

“Remember How He Told You”

Luke 24:1-12

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Salvation is ours and the victory is won! Death no longer has dominion over Jesus, and since we are joined with Him in His death and resurrection as Paul says in Romans 6, death no longer has dominion over us. On this glorious Easter morning, we celebrate with all the saints that the last enemy has been defeated, and we live free from the curse of our Old Adam which left us condemned to eternal fire and separation from God for all eternity. Because of that redemptive freedom from the grave, we joyously and fervently proclaim that Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Our risen Lord has given us a blessed gift as those who confess the truth of Scripture alone. And it is not only during Reformation time that we get to bring out the Lutheran “Solas.” Here in our text, we get a little tidbit of *Sola Scriptura* within the Scripture itself this Easter morning. The angel sent to the tomb says to the women in verse 6 of our text, “He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee...” When we read that, our inner 5-year old’s curiosity is compelled to ask, “What/where/when/why/how did He tell them?” All of these questions certainly had to be flying through the heads of these women as well, pulling at every thread of a memory to find the one where Jesus told them He was going to rise from the grave. And they do remember, and we too remember these things by that which is recorded in the Word of God, from the prophecies of the prophets, to the fulfillment of those in the person of Jesus Christ, the risen Son of God.

The truth of Christ is laid bare in the words of Holy Scripture. By way of the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, the Old Testament prophets, the New Testament evangelists, and Jesus’ Apostles spread the good news of salvation for all people in Christ the Lord. But in these days following the death of Jesus, the Apostles were neither joyous nor wanting to spread the good news. They were hiding, afraid, and commiserating in disbelief. They allowed their worldly understanding of death to cloud the clear words of Scripture and of their Lord, words which they knew very well, that would have assured them that Jesus was not lost to the grave forever. So, as we worship in joy on this most holy day, we pause now to see what the prophets foretold, what Jesus foretold, and what our Lord and Savior fulfilled in His resurrection to life for our sakes.

In all trials and troubles, we can always find help and comfort in the reality of Jesus' resurrection. Because it reminds us that we are not bound to this life alone. No matter the intensity of our fears, or the seemingly insurmountable anguish we might feel, the Son of God has risen from the grave to seal the reality of our eternal life in heaven with Him. Take Job, for example. In the midst of what most would say is too much to deal with, He proclaims with confidence, as we also will sing, from Job 19:25-26 “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God.”

What magnificent beauty and truth lies in those words. The Christian life is fraught with suffering, and is something we all must deal with in this life. While suffering takes many forms, the relief is only one, and that one is Jesus Christ who has been raised from the dead, so that we might have eternal life “in our flesh” before the face of God for all eternity. Job shows us that faith in Christ and His redemptive work on the cross will carry us through any and all trials in this life, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus as the risen, Holy One of God.

King David’s proclamation of the Gospel of the risen Christ is clear in Psalm 16:9-10, where the Psalmist writes, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.” The Holy One of God will not see the corruption of death, for He is the risen Savior, Jesus Christ. His body is not lost to the earth, but has been made new in the glory of God the Father. And on account of His glorious resurrection from the dead, we too will not be abandoned to Sheol—that is, to the grave. While our earthly bodies will decay, they will one day be made new in the glory of the Father, just as Jesus’ body was made new in His resurrection from the dead. The Holy Spirit worked through the songs of David to proclaim the truth of Jesus’ resurrection, centuries before the earthly event took place, and the Apostles would have been innately familiar with the book of the Psalms, most likely even having it memorized.

Though we have only barely scratched the surface of the writings relating to Christ, we can see that Jesus spoke to His Apostles through the Psalms and Old Testament writings, opening them up to the truth of what must take place in His earthly life. And, as if the testimony of these books wasn’t enough, Jesus even gave the Apostles the insight about His resurrection directly Himself. We read in John 2:18-19 after the cleansing of the temple, “So the Jews said to Him, ‘What sign do you show us for doing these things?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’” Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the Temple is. He is the Tabernacle of God, the dwelling place of God amongst His people. And the enemies of Christ will soon destroy

the temple of His body, leading Him to the cross and to His death, and out of His death He will destroy death, and proclaim victory over Satan when He rises from the grave.

