

April 26, 2009 – Third Sunday of Easter
“Filled Lives”
Luke 24:36b-49 (NLT)

Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said.

37 But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

38 "Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt? **39** Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do." **40** As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

41 Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he ate it as they watched.

44 Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled." **45** Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. **46** And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. **47** It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' **48** You are witnesses of all these things.

49 "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

When I was a kid I at Easter there was usually a lot of candy, a few colored Easter eggs that we dyed the night before. My Grand mother would bake these cookies that looked like a basket and it had an actual egg or two baked right into the cookie, so that it looked like a basket with eggs. Of course the best part was that Grandma would tie a red ribbon around the part of the cookie that would be the handle of the basket, and rolled up and tied with the ribbon was a dollar bill.

My mom always got a chocolate bunny that she would put in the middle of our dinning room table. But one year, she purchased a chocolate cross instead of a bunny (kind a weird eating a cross, then again I guess eating a bunny is kind a weird too). But here was our surprise the cross was solid chocolate, not like the hollow bunnies we usually got. We only had the cross that one year, after that it was back to the hollow bunnies, a disappointment after having solid chocolate.

Do you know that according to tradition we call this day on the church calendar the Third Sunday of Easter. Here it is a couple of weeks since Easter Sunday and we are still calling it Easter. Even though all the chocolate bunnies have been devoured along with all the jelly beans; even though the colored eggs are gone (at least we hope they are

and don't smell them coming from some hidden place in the house in the next few days); even though the marshmallow peeps have left the building (and oh, how I miss them); even though all the delicious food and desserts my wife cooked and all the leftovers have now been eaten; and even though because it was such a special day and the choir was singing but now my tie will not be seen for another year...still we are talking about Easter.

But does it really feel like Easter? Oh, yeah a few of our cheerleaders will say yes, but to the rest of us today, this Third Sunday of Easter, has a different feel than the First Sunday of Easter we celebrated a couple of weeks ago. Be honest, is that how you feel? After having a solid Easter a few weeks ago is this Sunday like going back to something hollow?

As a pastor, I am often saddened by how some can feel strong in the Lord for a while, but then so quickly get pushed around by cultural and other influences. What will it take to become more consistent followers of Christ? What will it take to know the God of this universe, and to feel His presence in the basic and everyday details of our life even on a day like the Third Sunday of Easter?

Is the answer more education? A certain type of worship style? More Bible reading? What is it that will make that change?

I love how we encounter Jesus in our text. Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among His followers, and He says, "Peace be with you."

Last week we talked about leaving behind empty tombs. We have forged a life that feels safe yet empty and dead. Jesus rolls the stone wall away and in Him we can walk out of our tomb, from death to life. Jesus is God and this is why we have hope in Him. But we can't just try to leave an empty life behind without also being filled with a new life and power. We can leave an empty life behind, realizing that in reality we have a filled life.

Today in our text Luke's concern is to point out that Jesus is human. Yes, Jesus is fully God but He is fully human at the same time. The resurrected Jesus is the fullness of resurrected humanity. He is what we will become.

Luke tells us how Jesus appeared to the disciples and says, "Why are you frightened? Why are your hearts filled with doubt? I am alive, it is really me. Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do. You are not seeing a vision." As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet. "See it is really me I am alive. Then as they are still in shock and disbelief yet filled with joy and wonder, He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it as they watched. He is Spirit, He is God, but He still has a body, He is human. His resurrection from the dead was not just that of His Spirit, but it was a bodily resurrection. He now had a different existence, a new body, like the one we will

one day have. He is what we will be at our resurrection, when our bodies are changed and joined with our spirits. He is the fullness of resurrected humanity our hope for a life with no pain, sorrow, sickness or death. (You understand this, right?).

Luke presents us with a Jesus with a new body, and the promise of a physical eternity and hope. Here is the point: Jesus is so much more in touch with what it means for you to be a human than even you are. He knows why you cry. He feels your laughter. He is broken by your loss. But my friends-be at peace, because Jesus also promises His real presence and power in our lives.

In this passage, Jesus told the disciples to wait for the Father's promised presence. He says, "...I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised....Holy Spirit ... fills you with power from heaven." They were to gather in Jerusalem, and to wait for the power for living. This wasn't simply a head thing, a concept that they would soon understand. Jesus was instead talking very plainly about a realized resurrection presence that would be in them and would change them. For the disciples that would come on the day of Pentecost, as Luke records in the Book of Acts, when the disciples would celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the risen Christ.

Jesus didn't start a religion for you. He started a relationship for you with God. Jesus didn't merely want you to know principals to apply to your life but He wanted you to know the Person of the Holy Spirit in your life. Jesus does merely ask you to leave an empty life and leave an empty tomb behind, He wants you to live a filled life, in the peace and power of the Holy Spirit. It is His Spirit in you that is the power for living. It His resurrected presence by way of His Holy Spirit that will change you.

So what will it take for you, so many years later, to receive this resurrected power? The promised Spirit? Do we have to wait until the Christian / church calendar declares it to be Pentecost Sunday? Or is such peace and power available for people like you and me today?

I love verse 45 where it says that Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. What grace! This is what I pray for every Sunday, that God, by His grace with open our minds to understand His word to us. You see Jesus knows our humanity so well that He knows our minds need to be cleared to be enlightened. And He said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' You are witnesses of all these things.

Do you want His Spirit? Then believe He is the Messiah Who suffered and died and raised from the dead, and that in Him there is forgiveness of sins for all who repent. There is the condition, there must be repentance. To repent is to change your mind and your direction (from going away from God to going toward God; from pleasing self to

pleasing God). That is, there must be a total surrender of your life to God. No half way commitment. Then you will have power to live as a witness for Christ.

A little over a week ago the Lord met with me in the morning in my office. What a surprising and wonderful meeting it was. By His grace He opened my mind and used an unexpected Scripture to speak to me. We are reading through Genesis, and that day we were reading about a famine in the land and people having to come to Joseph for food. Here's what it says in Gen. 47:19 (NLT) "Why should we die before your very eyes? Buy us ... in exchange for food; we offer ...ourselves as slaves for Pharaoh. Just give us grain so we may live and not die, and so the land does not become empty and desolate."

The people offered everything they had, their money, their livestock, their land and when there was nothing else left to offer in exchange for the food they needed, they gave themselves because they were starving to death. They begged Joseph for food to keep them alive and were willing to give all including themselves as slaves to have that food to sustain them that they might live.

Are you willing to offer yourself to God? We are starving spiritually...starving to death! Only Jesus has the food to keep us alive. Are you willing to offer yourself as slaves of Christ? Are you spiritually hungry enough that you will say, "Lord, I am starving, I give you myself, give me your life sustaining Spirit?"

It is still Easter. We still have the presence of the resurrected Jesus. There is still hope. And as Dr. Leonard Sweet once said we are "still in one peace!" 1 (P-E-A-C-E).

Jesus says, "peace be with you, I am alive, and I offer forgiveness of sins for all who repent, turn from sin, turn to Me, and through your faith I will give you the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and give you power from heaven, power to live a full life."