

A Sermon Preached by Pastor Justin Johnson  
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church Bellingham, WA  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter May 9, 2010  
Text: Luke 24:36-43

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Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from Our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last Sunday, you heard part of Luke's account of the events after the resurrection of Jesus. The part you heard was the story of the encounter of Jesus on the road to Emmaus and how Jesus explained how it was necessary that the Messiah suffer these things and then enter into glory. And how Jesus explained everything to the two on the road beginning with Moses and the prophets. But that it was not until the breaking of the bread that Jesus was seen.

This week we continue with Luke's post-resurrection account. This is not the assigned lectionary gospel reading for the day. However, I decided since it was the year of Luke we ought to hear most of Luke's account of the events that happened after Jesus was resurrected. Next week, we will hear from Luke the account of Jesus' ascension, and then the next week, it is the story of Pentecost.

But the account we are given for today goes like this. The two who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus were so excited about this event that they ran all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the eleven and their companions. And as they were telling them, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace, be with you." Now, what would you think if the man that you had seen crucified and buried was standing before you? Even though the two men from the Emmaus road were bearing witness to the resurrection of Jesus, those gathered were "startled and terrified." I think that sounds about right, I am pretty sure that is how I would feel if a dead man were standing in front of me alive.

But Jesus does not seem to understand. He says, "Why are you frightened and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" Then he shows them his hands and tells his disciples to touch him, for a ghost does not have flesh and blood and then Jesus goes a step further and asks for something to eat and they give him a piece of fish and he eats it, proving that he is indeed flesh and blood,

that he is not a ghost. He asks for something to eat, Luke tells us, “While in their joy, they were still disbelieving and wondering.”

This caught my attention as I studied this passage. The disciples were excited, but they were still not quite sure that what their eyes were seeing could be trusted. This was going against all of their experience with dead people. Their experience and ours is that dead people stay dead and here is the one they know was dead and here he is alive again.

I am reminded of a tv show I saw this last week. I was watching re-runs of 7<sup>th</sup> Heaven, a show about a minister and his family. Well, the dad had heart troubles and took it easy for a long time which was fine for his family, it was what they wanted. Then one day, the dad decided to start living life normally again and it shook up his family and everyone kept asking him if he was okay, if he was sure he should be doing this or that. And he kept trying to convince people that he was okay. In one scene, he is sitting with his adult daughter and he is convincing her that he is okay. One of the lines that he says, is “Why is it so hard for people to believe good news?”

This is what the disciples are experiencing and it is our experience as well. It is hard to believe good news, especially when we are used to hearing bad news. I think nothing of it to turn on the TV and hear about troops being killed in Afghanistan or Iraq, but I would be very leery if the newsman told me that the leader of Al Qaeda had tea with the president of the U.S. and a peace agreement was made.

We get used to hearing bad news. Anytime someone tells you that they want to talk to you, what do you expect? You expect to hear some bad news. When Melissa was in the hospital, we always geared up for the worst, we prepared for bad news from the doctors, and we were relieved when it was not as bad as we thought it might be.

Even when we get good news we tend to say, “I can’t believe it.”

It seems as though our natural tendency is to doubt, to not believe, to expect the worst. But this is not what we get with God. What we get with God is good news. And that news is this that Jesus is not dead, but is alive. And that means that all that he said, all that he promised is true and that it is for you. For in Jesus comes the forgiveness of sins, a promise that brings new life, for where there is forgiveness, there is grace to begin again. And in

Jesus comes the promise of resurrection from the dead, a promise that we can hold to be true because Jesus himself was raised from the dead, not as a ghost but as flesh and blood. And these promises are ours because of God's great love for you and for me. And sometimes it may be hard to see and hard to trust in these promises, but they are ours to cling to through all of life's ups and downs.

And In Jesus we can hold that one day we will see what John saw in his vision as he records in the book of revelation. And that one day we will gather at the river, where we will hunger and thirst no more, the place where there will be no more crying and no more dying, a place where all will be made clean and nations of the world and all the people will be healed. Yes, one day we will gather at the river, for Christ is alive, he is raised. Thanks be to God. Amen.