

**Sermon – April 18, 2021**  
***“You Can’t Keep a God-Man Down”***  
**Crown of Life Lutheran Church, Rigby, ID**  
**PASTOR DAVE SCHILLING**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let’s pray as we open ourselves up once again to the teaching of God’s Word ...

Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day and for the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Let your grace and your peace be with those gathered here today. Guide us that we may truly be Your disciples. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Savior and our Lord. Amen

He is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Since we are still in the Easter season, it is quite appropriate that we begin our message with that great news. Two weeks ago, you heard me share with you, through the eyes of some women at the empty tomb, how difficult it is to really believe the good news that Christ is indeed risen from the dead!

In fact, at first, it didn’t seem like they believed it at all. But then, Jesus appeared and spoke His Word to them, and they finally believed.

In last Sunday’s Gospel reading, you heard the story of “Doubting Thomas”, a man who had heard the news that Christ had risen, but couldn’t quite believe it until Christ appeared to Him, and spoke His Word to Him.

In the section just before our Gospel reading for today, we have an appearance of Jesus to a couple of his lesser known followers from the town of Emmaus.

They had journeyed to Jerusalem for the Passover and had followed the events of that week. So, the evening of the Resurrection, while walking back to Emmaus, which is about 7 miles from Jerusalem, they encounter Jesus.

What I find intriguing is how Jesus responds to their conversation. He said to them...

“How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” Luke 24:25-27

Luke goes on to say that Jesus stayed for dinner, and during dinner, He broke the bread, gave it to them, and then “...their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.” (Luke 24:31)

Let me ask you this morning, if you had been there, would you have believed the news that Christ is risen? What would it have taken to convince you?

Or, would you need someone to open your mind, clean out the junk that's in there, so you could believe God's Word?

Well, our Gospel lesson for today is going to teach us about the Word of God, and about the truth of that Word. It is my prayer that as you hear His Word today, our Lord will open our minds as He opened the minds of His disciples so long ago.

So, what is the key to understanding these experiences with Jesus after He rose from the dead?

Jesus taught the women on that first Easter morning, the Apostle Thomas, and the two disciples from Emmaus "from the Scriptures" why these things had happened to Him. He didn't just make up stuff. He didn't just tell them a good story to comfort them.

He spoke to them God's living, active Word. The same Word you and I study today.

Now what's my purpose in sharing these accounts with you?

First, remember that during the experiences of the women...

- they had all seen the physical evidence of the resurrection – the empty tomb,
- they had all heard His Word earlier about rising from the dead, BUT
- all their worldly experiences led them to believe that this good news was false ... it was FAKE news so to speak.

It was not until Jesus spoke His life-giving Word to them, and through that Word opened their minds, that they realized He had indeed risen from the dead. This seems to me to be a process.

Because didn't the same thing happen to the two men from Emmaus? When Jesus appeared to them, they did not recognize Him because they were so wrapped up in the earthly events surrounding His death.

Their worldly experiences prevented them from believing it as well, until Jesus speaks His Word to them.

Jesus started with Moses and the Prophets (the Old Testament), and showed them how they pointed to Him, His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of their sins.

It wasn't until Jesus spoke His Word to them, that they believed that He had risen.

This brings us to our Gospel reading for today. The Emmaus disciples had returned and found the 11 apostles. They tell them, "It is true. Jesus has risen because we have seen Him."

Then, as they are talking about this, suddenly Jesus is right there in the presence of these disciples, who were sequestered behind a locked door. I suspect a hush came over the room. You could have probably heard a pin drop.

To break the tension, Jesus says, "Peace be with you." At first, they must have been startled, acting as if they had just seen a mirage or an apparition.

For the disciples, this is their friend, their companion for the last 3 years. This is their Rabbi, the One they saw arrested, beaten, and crucified ... now remarkably, they see He has risen from the dead!

His Word confirms it when Jesus said "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is really me! Touch me and see, a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have."

Jesus then shows them His hands and side.

Sure enough, the marks of the nails provided the evidence that the same body that had been crucified on the cross, and laid in a tomb, is now alive and standing right there before them!

The text says that the disciples still Couldn't believe ... even though Jesus had given them all of this visible proof.

Their life experiences led them to believe that this good news of Jesus rising from the dead had to be false ... somehow it must be FAKE NEWS because these things do not happen in the world.

Our text says they were overjoyed, but they still couldn't bring themselves to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead.

So, Jesus continues to reach them when He asks for something to eat, and they give him a piece of broiled fish, and he eats it.

Now if Jesus was just a spirit, he wouldn't be able to eat the fish. But there, right in front of their eyes, they saw the resurrected Jesus, body and all, do something that only a living, breathing person can do ...eat food.

At this point, Jesus says to them, "This is what I told you when I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Old Testament."

At this point, our text says Jesus "opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures." Remember, during his ministry, Jesus had told His disciples on AT LEAST three occasions that he would suffer many things, be crucified, and rise again on the third day just as the Scriptures say.

And do you remember what their reaction was? When Peter first heard Jesus say this a few days before the Transfiguration, Peter said "Never Lord, this shall never happen to you" (Matthew 16:22)

Another time when Jesus was telling them all this was going to happen to Him, right afterward, James and John asked for seats at his right and his left in His kingdom, thinking of a kingdom of worldly power.

