

IN THEIR MIDST
Luke 24:36-53

Intro: In our study of the events following the death and resurrection of Jesus---it's now Easter Sunday evening.

- By now the angels---the women---the men on the road to Emmaus---and Peter have all given testimony to the fact that Jesus is alive.
- The apostles couldn't dismiss such testimony---and they said they believed it.
- But it was time for them to know it first-hand.
- If they were to convince the world that Jesus was alive---they would have to be absolutely certain that He was.
- So Jesus removed all doubt from their minds by miraculously appearing to them---in a locked room.
- He left no room for doubt by showing them---teaching them---and leaving them in a way that would fill them with joy.
- Giving them a hope that would endure until He returned.
- We draw our brief study to a close by first seeing Jesus in their midst---showing Himself to them.

I. SHOWING THEM
Luke 24:36-43

- “And while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst.

- But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.
- And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?’
- ‘See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’
- And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.
- And while they still could not believe it for joy and were marveling, He said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’
- And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish;
- and He took it and ate it before them.”
- This appearance of Jesus took place when a group of His disciples were huddled together---behind locked doors---discussing the events of the day.
- Apparently ten of the apostles were there---along with the women---the men from Emmaus---and some others.
- They were no doubt filled with fear---excitement---hope---and doubt---the gamut of emotions---when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst.
- He scared them to death!
- They thought they were seeing a ghost.
- He appeared out of nowhere.
- It looked like Him---but they weren't expecting Jesus to appear like that---if at all.

- The first thing He had to do was calm them down.
- And John records His first words to them were---
“Peace be with you.”
- “Calm down.
- Don’t be afraid.”
- “You heard I was alive.
- And here I am.”
- “There’s no need to doubt what you’re seeing.
- It’s Me---Jesus.”
- He then held out His hands---and pointed to His feet.
- “See them?
- See the wounds from the cross?
- It really is Me.”
- “Go ahead and touch Me.
- I’m not a ghost---or a figment of your imagination.
- I’m for real.”
- He then said something that puzzles us just a bit.
- “A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”
- We know His resurrection was not just a spiritual one.
- His body actually rose from the grave.
- But if His resurrected body consisted of flesh and bones---
how did He get through the walls?
- Apparently the Apostle Paul had to address similar questions in Corinth.
- In fact---in the 15th chapter of I Corinthians he actually poses the hypothetical questions---“How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?”
- He then discusses different kinds of earthly bodies and heavenly bodies---perishable bodies and imperishable bodies---natural bodies and spiritual bodies.
- He also makes it clear that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God---that the perishable does not inherit the imperishable.
- And that we will therefore one day have to exchange that which is perishable for that which is imperishable---that which is mortal for that which is immortal.
- With that in mind---I don’t think we should assume that since Jesus’ resurrected body had flesh and bones---at least during His post-resurrection appearances on earth---that our resurrected bodies will also consist of flesh and bones.
- We won’t be disembodied spirits.
- We will have a form that is substantive---and identifiable.
- But we won’t be flesh and blood---or flesh and bones.
- In discussing the various types of bodies---Paul makes it clear that God gives to each the kind of body He wishes.
- And if Jesus were to convince the world that He had truly risen from the dead---it was apparently necessary for Him to be given a unique body that had both physical and spiritual characteristics.

- He could appear and disappear at will---but He could also be touched.
- And to remove any doubt as to what they were seeing---He wanted them to touch Him.
- In fact---He invited them to even touch His wounds from the crucifixion.
- Doing so would not only prove He was for real---it would also prove that the one standing before them was the very same Jesus who had been crucified.
- Thomas---who wasn't there---told the others that he wouldn't believe they had seen the Lord until he too had seen Him.
- And until he had actually seen in His hands the imprint of the nails---and had put his finger into the place of the nails---and put his hand into His side.
- When Jesus invited him to do just that a week later---He exclaimed---“My Lord and my God!”
- Likewise---the others---when they saw His hands and feet---knew it was Jesus.
- But they still found it hard to believe.
- When Luke says they still could not believe it for joy---he isn't saying they didn't believe it.
- Just that they thought it was too good to be true.
- They couldn't believe it!
- Jesus was really alive!
- And then He did something that took them beyond belief.

- He asked if they had anything to eat.
- He didn't do so because it had been three days since His last meal.
- He did so---so they could watch Him eat.
- A phantom can't eat something that's physical---so Jesus ate a piece of broiled fish in their presence.
- And He would do so again---on a beach---in Galilee.
- He was showing them that He was for real.
- But He didn't stop there.
- He then went from showing them---to teaching them.

