

**Third Sunday of Easter – April 19, 2015**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

**I Know that me Redeemer Lives**

**Luke 24:36-49 (NIV)**

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. 49) 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 Friends in Christ Jesus:

Sometimes it takes a while for the reality of a situation to set in, doesn't it? Jesus' disciples found themselves struggling to accept everything that had happened in their lives as the events of our text were unfolding. They had just experienced a true tragedy – actually a series – of them that they were trying to understand and accept.

It was now Sunday evening – this situation had been going on now for about 72 hours or so. Their ordeal began on Thursday during their celebration of the Passover with Jesus. It was supposed to be a happy, joyous time. However, Jesus' mood was somber as he told them that one of them would betray him. Shortly after this, Judas left but the others did not immediately understand why. Soon they would discover that Judas had become a traitor to Jesus. After the meal Jesus led his disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane where he fervently prayed to his heavenly Father while his weary disciples napped.

Suddenly Judas appeared on the scene with a band of armed men. He greeted Jesus with a kiss to identify him to his enemies. Who could have imagined how everything would have unfolded? Less than 24 hours later both Judas and Jesus were dead. Judas tragically ended his own life. Jesus was crucified as a criminal. As the disciples gathered together to support and console each other their hearts were filled with fear. There was no guarantee that Jesus' enemies would be satisfied – their lives were in jeopardy too.

But there's more! In addition to the events we've already mentioned – there were the reports of Jesus' resurrection and appearance to the women and to their friends from Emmaus who told them they had actually walked and talked with Jesus. What did it all mean? What was next?

If you and I hadn't been blessed with our faith and an understanding of the meaning of Jesus suffering, death and resurrection – we'd find ourselves trying to accept the reality of the situation too.

Things were moving along quickly – much too quickly. There was hardly time for reality to set in when there was yet another amazing development. **While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."**

In their joy and amazement, they could hardly believe it. It was true – He lives –but that must have triggered all kinds of other fears and questions for those disciples – fears and questions, which are all too familiar to our generation and us, as we will by exploring this text using the theme

**Theme:** He Lives Triumphant From the Grave

1. He lives to silence all my fears
2. He lives, he lives who once was dead

It had been a busy day for Jesus. Early that Sunday morning he had risen from the dead. Angel messengers announced this to Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others (cf. Luke 24:10) shortly after dawn. Later that morning Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. That afternoon He walked with Cleopas and his companion on the path from Jerusalem to Emmaus and opened their minds to understand all that the Scriptures had said concerning his sufferings, death, and resurrection before he revealed himself to them. He had even appeared to Peter. These were the things that the disciples were talking about when Jesus came with his greeting: Shalom -- “Peace be with you.”

It was an ordinary greeting but it carried an extraordinary blessing for his disciples and for all those who hear his voice through faith. The apostle Paul reminds us (Romans 5:1 NIV) **Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...**

But at that moment the disciples felt anything but peace. Startled and afraid – that’s how Luke described the feelings and the emotions of the disciples on that Easter evening when Jesus appeared to them behind locked doors for the very first time. **They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.**

We normally speak of our Easter Joy – but for those first believers the conversation centered around Easter fear -- fears which Jesus came to set aside.

“Easter fear” – that’s what the soldiers sent to stand guard outside Jesus’ tomb experienced when the angel came down from heaven to roll the stone away from the empty tomb. (Matthew 28:4 NIV) **The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.** “Easter fear – that’s what gripped the women who came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. **As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.** 6) "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7) But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' " 8) Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid. (Mark 16:5-8 NIV)

In spite of the many reports that kept coming in throughout the day that Jesus was alive that evening the disciples were filled with “Easter fear.” **The disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"** (John 20:19 NIV)

The hazy fog of fear that had permeated the day was suddenly intensified when Jesus came and stood among them. He lived triumphant from the grave. He lives to silence fears but at least initially, they disciples thought they were seeing a ghost – their fears had brought about all kinds of irrational thoughts. What other explanation was there? These men as of yet did not understand that Jesus in his exalted state was present everywhere and could appear before them any time he chose to do so.

