

Conley Memorial Presbyterian Church, Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016

A Day of Discovery
Dr. Kenneth Humphreys
March 27, 2016

Luke 24:1-49

A day of discovery, a wondrous day. He is risen. He is risen indeed.

Today is the most sacred day of the Christian year --- the day in which we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior --- the day in which we once again discover his incredible love for us and the gift of salvation which he brings to us.

We know what to expect on this holy day but some 2000 years ago Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, the other women, Peter, Cleopas and his companion did not know what to expect, not at all. Peter of course had heard Jesus say that He would rise on that day, but he really didn't believe it. Certainly the women did not expect it nor did the two disciples walking along the road to Emmaus. They all had to discover for themselves. They all had to learn that He indeed had risen.

The women arose early that fateful morning. It was dawn when they went to the tomb to anoint the body in accordance with Jewish custom. They discovered what they never expected --- an empty tomb. The body was gone and two men in dazzling clothes appeared beside them. They were afraid and were asked, "*Why do you look for the living among the dead?*"

When that question was asked, they remembered Jesus' words that he would rise and they rushed to tell the disciples what they had discovered.

But the disciples did not believe them, possibly because in Biblical times women were not considered to be reliable witnesses to much of anything. Peter, at least, was curious enough to go to the tomb to see for himself. He discovered the empty tomb and the linen burial cloths and he left amazed.

The first actual sighting of the resurrected Jesus occurred later in the day on a country road a few miles from Jerusalem, the road to Emmaus.

No one is sure at all where Emmaus was back then. Scripture tells us that it was a village about seven miles from Jerusalem. It might have been a similar sounding place

called Ammaous which was about three and one-half miles, seven miles roundtrip, from the city or it might have been an Arab village about seven miles away on the road to Lydda. Centuries later the Crusaders built a fort there called Castellum Emmaus but there is no evidence that the village was called Emmaus in the first century. We just don't know.

Wherever it was really is not important but what happened on that road certainly was. Cleopas and a companion were walking along that road. We don't know the name of the companion or even if the companion was a man or a woman. Some have speculated that the companion was Cleopas' wife but there is no proof one way or the other. We do know that the two of them were followers of Jesus. They were a pair of disciples.

The two of them were walking home, discouraged at what had happened and at the death of Jesus. They were profoundly disappointed. Their hopes and prayers had come to naught. Jesus' crucifixion had dashed all of their hopes.

As they walked, Jesus appeared and walked along with them talking about what had happened. They didn't recognize him. They were so sorrowful that they were blinded to who he was.

They poured out their agony and sorrow. Jesus had been a great prophet and they had hoped that he was even more --- the long awaited Messiah. But his crucifixion had dashed their hopes.

But Jesus rebuked them. He told them that scripture predicted that the Messiah would suffer and he began to remind them what scripture had said. He took them point by point through scripture. He explained it all to them and they invited him to stay with them that evening.

At dinner he took bread, broke it, and began to give thanks and they discovered who he was but then he suddenly disappeared from their sight.

They rushed back to Jerusalem, found the Eleven and told them, but they didn't believe, at least not at that moment.

Then the third discovery happened. Jesus appeared to ten of them saying simply, "*Peace be with you.*" But they were afraid. They thought they were seeing a ghost.

He said, *“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.”*

Even then they were hesitant to believe until he asked for something to eat. Then they discovered that Jesus really had been resurrected, at least the ten of them did. Thomas was not there and his discovery would not come until later.

We here have also made the discovery, not in person of course, but in faith.

“If Jesus had not come back to life, our faith as Christians would be pointless, and we would still be under the penalty of our sin.” (Our Daily Bread, March 31, 2013)

“The Son of God died and rose again, and His resurrection is the guarantee that God will bring us up and out of the ground: A thinking, feeling, remembering, recognizable person who will live forever.

“Living forever means living out the thought of eternity that God has placed in our hearts; meeting again one’s believing loved ones lost through separating death; living in a world without sorrow; seeking our Lord who loves us and gave everything to unite us to them forever.” (Our Daily Bread, April 25, 2011)

Scripture tells us that Jesus was raised to life for our salvation. We have discovered that we are right with God because Jesus is alive!

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.”

Alleluia, Amen.

Note: Scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible, 2011

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Liturgical color – white

**This is the day the Lord has made.
let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

Announcements

Greeting

Early on the first day of the week,
the disciples of Jesus went to the tomb
where he had been buried
only to find that the stone had been rolled away
and the tomb was empty.
Friends, we gather here as Christ's disciples,
on the first day of the week,
to celebrate the good news of the gospel:
Jesus Christ has risen from the dead!

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Rejoice and be glad:

This is the day that the Lord has made!

Rejoice and be glad:

Heaven and earth will never be the same!

Rejoice and be glad:

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Let us worship God.

