

<sup>36</sup> Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." <sup>37</sup> But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?" <sup>39</sup> 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." <sup>40</sup> When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. <sup>41</sup> But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" <sup>42</sup> So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. <sup>43</sup> And He took it and ate in their presence. <sup>44</sup> Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." <sup>45</sup> And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> And you are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Text: Luke 24:36-49    A 5/7/17    Acts 4:8-12    1 John 1:1-2:2    Psalm 62    Resp. Ps.: 28  
Hymns: 733, 728, 200 (1, 4-8), 188 (1-4)

## **FROM FEAR AND DOUBT, TO FAITH AND PURPOSE**

- 1. Jesus is always with us**
- 2. Jesus directs us to Himself and His Word**
- 3. Jesus helps us to face and overcome what troubles us**
- 4. Jesus gives our lives their real purpose**

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

We're still in the Easter season. In the story of our Lord's appearance to His disciples on that first Easter evening we see how Jesus brings us **FROM FEAR AND DOUBT, TO FAITH AND PURPOSE.**

– 1 –

It was only three days since Jesus had died on the cross, and His disciples were so sad and troubled. Would they also be killed for being Jesus' followers? They had been **certain** that Jesus was the Messiah, but now they weren't sure what to think. What were they going to do with their lives? Everything was mixed up, and they didn't know what to do.

Earlier that day Jesus had appeared to and spoken with two of their fellow disciples on the road to Emmaus. After Jesus left them they immediately went to the disciples and those with them and told them, "*It is true! The Lord has risen....*" (NIV)

This brings us to the beginning of our text. While the disciples were still talking about this, "*Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them and said to them, 'Peace to you.'*" "Peace to you" was a common greeting among the Jews. But when the newly-resurrected Jesus appeared to His disciples, most of whom had thought He was dead, and told them, "*Peace to you,*" those words

took on tremendously deeper meaning for them. Jesus knew His disciples desperately needed Him, and He was right there for them.

As the saying goes, “Life happens.” Maybe someone who had been a big part of our life isn’t anymore. Maybe something we always depended on (or thought we could) we suddenly can’t depend on anymore. Maybe we come to see that something we had been so certain about is actually very different from what we had thought. When these kinds of things happen to us they can affect us deeply and cause us real anxiety and fear and sorrow.

The psalmist assures us, “*God is our refuge and strength, **an ever present help in trouble***” (46:1). Jesus is always with us, especially when we need Him most. Scripture assures us, “*Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid..., for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you*” (Dt. 31:6).

The disciples were still very confused and still thinking that Jesus was dead. John tells us in his parallel account that the disciples were in a room with the doors locked when Jesus suddenly simply appeared to them (Jn. 20:19). We can tell from the original words of our text that this really frightened them. (Thus Jesus’ first words to them: “*Peace to you.*”) As the disciples struggled to process it all their first reaction was to think, “This can’t really be Jesus. He’s dead. This must be some kind of ghost.” (The Bible doesn’t say there are ghosts, it says the disciples, in their confused and frightened state, **thought** they were seeing a ghost.)

“*[Jesus] said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?’*” It is very significant that the word “*doubts*” in the original is also translated, “thoughts,” “reasoning,” “questions,” and “arguments.” Do you see how all these things go together? Is God **always** going to be there for us? Will God **ever** forget about us or fail us? Will God **always** keep His promises to us in His Word? So why do we so often doubt? When, instead of just trusting God and His Word, we dwell on our “thoughts” and “reasoning” (“I can’t see how things are going to work out”), and on our “questions” and “arguments” (“I know the Bible says this, but...” “I know You promise me You’re going to help me, Lord, but...”), we always end up in doubt. And when we doubt, we become “*troubled.*” As Jesus says, “*Why are you **troubled**, and why do **doubts** rise in your hearts?*”

What had caused the disciples’ doubts about Jesus? We just heard of doubt being caused by “thoughts,” and “reasoning” The Jews had “[reasoned]” things out in their minds that their Messiah would be an earthly leader who would establish a glorious earthly kingdom for them. When Jesus died and that hadn’t happened, the disciples were confused and full of “questions” and “doubts.” Their “[reason]” told them that Jesus was dead and gone, and that added to their “doubts.”