II. TEACHING THEM

Luke 24:44-49

- “Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’
- Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,
- and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day;
- and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
- ‘You are witnesses of these things.
- ‘And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’”

- All that they had witnessed over the last three days--- including His post-resurrection appearance to them---really shouldn't have surprised them.
- He had told them all these things would happen---when He was still with them.
- Obviously He was no longer with them in the same way He had been for the past three years.
- But He had told them He would see them again---and they should have expected it.
- And all that He had told them---had long ago been written about Him.
- In the Law of Moses---and the Prophets---and the Psalms.
- All of the Old Testament should have prepared them for what they had witnessed---and were even then experiencing.
- But apparently it hadn't.
- So He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.
- Don't you wish He would do the same thing for us today?
- Actually---He does.
- The Apostle Paul makes it clear in I Corinthians 2 that we have been given the Spirit---that we might know the things freely given to us by God.
- And obviously---that includes an understanding of His word.
- So the Holy Spirit can open our minds to understand the Scriptures today---just as the resurrected Lord opened the minds of the disciples.
- However---since Jesus is no longer here to personally teach us the Scriptures---we must study them ourselves.
- And we should avail ourselves to teachers who diligently seek to handle the word of truth accurately.
- This must be done before we can expect the Holy Spirit to open our minds to the Scriptures He has inspired.
- But Jesus did personally teach the disciples.
- And He opened their minds to the Scriptures.
- Taking them to the heart of the gospel---He reminded them that it had been written that the Christ should suffer---and rise again on the third day.
- And until they---and we---understand that---we will never make sense of the Law---the Prophets---or even the Psalms.
- The death---burial---and resurrection of Jesus is the central message of all the Scriptures.
- It's the gospel---the good news---that was to be proclaimed to all nations.
- Beginning right there---in Jerusalem.
- And it's the only message that can lead to true repentance---and the actual forgiveness of sins.
- A message of hope---that is universal in scope.
- And the message to which the apostles were to be prime witnesses.
- They had seen it.
- And now they understood it---at least provisionally.

- To further equip them for the task to which they had been called---Jesus would send His Holy Spirit.
- And they were instructed to wait in Jerusalem for that event to take place.
- And it did happen---on the day of Pentecost.
- They were indeed clothed with power from on high.
- Now Luke is wrapping up his gospel here---and he may be running out of parchment on the scroll.
- So he jumps over the forty days Jesus spent on earth between the resurrection and the ascension.
- A time during which He would appear to the apostles in Jerusalem at least two more times---and in Galilee.
- A time during which Paul tells us He also appeared to over five hundred at one time.
- Luke will---however---begin his second treatise---*The Acts of the Apostles*---by summarizing what took place during those forty days.
- Noting that Jesus presented Himself alive---offering many convincing proofs---and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God during that time.
- And it was actually at the end of those forty days that Jesus told the apostles to stay in Jerusalem---and await the coming of the Spirit.
- Before leading them to the Mount of Olives---and leaving them.

III. LEAVING THEM Luke 24:50-53

- “And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.
- And it came about that while He was blessing them, He parted from them.
- And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
- and were continually in the temple, praising God.”
- After telling the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit---Jesus led them out to the Mount of Olives to say goodbye.
- And we know the ascension took place on the Mount of Olives---because Luke tells us so in Acts.
- It’s therefore a bit confusing to read---“He led them out as far as Bethany.”
- But the word translated “as far as” might better be translated “toward.”
- And the NIV does translate it “in the vicinity of” Bethany.
- So Jesus led them to the Mount of Olives---lifted up His hands---and blessed them.
- And being a priest forever---according to the order of Melchizedek---He actually had the authority to bless them.
- It wasn’t a ceremonial blessing---like we give one another today.
- It was an actual blessing from the Son of God---and our eternal High Priest.

- And as He was blessing them---He parted from them.
- Only this time He didn't just disappear.
- He left in a way that sent them back to Jerusalem with great joy.
- He parted from their midst in a way that made it clear where He was going.
- He was ascending into heaven.
- He was leaving the physical realm---and entering into the spiritual realm.
- A realm from which He could always be present in the lives of believers.
- And in the upper room He had promised that if He were to leave---He would one day return.
- He would return to receive us to Himself---so we could join Him where He is. (John 14:3)
- That's what enabled the apostles to have great joy---even at His departure.
- That's what sent them to the temple---praising God.
- At least it did so---once the angels reminded them that He would return.
- Luke fills us in on this in the introduction to Acts.
- “And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.
- And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them;
- and they also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:9-11)
- Jesus---is coming---again!
- That's what sent the apostles to the temple with great joy.
- And that's what brings us here---with great joy---today.
- Jesus---is coming---again!
- And if you actually believe Jesus died for your sins---and rose to assure you that you too will one day rise from the dead---you too can anticipate the return of Jesus---with great joy.