

## *The Third Sunday Of Easter*

April 26, 2009

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 24:36-49

*While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 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." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence. 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." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. 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." (NIV)*

Our youngest girl Rachel, as many of you know, is quite a character. Like many children she is a sponge and it makes you wonder where she picks things up. For example, some time ago she started this thing where she stands in front of the refrigerator, puts her hands up like this, looks up at the freezer door and yells: "open sesame." She keeps yelling "open sesame" until Lisa or I go and open the freezer door and get her one of the treats she wants. Rachel knows that the good things like ice cream and Popsicle's are behind that door and she wants it open so she says the words "open sesame."

We too have some Words that open a door to all kinds of good things. These words are not a catchy command, but the very words of God. We too have someone who opens the door to everything good for us. That Someone is not a parent opening a freezer door, but a Savior who opens the door to every good and perfect gift. Today we focus once again on what a big difference a living Jesus makes for us. **A living Jesus gives us an: Open tomb. Open mind. Open heaven.**

Last week we heard from the apostle John; this week we listen to Luke's version of Easter evening. That a living Jesus gives us an open tomb has been our main focus for the last couple of weeks. The good news is Jesus is not in the grave, but he has risen just as He said He would. This message is of first importance. The open tomb is God's great big banner to the world that He has indeed justified us. God has declared the entire world not guilty. He has accepted the payment of Jesus' blood and death on the cross for the sins of the whole world. An empty tomb means forgiveness and peace with God for us. An empty tomb means victory over sin & Satan, victory over death and hell for us. It means life and salvation for us.

So Jesus makes sure we know that the tomb is open. To show the tomb was open Jesus had angels roll the stone away, to show the tomb was open Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, to show the tomb was open He appeared to Peter, and to show the tomb was

open Jesus just appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Now Jesus comes to where His disciples, minus Thomas, are gathered with other followers and friends and ***“While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”***

We are reminded that there was more than one doubting Thomas; there was a whole room full of doubters. So doctor Luke gets specific about the lengths Jesus goes to give evidence the tomb is empty. Jesus tells them He is not a ghost and He gives proof by showing them His hands and His feet. He allows them to touch Him so that they know He is flesh and blood and bones. Then Jesus asked them, ***“Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.*** The tomb is open. Jesus lies in it no more! **He lives, He lives, who once was dead; He lives, my ever-living Head. (CW 152)** That means that open to us is every spiritual blessing in Christ.

But the disciples were not yet fully enjoying those blessings. Just think about the big difference a little faith in a living Jesus could have made! They could have been celebrating, enjoying a meal and checking the time, all the while thinking *“I can’t believe this has all come true in our lifetimes! Jesus laid down his life for us sinners just like he said he came to do and a few people have already seen him alive which is exactly what he said would happen.” He should be here any minute now. It’s going to be so great.* Then when Jesus appeared what a difference a little faith in a living Jesus would have made! They could have swarmed around Jesus, hugged him, kissed him, sang and praised His holy name. They could have said, *“Welcome back, we have been waiting for you. You did it Jesus, just like you said!”*

But instead they were afraid. They were afraid of the Jews & afraid for their lives. They met in terror and fear. When Jesus does appear, Luke describes them as startled. They are frightened. They are confused. They superstitiously think they see a ghost, not Jesus. Even after they see Jesus hands and feet in their joy and amazement they still did not believe it. What a difference a little faith in a living Jesus would make! Thankfully the Lord Jesus provides it. A living Jesus gives each of them an open mind. ***“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.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”***

Jesus points them back to His Word. He shows them again how everything happened just as revealed in the Bible. Now they got it. The Holy Spirit opened their eyes. Jesus opened their hearts to the truth. Now the cobwebs started to disappear and they began to understand. Jesus had to suffer. Jesus needed to die. Jesus promised to rise again on the third day. Now the party can really begin. Now they could rejoice. Now there is no reason to be afraid of anything or anyone ever again. Now they had a message of repentance and forgiveness that was certain. Now they knew peace. Now they could boldly serve as Christ’s witnesses.

Are we ever like these disciples who met in fear? Do we ever have a fear of failure - a fear of hopelessness - a fear of the future - a fear of death? Do we ever forget Jesus’ words and, instead of being the happiest people on earth, become people filled

with worry, doubt, and fear? If so, God is not amused. For our fears tell God that we don't think He is trustworthy. Our fears deserve the same rebuke the disciples received when Jesus said: "***Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?***"

Then we need the same thing the living Jesus did for the disciples. We need to hear God's Word and promises. We need to see how Jesus fulfilled all the Bible for us. We need to see how Jesus is every commandment kept - how Jesus is every sin punished - that Jesus is the promised Savior. We need God to open our minds. Through Word and Sacraments that is exactly what the Lord does for us. The Holy Spirit gives us understanding. He opens our eyes to see that on the cross all our sins, even our sins of needless worry and fears, were nailed to Jesus. He had to suffer and die so that we can live. Through the Scriptures which Jesus fulfilled, Jesus gives us an open mind. What a big difference a little faith in a living Jesus makes for us! Fear of failure is replaced by confidence that our labor in the Lord is never in vain; fear of hopelessness is replaced with a living hope. Our future - in God's hands. Our death will be but a sleep and the gate to everlasting life. Now we know forgiveness and peace. Now we have no more reasons to be afraid and every reason to be the happiest people on earth. Now we too can boldly serve as Christ's witnesses.

A living Jesus has given us an open tomb. But without faith we would miss out on all of the awesome blessings of that empty tomb. That's why a living Jesus comes with His all-powerful Word to also give us an open mind. He opens our minds to understand and our hearts to believe the Scriptures. And an open tomb and an open mind mean one thing for us - an open heaven. It means that one day Jesus will return to our graves and He will say His own version of "*open sesame.*" All in their graves will come out. To all believers Jesus will say: "***Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine***" (Isaiah 43)" And our Savior, "***the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body***" (Philippians 3). With our glorified bodies we will enjoy all the good things prepared for us in heaven forever and ever and ever. Isn't it wonderful to have a living Savior? Thank Jesus every day for He has given us an open tomb, an open mind, and an open heaven. Amen.