**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."**

The longer Jesus spoke and was with them – the more reality began to set in. His words began to settle their fears but his words were not completely comforting. Mark tells us that Jesus rebuked them. **He rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.** (Mark 16:14 NIV)

Jesus rebuke was loving – as was that sorrowful look that rebuked Peter for his denial of Jesus on Maundy Thursday evening – but it was effective. His disappointment was evident and it convicted them of their sins. Now the feelings of fear that so often accompany guilt replaced their terror. Jesus was right of course; they had let him down. They ought to have been expecting his resurrection, but instead they were overcome with sorrow at his death and were apprehensively awaiting their own demise.

Jesus came to bring them peace – he came to drive away their fears. ***He lives who once was dead.*** Dear friends those are not just nice words of poetry – those words get to the root of the "Easter fears" the disciples -- fears that haunt us when we are confronted with our guilt.

It's not enough to simply believe that Jesus lives – it is vital that Christ was raised from the dead. Jesus had to die. If Christ had not died then there would have been no payment for our sin. Jesus did die – the marks on his hands and his feet and side are proof of his death. They confirmed Jesus' death for the disciples even as the opportunity to see, touch, and eat with Jesus confirmed for them that he was now alive. **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.**

Repentance and forgiveness of sins – that was the solution to their fears. Through the Scriptures Jesus confirmed for the disciples that he was the Christ. He suffered and rose from the dead on the third day to provide peace and forgiveness of sins for them and for the world just as the Scriptures had foretold

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The disciples learned those truths that first Easter evening. These are truths that apply to us as well. It is true, of course, that we have not seen the Lord's hands and feet. But the Scriptures have convinced us that Jesus died. **When the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"** (Mark 15:39 NIV)

When Jesus was dead, **Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. 44) Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. 45) When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.** (Mark 15:43-45 NIV)

There is no doubt for us that Jesus died and there is no doubt for us that he lives triumphant from the grave. “He lives he lives who once was dead,” is our joyous Easter song – but what about our Easter fears?

We’ve consider the Easter fears of the soldiers, the woman at the empty tomb as well as the fears of the disciples in the looked room. We don’t readily admit fear. Have you ever watched some young boys trying a dangerous stunt? You can see the fear in their faces; but to hear them tell it to their friends – they’re not afraid of anything.

Later however after the fearful event is over, after all the bragging about how brave they were – after the bravest acknowledges he was just a little bit afraid – ah that’s when others will become brave – brave enough to admit their fears.

Now it is our turn to be brave – the disciples admitted their fears to Luke – Luke was not a firsthand observer of the things he reported. Rather as he tells us in the opening verses of his Gospel (Luke 1:2-4 NIV) he carefully investigated everything from the beginning, and then wrote an orderly account of his investigations so that Theophilus might know the certainty of the things he had been taught. The Holy Spirit has preserved his account for our benefit – so that we too might be sure that Jesus lived a perfect life for us, that he died the death we deserved for our sins and that he lives Triumphant From the Grave

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So how would you answer Jesus’ question: **“Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?”**

What is it that fills our lives with fear – do we have fears for our family, fears about our relationships, fears about our friends, fears about our society and the economy, fears about our status in God’s family? Do we have fears because of our sins? What is it that raises doubt in our minds? Do we have questions about God and his love for us? Do have doubts that God is able to provide for us? Do we have doubts about our eternal destiny? Maybe our doubts are not quite that weighty – but they still trouble us.

“Fear and doubt” – they’re twin trouble makers for us, aren’t they. Where there is one, the other is always lurking nearby. We have a tendency to try to minimize our fears our doubts until they become way too big for us hide. Jesus doesn’t think any of our fears or doubts are trivial. He lives to silence all my fears. Therefore, there is no need for us to attempt to make light of our fears either. Trusting in Jesus glorious resurrection, let us lay our fears on Jesus as we confess:

I know that my Redeemer lives, He Lives Triumphant From the Grave

1. He lives to silence all my fears
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Oh the sweet Joy this sentence gives, I know that my Redeemer lives! Amen.