

It was only a few hours into the first Easter morning following the resurrection of Jesus and Luke records it this way:

Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.³⁶ And just as they were telling about it, 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."

Luke 24:35-49 NLT

We come together on Easter to celebrate a risen Savior. Although He was dead He is alive and coming again someday.

Think about this statement: The ministry of the risen Christ to the Church determines His ministry through the church. It is through the ministry of the church (Christ body) that His message is proclaimed. To prepare the early church for what would come later He ministered to them and left us an example of what we the body of Christ should be.

Here is what happened in this story and how we can apply it today.

Jesus was an example in three ways.

1. He had a ministry of encouragement

³⁶ *And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. “Peace be with you,” he said.* Luke 24:36 NLT

a. They were encouraged by His peace

He spoke peace to them just as He does today through His body the church. When you hear the word peace in the context of Jesus Christ you have to think of His own words when He said,

²⁷ *“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”* John 14:27 NLT

There is nothing that can replace the peace that Christ gives us.

Someone said, “My therapist told me the way to achieve true inner peace is to finish what I start. So far today, I have finished 2 bags of chips and a chocolate cake. I feel better already.”

The peace that Jesus gives us is far better than the momentary peace we achieve through our own methods.

After the resurrection Jesus appeared and disappeared several times. The point is that He is never away from us. We draw encouragement and strength from His peace and His presence.

In the NT, the word for peace means “to reconcile or join.” Some missionary Bible translators were working very hard to find a word for peace in a particular tribal language. At last, a native who was working with them found a combination of words that captured the concept—“a heart that sits down.” When the heart sits down with Jesus—when we join with God through his Son—there is peace.

Do you need peace today? Do you need for your heart to sit down? Look to Jesus. He has always been about peace.

b. They were encouraged by His presence

He was one of them. He was hungry and ate some food. He was among them. Can you imagine the trauma of seeing Jesus executed when you had given three years of your life to follow this man around? Now these disciples are grieving. They are gathered together trying to figure out what to do next. These were mostly blue collar Jewish guys that had given up their vocations to follow Jesus because they came to believe He was the Messiah and now He had been killed right before their eyes.

In the middle of their gathering Jesus just shows up! Wouldn’t you like Jesus to just show up some days in the middle of your stuff? You would probably have the same reaction if He did and if He ate some hamburgers off your grill you would really be in shock!

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.

His presence brought them peace and Jesus presence brings us peace. In the middle of our life challenges He brings peace into our troubled lives. He offers us peace in a world that can never find peace. It is by His presence in our lives that this happens.

You know the greatest gift that Jesus offers us besides salvation is the gift of His presence in our lives. He longs to be in community with us on a daily basis. He offered great encouragement to His disciples and He offers us daily encouragement as well if we are living for and with Him.

He also offers us enlightenment.

2. He had a ministry of enlightenment

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. Luke 24:45 NLT

What a gift this was! It has always been curious to me that the disciples were so ignorant about Jesus after spending three years with Him 24/7. The fact is that none of will ever know more than Jesus is willing for us to know. In other words, He opens our minds when we hunger to know Him. As we long to know Him more He will give us the ability to tap into who He is and who He wants us to be.

He does this in two ways:

a. He speaks words of revelation

“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.” Luke 24:44 NLT

When Jesus Christ chooses to reveal Himself to us it is an incredible moment. For some of us we will remember when the Holy Spirit stirred across our hearts and it became clear that God was calling us and giving us the opportunity to follow Him.

There are been other times of revelation in the life of a Christfollower.

He reveals Himself in our vocational choices.

He reveals Himself in our relationship choices.

He reveals Himself in our morality choices.

He reveals Himself in our moments of crisis.
He reveals Himself when we open His word and read about Him or when we sing a song or listen to a sermon.

But He also enlightens us by illumination.

b. He opens the mind by illumination

To understand the scripture requires more than human ability. It requires divine illumination. He gives them a special window into three essential theological truths when He appears to them in this story.

Let me quickly give you the references and you can study them for yourself.

