

HE HAS RISEN!

Luke 24:1-35

Key Verse: 24:6

“He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee....”

In the last passage we saw Jesus on the cross, shedding his blood for the sin of the world. With his lifeblood dripping down, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” In this way Jesus offered himself to God as a sacrifice of atonement for sinners. I was the one who did not know what I was doing and committed grievous sin against God. I deserved to be crucified and to die for my own sins. Yet, Jesus prayed for me, and for all of us, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” When we hear Jesus’ prayer and accept it in our hearts, godly sorrow wells up in our souls. We truly realize the seriousness of sin. We realize even more deeply the love of God and the high price he paid to save us from our sins. The forgiving grace of Jesus changes us from the heart. It cleanses and heals our souls and gives us peace and the power to forgive others. We can truly love others in the cross of Jesus. We can love Muslim people and pray for them in the cross of Jesus. America can be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in the cross of Jesus. Lord, keep us near the cross!

Today’s passage is about Jesus’ resurrection. It consists of two beautiful stories. First, Jesus’ resurrection is announced to women who went to the tomb. Their sorrow is turned to joy. Second, the Risen Christ meets two disciples on the road to Emmaus and shows them that he has risen. Their despair gives way to a living hope in the kingdom of God and they renew their mission. This old, old story of Jesus’ resurrection is for us. When we accept the resurrection in our hearts, Jesus gives us eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance. All of our root problems are truly solved through the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ is the best news to anybody, no matter who he or she may be. May God help us to accept this good news in our hearts today.

First, he is not here; he has risen (1-12).

Look at verse 1. “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.” These women had followed Jesus from Galilee. They each had received Jesus’ grace of healing and made a personal commitment to Jesus. They followed Jesus to the end, even though the disciples had all run away. For example, there was Mary Magdalene. Once she might have been a pure and lovely country girl who went to the big city to follow her dream. However, she committed one sin and then another until she was trapped in a sinful life and became the prey of demons. She cried every day, wanting to go back to her simple and pure country life, but it was impossible. One day, she met Jesus. Jesus did not despise her like others did. Jesus understood her. Jesus loved her and treated her with respect and kindness. Jesus drove out the demons that had tormented her. Jesus gave her a new life. She felt pure and free. Her joy overflowed and her thanks to Jesus was boundless. Jesus was the meaning of her life. Jesus was everything to her. So she followed Jesus and served him and his disciples. But Jesus was arrested, tried and condemned before her eyes. Jesus was publicly crucified, died and was buried. Mary’s heart was broken. Her tears flowed like a fountain. After seeing his burial, she and the other women went home and prepared spices and perfumes. They were not hysterical women. They were pious women of faith who kept the Sabbath holy even in such a situation. They loved Jesus dearly. As soon as the first day of the week arrived, very early in the morning, they went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body.

When they arrived, they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. This was a large tomb, big enough for people to walk into. Look at verse 3. “...but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” Here, Luke introduces the title, “the Lord Jesus.” This title of Jesus appears 101 times in the Bible, all in the New Testament. It appears only twice in the gospels, in Mark 16:19 and Luke 24:3—both resurrection accounts. It appears frequently in the book of Acts. We often use the phrase “the Risen Christ.” “The Risen Christ” is the equivalent of the phrase, “the Lord Jesus.” It refers to Jesus who rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the mighty God as the Lord—the King of kings and Lord of lords. After the resurrection Luke always calls Jesus, “the Lord Jesus.”

When the women could not find the body of the Lord Jesus, it caused them to wonder. Then, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. Obviously, they were angels (23). But Luke refers to them as men to express the reality of their appearance. The women responded with holy reverence, bowing with their faces to the ground. When we see godly women bow down like this, how beautiful it looks. We might want to say, “Surely, God hears your prayers.” But the angels did not speak so sweetly to the women. Rather, they rebuked the

women, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” The women were seeking a dead body. Women are faithful. But sometimes their faithfulness is misdirected. One young woman clings to a young man as though he can give her everlasting happiness. But she only grows more sorrowful daily. One woman clings to her only son as though he is a god. But she only grows more anxious. The angels rebuked these faithful but misdirected women, saying, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” They needed to believe the resurrection of Christ. The angels’ rebuke prepared them to do so.

The angels continued. Look at verse 6a. “He is not here; he has risen!” The angel’s message was clear. Jesus was not in the grave because he had risen from the dead. God Almighty had raised Jesus from the dead. In Acts 2:24 Peter said, “But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.” The women needed to look up at God, not peer into the dark tomb. Believing the resurrection of Jesus was the solution to their real problem. To help them believe, the angels continued, “Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” Jesus had said that he would suffer, die and rise again on at least two different occasions (9:22, 44; 18:31-33). It had happened just as Jesus said it would. When the women heard the angels’ reminder, the word of Jesus in their memories came to light. They agreed, “Yes, Jesus did say that.” Suddenly, everything made sense to them. Jesus had risen, just as he said he would. His death was necessary. But it was not the end. He had risen just as he said. Jesus’ death was not a tragedy; it was God’s will. And now he had risen! When they remembered Jesus’ word, they could have resurrection faith in their hearts.

