries and weakness of faith by saying to them, **"Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in you minds?"** Imagine this morning that Jesus is asking this question to you personally: "Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your minds?" Why are you so worried about what your future holds? Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! He has the whole world in his hands, including your life.

Then Jesus did something very special for them. He laid out a simple piece of evidence that he was alive. He said to them, **"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."** What a glorious and gracious invitation from the lips of Jesus for disciples of every age. Look at me. Touch me. Put your fingers into the nail prints if you wish, or even stick your hand into the large gaping wound still there in the side of Jesus. When Jesus offered this blessing to Thomas and told him to stop doubting and believe, Thomas responded by saying, **"My**

**Lord and my God.”** Through our eyes of faith we are doing that exact thing. As we read God’s Word and receive his body and blood in the Lord’s Supper, we are seeing and touching. We are examining the evidence. The Greek word used by John and also here in Luke has the thought of looking at something and carefully examining the evidence.

Think of how often you use your skills like a detective to analyze and draw conclusions from what you see. As you watch your favorite crime show, what are you doing through the whole show? You are looking for evidence and clues. Some small and some pretty obvious. Why? It helps to find the truth.

How closely are you examining the clues that God gives in his Word? Are you opening your Bibles often to see the many clues and the mountains of evidence? Are you coming to church regularly to grow in your faith and knowledge? What can happen to people if they take the time to examine the historical evidence in the Bible for Jesus’ resurrection? We know what happens! We find clue after clue and truth after truth and mounds of evidence that show that the resurrection did happen. Let’s look at some of the evidence from our text.

Clue #1: Look again at the nail marks in the hands of Jesus and the large wound from the spear that pierced his side. These wounds on Jesus are evidence of the fact that he loves you and he loves me. They are also evidence that the work of paying for our sin was accomplished in his body by his perfect life and his perfect sacrifice. This is so important because we cannot begin to find peace with God by what we do in our own lives. If we look at our lives honestly, we realize that our sinful heart controls our sinful body. Anger, greed, lack of love, lust, selfishness and pride are all there. All of these ugly sinful things find their way into my life and yours. And no amount effort on our part or nothing we can produce in our bodies and with our lives can remove or erase even one misdeed. That is why the body of Jesus that appeared to the disciples brings us such peace and joy. 2 Peter 2 tells us, **“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.”**

Clue #2: We can even see a tiny but notable clue in the fact that he ate a piece of fish. He was truly alive. He was not a ghost or a vision. He was really alive. Sometimes it is the smallest details and we might wonder why God even included this in his inspired word, but this small phrase is just another piece of evidence that everything is true. The clues about touching his body and seeing him eat some fish were great for the disciples, but what about us and all the other Christians who never got to see this with our own eyes? That is why the next little phrase that Jesus spoke really hits home.

## 2. Found in God’s Word

Clue #3: Jesus does even more to strengthen the faith of his disciples and make them sure of his resurrection from the dead. He points back to the testimonies of his suffering and death found in the Old Testament Scriptures. He says 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.”** I am holding in my hand the March issue of our magazine, Forward in Christ. On the front cover and back cover you see a crown of thorns and the words, “It is finished.” As a lost and condemned sinner these words means so much to me, but these words and the death and resurrection of Jesus were prophesied

long before Jesus ever spoke them from the cross. Inside this “Forward in Christ” magazine there is an article that emphasizes how the concept of Jesus suffering and death were pictured in the Old Testament by the lambs that were used for Passover and other sacrifices. When John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, **“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”** he was telling us to look at the way thousands of sacrifices in the Old Testament pointed to the great sacrifice of Christ. How exciting it is to show people the words of Isaiah 53 and lead them to see Jesus as the Lamb of God who was wounded for our sin and bruised for our iniquity.

In our text it says that Jesus **“opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.”** That word for **“opened”** is the same word used to describe how Jesus opened up the hearts and minds of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus so they could understand the Scriptures as well. It is used in Acts 16 to describe how the Lord opened the heart of a woman named Lydia when Paul spoke to her about Jesus. When we look into the Old Testament and see the many predictions about Jesus death and resurrection, each prediction is like a witness at a crime scene. The more witnesses you have the easier it is to establish what actually happened. In the crime shows we watch, when the agents investigate a crime scene and interview dozens of witnesses independently, it does not take long to get a good idea of what actually happened. In the same way the numerous predictions and prophecies in the Old Testament provide us with the evidence we need to believe that everything told us about Jesus life, his death and his resurrection are true. Our faith is built on a solid foundation of God’s words from both the Old and New Testaments.

Finally Jesus told the disciples that they would be witnesses of these things to other people and he would send them the Holy Spirit from the Father. **“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”** Today it is our job to do for people what Jesus did for the disciples that night. It is our job to point to the evidence for Jesus’ resurrection in the nail prints found in his hands. It is our job to lead people into the prophecies of the Old Testament so the Lord can open their hearts to believe. It is our job to point to the cross of Calvary and the empty tomb as witnesses of what Jesus did and what it means for us

In this same Forward in Christ, there is an article showing a couple who is listening to these words from Jesus about being witnesses as they have spent almost two years volunteering to spread God’s Word in Russia. This same issue has a beautiful article talking about the mission work right here in our own backyard at the Watertown ROC – Youth Recreation and Outreach Center. Since 2003 Pastor Tim Mueller and his dedicated group of volunteers has been faithfully spreading the peace of Jesus’ Easter message to the lost teens of Watertown. The article states that around 75 teens have been baptized at the ROC. There is another article that tells the love of Jesus as a lady who grew up Muslim was led along with her husband to believe that Jesus is the only way to heaven. What a joy to see hearts that have been opened in places like Russia, in places like North Carolina and right here in Watertown, WI. That is why we are still here. It is my hope and prayer that we will never grow tired of having Jesus show us his hands and side and joyfully proclaim to us how he has risen from the dead, just as he said. Amen.