The suffering and resurrection of Christ (v. 46) 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.*

Man's need to repent and God's forgiveness (v. 47a)
The global intention of His message (v. 47b)

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.'*

All of us need enlightenment. We need to know who we are and who God wants us to be.

On October 13, 1992, Admiral James Stockdale, a virtual unknown to all those outside military ranks, stood in the vice presidential debate as the running mate for independent candidate Ross Perot. In his opening statement, Admiral Stockdale looked into the camera and with trembling voice and unsettled nerves made the first statement of his political career saying, "Who am I? Why am I here?" It brought great laughter and rousing applause, as virtually all America was interested in the answer to that question! It was a painful moment for him but they are questions that only Christ can truly answer for us.

Do you know the answer to those questions today? Are you allowing Christ to guide and enlighten your life? Has He helped you determine who you are and why you are here on this earth? Do you know your purpose or are you just bumping along the road of life with very little meaning?

When you know what Jesus wants to do through you He offers you something else even more wonderful.

3. He had a ministry of empowerment

There is one last thing that Jesus gave these first disciples following His resurrection. He gave them the ability to be empowered to things beyond their own strength. Look at this last verse:

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.” Luke 24:49 NLT

There are two things that Jesus promised His disciples before He went back to His heavenly Father. You and I are the recipients of these as well.

a. The promise of the Father

In John 15 and 16 as well as many other places Jesus refers to a coming Holy Spirit.

“But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. ⁶ Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you. ⁷ But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate^[a] won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

¹² *“There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. ¹⁴ He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’” John 16:5-8, 12-15 NLT*

The Holy Spirit is the promise of God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the manifestation of God sent to be with us until Christ returns to earth.

b. The power of the Spirit

Alone we are nothing. With Christ and His Spirit we can be and do anything He asks us to do. We can be in places that are beyond our ability to see right now. We can do things that are beyond our ability to even process.

Personal: I have often told you that I am the last person in the world that should be standing here talking to you. If you know me at all you will still see signs of my introverted personality. I would much rather be in the back of the room. I would much rather slide into the corner table at the restaurant. I don’t like being on display. I am loaded with insecurities in myself. I am very comfortable spending hours alone in the evening and have the tendency to hide myself away from the crowds.

You may not believe but it is so true.

But when God “called or knocked on my door” and left me with the feeling that He wanted to use me, I had no choice but to answer and allow the power of His Spirit to be IN me.

There was an prophet in the Old Testament that God asked to do something and then He reminded him that it would be by His Spirit that the work would be done.

Then the angel who had been talking with me returned and woke me, as though I had been asleep.² “What do you see now?” he asked.

I answered, “I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl of oil on top of it. Around the bowl are seven lamps, each having seven spouts with wicks.³ And I see two olive trees, one on each side of the bowl.”⁴ Then I asked the angel, “What are these, my lord? What do they mean?”

⁵ “Don’t you know?” the angel asked. “No, my lord,” I replied.

⁶ Then he said to me, “This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: **It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.**⁷ Nothing, not even a mighty mountain, will stand in Zerubbabel’s way; it will become a level plain before him!
Zechariah 4:1-7 NLT

What God is calling you to do He will give you the ability to do it through His Spirit.

So who is the resurrected Christ to you? Easter is about resurrection! It is about new life and the offer of a new life for all of us.

As soon as children are old enough to speak, one of the first questions parents ask is, “How big are you?” Children seem to always give the same answer, “I’m soooo big!” They generally raise their hands to get additional stature, as if to say, “I’m huge. I’m enormous. There’s no telling how big I may be.”

This is not a scientific answer. You can’t use it in every context. For example, if your spouse were to ask, “How big do my hips look to you?” you might not want to throw your hands high over your head and exclaim, “Your hips are soooo big.” You teach your children to say this because you want them to realize they are growing. We know that the way they think of themselves matters. You don’t want them to think of themselves as small, weak, and lacking adequate strength to handle the challenges of life.”

But now I have a more important question: How big is your God? How big is Christ in your life? Is He the Risen Christ in your life? He certainly can be if He is not!