And, if even that was not clear enough to them, He states it even more plainly as He teaches them in Mark 8:31-32, “And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And He said this plainly.” There can be no confusion or debate about what is going to take place. The Lord of all has laid out the plan of salvation before His disciples so that they might understand it clearly. And yet, their sinful nature cannot accept it. Jesus’ teaching can oftentimes be difficult to wrap our heads around, and when we take them out of context or manipulate them to suit our own needs, they become dangerous and false witnesses of the Son of God and His victory over death. But these men have heard the truth, in the plainest of terms, and still do not see that this is how it must take place.

Just like the Apostles, we can struggle with accepting and understanding the Word of God. Yet, despite our shortcomings and our unwillingness at times to hear and see what He has told us, Jesus Christ still died on the cross to redeem us from our sin, paying our debt to win us eternal life in the presence of God. And thanks be to God that our worldly efforts have no part in that victory, because the best we can do on our part is completely mess it up if we believe that we can have a positive impact on our salvation. If left to fend for ourselves and create our own righteousness to please God, we would find ourselves rotting in the grave, with no hope of resurrection on the last day. Without Jesus’ intercession on our behalf, we can do no good before the Father, and cannot be saved. But our faith has saved us, just as the Son of God proclaimed to the many whom He healed throughout the Gospel accounts. We read in Romans 5:1, “Therefore since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Christ is the sole victor in our fight against sin, death, and the devil, and that victory is appropriated to us by His gracious gift of forgiveness, brought to us by faith in the Word and the Sacraments.

Everything written about Jesus in the Old Testament, and everything He has said to His Apostles has been fulfilled in His death and resurrection. All that He said has come to pass, those things which He spoke from His own lips, and those which the Spirit spoke before His incarnation through the prophets. Going back to the passage in John 2, John adds some commentary to Jesus’ words, saying in verses 21-22, “But He was speaking about the temple of His body. When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.” The Apostles come to the realization that all has happened as

Jesus foretold, probably based on the women's account of the words of the angels. The angels at the tomb are telling the women, "Remind them. He told them this would happen and they need not fear." In the face of death, they shudder to think of what they will do next now that He is gone. But He is not gone. He is risen! Death cannot hold Him, just as the Scriptures bear witness. And in so doing they bear witness to the reality of our own resurrection, a resurrection that is ours by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, who is the resurrected one, the almighty Son of God.

The angels sent by God to the women at the tomb affirm for all time the purity of the Scripture account. Jesus told the disciples how this would all come to pass, and yet, in their fear and disbelief, they have forgotten. They have forgotten what the Lord promised them through the prophets of old and through His own words throughout His ministry. Yet, even in the darkness of their fear, the Lord returns to them and reveals the truth that He has fulfilled all of those prophetic words. He is the Messiah, the one whom Moses promised, and the seed of the woman sent to crush the serpent's head. And just as He promised to return to them on the third day, He has promised to bring us His resurrected body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar, to be present with us as the one who has defeated death and hell. In this Holy Communion, which He instituted for our benefit, we share with one another the gift of salvation that is ours for the sake of Christ, and we share it with all the saints who have gone before us who also await the resurrection of the dead, when we will all be bodily reunited as one with our risen Lord Jesus.

Despite the doubts of the Apostles which Luke records, and even those doubts that may creep into your own mind, the truth lies in the words of Jesus, and so the angels point them back to the words of Christ for their consolation. And so, we too "remember how He told us" by His words in the Holy Scripture, which affirm the truth that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The resurrection of Christ has completed the plan of salvation, and is a foreshadowing of the final resurrection to come, (to echo the words of the angels) "remembering how He told you," through the words of the prophets, evangelists, and Apostles. Therein lies our Easter joy, as Paul says in our Epistle lesson this morning, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." Because Jesus has been raised from the dead, our salvation has been ratified and the victory over death has been won. In His death we were washed clean by His blood, and in His resurrection our hope is secured. For by the grace of God, when the final trumpet sounds, we too will rise to live with Him in heavenly bliss and glory for all eternity. Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.