Up to this point, the disciples never understood why Jesus said all these things.

But now that it had all happened according to the Scriptures, Jesus opens their minds so that they finally understand it. These very disciples who didn't get it at first, now understand, by the power of Jesus' words.

God's Words are true, all of this Had to happen so that "repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem".

But, there was one last thing Jesus would tell the Disciples. This message of Christ crucified and risen for the forgiveness of the sins of the world, would be proclaimed BY THEM ... by His disciples ... ALL of His disciples. Jesus would SEND them out.

Jesus said, "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."

The disciples would be sent out into the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and proclaim the very message that Jesus had given them in His Word.

Nothing more, nothing less, so that through the message of Christ's Word, minds would be opened, and people would repent of their sins, and have their sins forgiven.

So what, you may ask? What does that have to do with us today ... the people of Crown of Life?

Simply put ... as disciples of Jesus Christ, as members of the one, holy, Christian and apostolic church, we are all called to follow and proclaim the teachings of our Lord Jesus.

We are called to bring His Word to the nations of today.

For more than 30 years, this congregation has been called to bring that Word to our surrounding community.

The message we are to proclaim, as we heard in both last Sunday's gospel reading from John 20 and this morning from Luke 24, is to proclaim, "repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Christ."

That really means we have a rather simple two-fold message one of Law and one of Gospel.

First, we have been called to point people to God's Word of Law. That means we are to tell them exactly what God's Word has to say about our broken condition. And this is where a lot of problems have crept into the church in the last few decades.

To lead someone to true repentance, we have to proclaim the law. It means we must point out the sins of all people, starting with ourselves.

But we live in a society that says you do your thing, and I will do my thing. Often, if you tell someone that a certain behavior or practice is sinful and against God's Word, you'll hear the question, "Who are you to judge me? What gives you the right to say that?"

Our society is becoming more and more tolerant of sin as time passes. And there's tremendous pressure on Pastors to keep quiet about it in sermons, and all of us to keep

quiet about that in our daily conversations, because people do not want to hear that they are sinners and sin is bad.

Or, the argument goes like this ... since our society is different today, God's expectations must have changed. All that stuff you read about in the Bible, well, we live in different times, and those things only pertained to that time and place 2,000 years ago.

The eventual result is that we are no longer a society declaring what Christ has commanded His church to declare.

It no longer is a message of "repentance and forgiveness of sins" ... it is nothing more than a feel-good message to give you a boost for the week.

It is popular stuff, and in some cases, it packs churches on Sunday ... giving it the outward appearance of success.

But the problem is ... it doesn't save anyone from judgment and hell. If you are one of those who thinks that God doesn't care about proclaiming His word of Law, you better think again, because Jesus makes it clear in our Gospel reading that we are to proclaim it today!

So, the first part of our witnessing and messaging must be the proclaiming of the Law of God. But we never do it simply to point fingers and say, "We are better than you because we are not doing that."

People know when they are sinning or doing something wrong ... because God has written His Law on their hearts. That is why we ALL have a conscience.

The purpose of proclaiming God's law is to show all people how we fall short of what God expects of us, and what our sinfulness has rightly earned us.

And more importantly, it prepares all of us to hear the second part of that message, the part about the Gospel ... the part about forgiveness.

That is when we hear about what Jesus Christ did for us. We hear about how He, the sinless Son of God, took our place by suffering and dying, and then rising again to defeat the power of sin, death, and the devil, so that we will be raised up to new life with Him.

That's when we realize that there is no sin too great that it can't be forgiven.

And that's the two-fold message we as Christians have been called to proclaim to our community.

We are all called to point people to God's Law, which calls them to repent. And then we to proclaim the sweet news that their sins have been forgiven on account of Christ ... that's the Gospel.

Are you listening this morning, wondering if there is any way that God could love someone like you, especially after what you have done in the past?

If you are, it is my joy to proclaim to you that Christ has died for the likes of you and me. Our sins are forgiven, and are removed as far as the east is from the west.

Christ has set you free from that sin, so you can be God's child. You are justified ... just as if you had never sinned.

This morning, through His Word, Christ has opened our minds, just as He opened the minds of those women and His disciples so long ago through the preaching of His Word.

Through eyes of faith, you and I have SEEN His nail scarred hands and feet, the wound in His side ... we have seen the great price that He paid so that we can be forgiven of your sins.

You have also heard your Lord give all of us our marching orders. He never said it would be easy. He never said it would be popular. But, He did say that it is the ONLY message He wants to proclaim.

"Repentance and forgiveness of sins" ... Law and Gospel.

A church member once asked her pastor, "We have some neighbors who believe a false gospel. What literature would you recommend that I give them?"

The pastor thought for a few moments and then answered, "How about the gospel according to you. Let them read your life."

As we continue to proclaim and live that message of Law and Gospel to all who will hear, we pray by the power of the Holy Spirit they will come to know that they are forgiven for all their sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The proof is in the words of Easter that we see through eyes of faith and minds opened by the Word of God ...

Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

Dear Heavenly Father, help us to fully understand the power in Your Word. Help us study it and discern Your will for our lives through Your Word. Give us the encourage and strength to be proclaimers of Your Word to those around us. We ask this in Christ's holy name. Amen.