

Apr. 1, 2018

Lesson 5: He Has Risen

Scripture: Luke 24: 1-12, 30-35

Context:

Today's scripture lesson jumps ahead to the Gospel of Luke and acknowledging God as we remember the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This unit covers the glory and honor that comes with the resurrected Christ, the one who rose from the dead and continues to rule over the world.

Today's lesson goes to perhaps the longest telling of the resurrection and appearance of Jesus to the apostles and his other disciples. Out of all the gospels though, the resurrection narrative is so important that it is mentioned multiple times. Even the beginning of the narrative does not provide the name of those who discover the empty tomb because the resurrection is to be the main focus. Only later does the writer give the names of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and other nameless women. Even with a large group of eyewitnesses, the apostles don't believe. Only when Peter goes to the tomb will his eyes glimpse the truth. Once again, the author points us to the resurrection as the focus.

Luke's gospel continues on with the story of those who are outside the apostles' circle. Two individuals on the road to Emmaus meet a stranger and tell him what happened and once again repeat that it was the women who found an empty tomb. The stranger discusses all these things with him until they stop for the evening and they give an invitation for him to eat with them. As they break bread and give it to one another, they realize that the stranger is Jesus.

Immediately, they get back on the road and return to Jerusalem. They share with the eleven and all the companions about what they have seen. Jesus is resurrected and he is on the go. The women were right. Simon Peter was right. There was an empty tomb to prove that Christ had risen.

One might wonder why all these stories and details are present in Luke's account, but not the others. The most logical reason is that the early church depended on the words of the apostles and those who were closest to Jesus. The author of Acts had the same stylistic tendencies as Luke, implying that one author wrote both books. These resurrection stories would have helped in writing the history of the church where we are reminded that God raised him from the dead, "of that we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32).¹ The proclaimed resurrection was of utmost importance to the early church as it is today. Thus, these stories would have emphasized that multiple individuals in the early church did indeed have experiences of the risen Christ.

Application:

The key verse for today is Luke 24:34 "The Lord has really risen!" One would imagine that these words were gushed over again and again by the disciples and apostles

¹ Fred Craddock, "Luke," *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press: Louisville, KY 1990), 281.

as they recounted to each other what they had seen when the disciples returned from Emmaus. For years, they had heard Jesus tell them numerous times that he would “suffer, die, and then rise again.” But the words always drifted away. They got lost among all the other things going on and all the other teachings of Jesus.

If we are honest, we can get where the disciples are coming from when it comes to their predicament. They got lost in the midst of all the things that came with following Jesus. At the time, the resurrection wasn't at the forefront of their minds. It didn't mean anything because Jesus was standing right there in front of them. How quickly things changed when Jesus was dying on a cross and the disciples were grimly reminded of Jesus' words to them.

The same goes for us; we get sucked into missing those moments where God is at work right in front of us. Just the other day I was even thinking about my long list that comes with Holy Week: write the sermon, contact the greeters, get the bowls of the Maundy Thursday, etc. I won't bore you with the rest of my list because I know that yours is long as well. In the midst of it all though, I remembered some advice from a mentor when it came to these kinds of seasons and life of general. She told “just soak it in sometimes. Do your best, yet watch for glimpses of God even in the big moments and the little moments.” For some reason that has always stuck with me.

It especially is important to me during Easter. The disciples at first were scared because Jesus was gone. It wasn't until the breaking of the bread though and even Simon Peter going by himself that they realized that Jesus kept his word. Even when their plans messed up, God surprised them with something even better.

That is the amazing part about the resurrection of our Lord that we celebrate at Easter. The power of God comes through Jesus Christ who died on a cross and then rose from the dead. It was unnatural. It was unexpected. It was something that made the disciples ponder and wonder and threw their plans out the window. Yet what they received was something more incredible than they ever could have imagined in their wildest dreams.

How will you experience Easter this year? I hope that in this season, you will not just catch a glimpse of the risen Christ through one song, a beloved tradition, or sermon at the great hour of worship on Easter Sunday. I hope that you experience Christ that day, and the days that follow. That's what the gospel of Luke reminds us. Jesus didn't just rise from the tomb and leave the disciples hanging. They got to see him work on the roads that they traveled, in the bread that they broke together, and in the stories that they told one another. The same goes for us; the risen Christ is at work around us each and every day. Will you join him and let it sink in, or will you look back and miss the power of resurrection?

Rev. E. Hunter Pugh
Associate Pastor
First United Methodist Church
1380 W. Main St.
Dothan, AL 36301
Office (334) 793-3555 ext. 240
E-mail: hunter@fumcdothan.org