– 2 –

What did Jesus do about His disciples’ doubts? “*He said to them, ... ‘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.’ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, ‘Have you any food here?’* <sup>42</sup> *So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence.*”

Jesus directed His disciples to Himself. The original text makes it clear that Jesus did this in a very powerful way: “**Behold** (“**Look at,**” “**See**”) *My hands and feet!*” “*It is I Myself!*” “**Handle**” (**Touch**) *Me and see!*” Jesus assured them that they weren’t seeing a ghost. Then He showed them His hands and His feet. It really was Jesus Himself in the flesh. Jesus had risen bodily from the grave, and is alive!

We can get so caught up in our troubles and doubts and worries and fears. We turn downward and inward. Jesus tells us, “**Look at Me!**” Our Savior lifts up our head and turns our focus to Him. We read in the sixty-second Psalm, “*Find rest, O my soul, in **God alone**; my hope comes from **Him**. **He alone** is my rock and my salvation; **He** is my fortress, I will not be shaken. ... **He** is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in **Him** at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to **Him**, for **God** is our refuge*” (vv. 5-6, 7b-8). Take your focus off of yourself and what’s troubling you, and turn to Jesus. He invites us to “*pour out [our] hearts to Him*” and tell Him everything we’re confused and worried about and afraid and troubled by, and ask for and receive His help.

Jesus said to His disciples, “*These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.*” Jesus took away His disciples’ doubts by directing them to His Word. Jesus “*opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day ....’*” Now they understood why Jesus had to die on the cross, and what His resurrection from the dead means.

When we’re full of doubt and fear and uncertainty the solution is to turn to God’s Word. “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*” (Ro. 10:17). God’s Word takes away our doubt and fear and confusion, and gives us faith. “*Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*” (Ps. 119:105). Through His Word God leads us and shows us the way. As we keep turning to God’s Word, we’re reminded that our Savior loves us so much that He gave His life for us. God’s Word works in us the confidence that everything it says is true, that Jesus is with us, and that God will keep all His promises to us.

– 3 –

Jesus didn’t say to His disciples, “My poor disciples, I feel so sorry for you.” He told them, “*Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?*” Jesus sympathized with His disciples and cared about what was troubling them. That’s why He was there. Jesus knew His disciples needed Him to help them face their doubts and worries and fears, and overcome them.

Sometimes we give ourselves permission to remain in our troubles – our sorrow, our confusion, our doubts and fears, our self pity (“Poor me!”), our anger, our worry and anxiety, and so forth – by telling ourselves, “This bad thing happened. I have a **right** to feel the way I do.” As long as we allow ourselves to remain in that mindset, we’re not going to get over what’s troubling us. Jesus wants us to bring what’s troubling us to Him and let Him help us with it. The process can take time, and it can be painful, but Jesus will help us face what’s troubling us and work through it and overcome it.

– 4 –

Jesus told His disciples, *“Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in [My] name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”* With these words Jesus reaffirmed His disciples in their life’s calling. Only a few minutes before this they didn’t know what they were going to do. Three years earlier Jesus had called them to be His disciples and *“fishers of men”* (Mt. 4:19). They had seen Jesus die on the cross, and now they saw Him alive again. They had personally witnessed the salvation story. Jesus had opened their minds to understand His Word. Jesus gave them the promise of the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (less than two months from that time) when the Holy Spirit would fill them with strength and zeal and boldness as they bore witness to Jesus and His Word on that day, and for the rest of their lives.

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths”* – Proverbs 3:5-6. Sometimes we go through difficult times in our lives, and we’re troubled and confused and not sure what to do, and maybe what direction our life should take. Jesus comforts us and strengthens us and settles us. He assures us that we are His dear children. He reaffirms us in our life’s calling that wherever we are and whatever we’re doing we live for Him, and to bear witness to Him. Trust Jesus. He will direct your life.

When “life happens” to you, remember Jesus is always with you, Jesus directs you to Himself and His Word, Jesus helps you to face and overcome whatever is troubling you, and **Jesus** gives your life its real purpose. Amen.