Remembering Jesus’ word was like bright sunshine penetrating their hearts. Their sorrow was driven away. Eternal joy and a sense of God’s victory came into their hearts. They could see that the world was not ruled by evil men, but by God Almighty who is good and gracious. They realized that death is not the end of everything. After death, there is glorious resurrection. New life and new strength filled their hearts and souls. Moreover, they restored a sense of mission. They ran back to the apostles to share the good news with them.

However, the Eleven and the others did not believe the women. Although the women spoke clearly and plainly and repeated their story several times, the apostles and the others with them just shook their heads and said, “Women!” But in fact, they were bound by unbelief and the power of death. Most likely, they were thinking about their own failures, the difficulty of their situation, and their own broken dreams. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. It was the beginning of opening his heart to the Risen Christ (34).

Second, Jesus’ Bible teaching changes two despaired men (13-35).

Look at verse 13. “Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.” These two men were disciples of Jesus, but not among the Eleven. They were on the way to Emmaus to escape from Jerusalem. We can call them runaway disciples. In the army, those who run away from the front line can be shot by their officers. Their commanding officer, the Risen Christ, appeared. However, the Risen Christ was not upset with these two men. Rather, he understood them and he visited them. He helped them in the most gentle and humble way. He came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?” Of course, the Risen Christ knew everything. But to draw out what was on their hearts, he asked them, “What things?” Then they opened up. Look at verses 19b-20. “‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him.’” Look at verse 21a. “...but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.” They had lost hope. It had been dashed to pieces. They had followed Jesus with a hope that he would establish the messianic kingdom, redeem Israel from Roman oppression and make her glorious once again. Their interpretation of the messianic hope was bound to this world. It was more political than spiritual. Jesus had taught them about the kingdom of God again and again. But instead of coming to share God’s hope of the kingdom of God, these men had retained their own worldly version of messianic hope. When Jesus died, this hope was dashed to pieces. Men must have hope. But they had no more hope. They were men of despair and they were running away to Emmaus.

It is important to realize that these men knew all the essential facts about the resurrection (22-24). They knew the tomb was empty. They knew the women claimed to have seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. They knew it was the third day since his death. But knowing the facts did not give them resurrection faith. Rather, they thought everything was over. They were talking with the Risen Christ. But they did not know who he was or what was happening. Here we learn that human hope leads to despair, and despair makes people spiritually blind and fearful. Despair makes people run away from their mission.

Jesus had taught his suffering, death and resurrection to his disciples again and again. But when it happened, they did not believe it. It was because they had never accepted his teaching from their hearts. They didn't like to hear about his suffering and death. They held on to their human dreams. When Jesus died, their human dreams died and they despaired. How did the Risen Christ help these men?

Look at verses 25-27. "He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." The Risen Christ rebuked them for being foolish and slow of heart. They should have been quick of heart to believe like father Abraham. When father Abraham was told something by God, he accepted it immediately and took action. Once God told him to sacrifice his only son Isaac as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah. Of course, Abraham did not want to do so. As a father, he loved his only son Isaac. But Abraham was not slow of heart. He got up early the next morning and began the journey. He wasted no time, but was about to slay his son Isaac; the knife was raised. Then God stopped him and blessed his obedience. But these men were slow of heart to believe the word of God. Jesus should have dismissed them and found better disciples. But he did not. In his great mercy, he started all over again by teaching them the word of God. Jesus had a long Bible study from Genesis to Malachi focusing on the person and work of the Christ. Jesus-centered Bible study is the best medicine for despaired hearts.

The prophet Isaiah was once a man with a despaired heart. His national situation seemed hopeless. The women of Zion were flirting (Isa 3:16) and the young men were partying (5:22). Injustice covered the land and foreign invasion was imminent. Isaiah could see only darkness and distress and said many unbelieving words. One day he saw the Lord seated on his throne, high and exalted. Above him were seraphs, calling to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah realized he was a terrible sinner whose unclean lips had spoken unbelieving words. Then God sent a seraph with a burning coal that touched his lips. His guilt was taken away and his sin atoned for. Then he could hear the voice of the Lord. He discovered God's shepherd heart for the whole world. He could see the coming Messiah and the coming kingdom of God. He wrote the book of Isaiah; God's hope and vision. Whoever meets the Risen Christ through Bible study can be cleansed of despair and have God's hope and vision.

Look at verses 28-29. "As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them." Their attitude toward Jesus has changed. They really wanted to be with Jesus. It was because the word of God was circulating in their hearts. "When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight" (30-31). The disciples had seen Jesus take bread, give thanks and break it more than once. Jesus was thankful to God always. Jesus fed them first always, even though he was also hungry. When he did it again this time, their spiritual eyes were opened and they recognized him. They met the Risen Christ. But as soon as they recognized him he disappeared from their sight. His mission of planting resurrection faith in their hearts was accomplished.

Look at verse 32. "They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'" Through Bible study with the Risen Christ and meeting him personally, they completely overcame their despair. Now their hearts were burning with the word of God. Look at verse 33a. "They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem." There was no more fear in their hearts. They became men of courageous faith and their sense of mission was restored.

In this passage we learn that Jesus wants us to have resurrection faith based on the word of God. Resurrection faith gives us victory over death and its elements of sorrow, fear and despair. Resurrection faith gives us true joy and restores us to live with God's mission. Resurrection faith comes through Jesus-centered Bible study. May God help each of us to have resurrection faith in our hearts.