Opening Prayer

Alleluia! We praise you, O God,
for the power of your saving love
revealed in the resurrection of our Lord.
As you have raised Jesus from the dead
give to us the gift of everlasting life,
that we may worship you forever;
through Christ, our risen Savior. **Amen.**

Prayer Response Inside front cover of hymnal – In Unison

*Hear Our Prayer, O Lord, Hear Our Prayer, O Lord, Incline Thine ear to us, And grant us Thy peace. **Amen.***

Psalm of Praise Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 (pew Bible pages 956-957).

- ¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
- ² Let Israel say:
“His love endures forever.”
- ¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my defense;
he has become my salvation.
- ¹⁵ Shouts of joy and victory
resound in the tents of the righteous:
“The LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!
- ¹⁶ The LORD’s right hand is lifted high;
the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”
- ¹⁷ I will not die but live,
and will proclaim what the LORD has done.
- ¹⁸ The LORD has chastened me severely,
but he has not given me over to death.

¹⁹ Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.

²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.

²² The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;

²³ the LORD has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ The LORD has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.

Call to Confession

Since sin and death came through a human being,
the resurrection of the dead has also come through
a human being.

For as all die in Adam,
all will be made alive in Christ.

Trusting in that promise of God,
let us confess our sin.

Prayer of Confession (Responsive)

Gracious God, we have heard the good news:
how on the third day, Christ rose again.

Still we look for the living among the dead.

You rolled away the stone from the tomb.

Still we look for the living among the dead.

You sent messengers to proclaim the gospel.

Still we look for the living among the dead.

You were faithful to your promise;

you have done wonderful things!

Still we look for the living among the dead.

[silent confession]

Forgive us, Lord, we pray.

Teach us to trust your promise

and to believe the good news of salvation:

Christ is alive; Jesus is risen from the dead. Amen.

Assurance of God's Pardon (Responsive)

Please respond to "We rejoice in the good news of the gospel" with "**In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Thanks be to God.**"

When Christ comes to reign,

he will put an end to every ruler, every power, every authority;

he will put every enemy under his feet.

And the last enemy to be destroyed is death.

As we await that great and glorious day,

we rejoice in the good news of the gospel:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Thanks be to God.

*Gloria Patri

Childrens' Message

Prayer for Illumination

Living God, by your Holy Spirit,

open our eyes to see the new light of this day;

open our lips to tell of the empty tomb;

open our hearts to believe the good news;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Gospel Reading: Luke 24:1-49 (pew Bible pages 1643-1645)

Our scripture reading from this morning Luke tells of three discoveries. Let us listen for the Word of the Lord.

The First Discovery: Jesus Has Risen

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. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴ While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. ⁵ In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ⁷ ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ ” ⁸ Then they remembered his words.

⁹ When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. ¹⁰ It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. ¹² 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.

The Second Discovery: On the Road to Emmaus

¹³ Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. ¹⁵ As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶ but they were kept from recognizing him.

¹⁷ He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. ¹⁸ One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

¹⁹ “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.²⁰ The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him;²¹ but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.²² In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning²³ but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.²⁴ Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

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

²⁸ As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther.²⁹ 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.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.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?”

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together³⁴ and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.”³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

The Third Discovery: Jesus Appears to the Disciples

³⁶ 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.”

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

*Congregational Hymn “In Christ There Is No East or West” #439

Sermon “**A Day of Discovery**” Dr. Kenneth Humphreys

Choral Anthem “See, What a Morning (Resurrection Hymn)”, sung by Kristyn Getty; words by Keith Getty (© 2003 Thankyou Music (PRS). Used by Permission. CCLI License 11224027) (Track 8, CD 30) – See bulletin insert for lyrics.

*Confession of Faith Apostles Creed, Ecumenical version

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. AMEN.**

Tithes and Offerings

We praise you, O God, and give you thanks that you have given us such joy, such grace, and such hope, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let our lives be proof of that good news. Let all our words and actions, our love and service bear witness to your resurrection power;
for the sake of our living Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Let us present our tithes and offerings to the Lord.

*Doxology #592 – In Unison

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer (Responsive)

As the words "God of new life" are said, please respond "**hear our prayer.**"

Rejoicing in God's promise of new creation,
let us pray to the Maker of heaven and earth,
saying: God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the church . . .

Make us faithful witnesses to the resurrection,
proclaiming the hope that is ours in Christ
for the sake of the world he came to save.

God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the world . . .

Bring justice and peace to all the nations,
so that the lamb and wolf may feed together
and all may enjoy the fruit of their own labor.

God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for this community . . .

Put an end to the prejudice and partiality
that divide neighbors from one another.
Help us to seek what is good and right for all.

God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for loved ones . . .

Redeem them from the power of death,
so that they may tell your mighty work
and celebrate your steadfast love.

God of new life, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, keep us working and praying

for the coming of your holy realm of peace,
when we will share abundant life with you;
through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord,
who taught us to pray **Our Father ... Amen.**

*Closing Hymn "Christ Is Alive" #108

*Charge and Blessing

You are witnesses to the resurrection;
you are messengers of the gospel.
Go forth to tell the good news,
preaching peace by Jesus Christ—
he is Lord of all.

Grace and peace to all
who have an undying love
for our living Lord, Jesus Christ.