

## “You Are Witnesses of These Things”

Luke 24:36-49

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

Last week, we heard John’s message in his First Epistle, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life” – John says, that is what I am continuing to proclaim to you.

John’s focus was to bear witness of the evidence of the risen Son of God. In our first reading this morning, we hear the words of Peter who testified before the people of Jerusalem as a witness of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered and denied in the presence of Pilate. . . You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer [Barabbas, to be released], and you killed the Author of life.” We are witnesses that God raised Him from the dead.

We are witnesses of these things. This is legal language. We are willing to testify under oath. We are willing to stand before judges and kings and emperors. We are willing to die rather than change our testimony, because our testimony is true. Our testimony is the difference between life and death.

The disciples understood this. The disciples’ willingness to tell others about Jesus’ rising from the dead – no matter what the

consequences are, this is very different from how the disciples responded to stress before the resurrection.

Before Jesus rose from the dead, Peter denied even knowing Him – three times. The apostles were most concerned with securing the most important positions or positions of power and honor in Jesus' kingdom. After Jesus is arrested, the disciples hide out in a locked room for fear that they might be the next ones nailed to a cross.

Everything changes when Jesus stands among them and says, "Peace be with you!" Everything doesn't change right away. At first, they are startled, they are frightened; they think they see a ghost. Jesus says, "Look at My hands and My feet." Touch Me. Ghosts don't have flesh and bone. Ghosts don't have feet. I mean, if you drew a picture of a ghost, would you draw him having feet? Of course not! Ghosts don't have feet. Everyone knows that.

The disciples still were in disbelieving joy. It didn't make sense to them – yet. So He ate a piece of fish – to further show that He was really there in His body. Ghosts don't eat solid food. It would just fall out the bottom. I mean, everyone knows that.

But as convincing as seeing and hearing and touching Him was, the real change only happens for the disciples when He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And everything written about Him in Moses and Prophets and the Psalms was made clear.

Then, and only then did all of these things make sense. Only after He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures did the disciples understand what Jesus had told them – how He

would be betrayed into the hands of scribes and chief priests, and be handed over to the Romans, and be mocked and beaten and spit upon and nailed to a cross.

Only then did the words of Scripture from the Old Testament concerning the suffering of the Son of Man and the references to Him being pierced, like in Psalm 22 or Zechariah 12, finally make sense.

Only after Scripture was opened to them did they remember what He had said about being raised up on the third day, that the only sign He would give would be the sign of Jonah – just as he was three days in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man will be three days in the belly of the earth. Only now, after the resurrection, do the disciples understand what Jesus meant about destroying the temple, and in three days He will raise it up again.

Only now do the disciples understand these things. But their job, their task in life was not simply to “understand.” Jesus tells them, “repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” But don’t stop there. There are people whom God loves in Quincy, IL who also need to understand the Word of Life found in Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. “You are witnesses of these things”

What a joy to have the Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ with us this weekend. You are witnesses of these things. I am interested in hearing how your time in our community has been. Their task was to go out throughout our neighborhood, greet out neighbors, share the Word of God – God’s Word of Life found in Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. You are witnesses of

these things. I appreciate the “ongoing” work you do (hence, your name).

For everyone here, I urge you to understand that all of you have opportunity to be a witness to God’s Word of Life. Now, each of us have different callings in life. We all have different spheres of influence. However, we all start at the same place. We all start with the Word of God and our personal need to understand that Word of Life.

Your mind needs to be opened to understand the Scriptures. This doesn’t happen in one weekend, or one time coming to church or Bible class. As I said a few weeks ago in my sermon, quoting Aristotle: “We are what we repeatedly do.” You come to church once. Nothing seemed to change. The wall that was there is probably still there – unless, by the grace of God the miracle of faith happens.

For those whom the OAFCC witnessed to this weekend, are we going to see dozens of them gathering here for worship? Probably not, unless by the grace of God the miracle of faith happens. Our task is to keep holding out that message of grace and peace. Our task is to keep sharing that Word of Life and allow the Holy Spirit to work through His means of grace and open their minds to understand the Scriptures.

Success is not measured in numbers. Whatever your calling is in life, God does not call you to be successful. He calls you to be faithful. Whatever sphere of influence you have in regard to the Kingdom of God, you are witnesses of these things. Amen. Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!