

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

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Preacher: Rev Kenneth I Macleod

[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in Luke 24 and that section from verse 36 to 49.

Just read the very beginning and as they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace to you. But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

When somebody dies, we normally talk about that person. If the person is of national importance, you will find that the media will spend quite a bit of time talking about that person and analyzing that person's value to society or whatever.

When somebody dies locally within the community, we often reflect upon that person and think about who they were and what they did.

And of course, when somebody dies and that person is a member of the family, then of course there is the ongoing reflection upon that life. The one thing that remains, of course, always are the memories.

[1 : 20] We always have the memories of the person who has died. Part of course, of course, what makes death so difficult is that that is all that we have are the memories. Death is that awful robber that takes people away.

That word in Psalm 103 is a very powerful word which says, The place which once knew us will know us no more. And we find that day by day and week by week in our own communities that people who were part and partial of everyday life are gone.

We'll never in this world see them again. And there's a silence almost in their absence. And that's one of the difficult things for us to deal with.

And of course, it's very difficult within the family circle when that happens. But there is always the memory, always reflecting, talking about, thinking about.

But as we say, it's with regard to the past. But what we have here is really very different. And that's part of what makes the story of Jesus all the more remarkable.

[2 : 32] Because the hero, the person that this narrative has all been about, we're following his life and his death, met the most violent and brutal end.

He was buried. But they're not talking here about memories. They're talking about appearances. And that's what makes it all the more remarkable. That the person who met this violent end was taken down, dead, and buried.

This is making these appearances. And that's what, in a sense, makes this so remarkable, so unique, and so wonderful. Now, we saw that the first 12 verses highlighted the empty tomb.

Then, from verse 13 to 35 last week, we saw these two men on the journey to Emmaus and Jesus coming alongside them and journeying with them.

And now, here, we have Jesus inviting the disciples to actually touch him and feel him. Because at first, it tells us here, when they saw him, they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

[3 : 44] And no wonder, so would you and so would I, if we were sitting in a room talking about somebody that had been buried, and that person actually came and stood in the center of the room, you and I would be troubled.

And so these people were troubled. But it shows us very clearly that Jesus is walking with them, he's talking with them, he eats with them, and he invites them to touch him.

Showing that his body, it's not an apparition. It's not just the appearance of a body, that there is no doubt there is an actual body.

There is something that can be felt, something that can be touched, something that moves, something that interacts. And all this, of course, is of tremendous importance to the Christian faith.

And this was at the very heartbeat of all that happened in these early days for the church. This is what gave them their impetus and their hope. These men who had been in despair and despondency, they had seen their world collapse, and the Lord whom they so loved die.

[4 : 59] Now they find that he's alive, powerful, ruling, reigning again. And so I don't think that we can really grasp just the reaction of how their whole life was transformed in a moment, from utter despair to absolute joy.

And so the empty tomb, of course, is that which baffles the critics to this very day, and it's that which gives the church so much thrill and joy.

Today, the Lord's Day, that's why we have this, it's a day which is reminding us of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we should never lose sight of that, any Lord's Day that we come together, that this is a day that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

It's the very heartbeat of the Christian faith. And we should always be seeking that that vibrance, that joy that is found, that thrill, that newness of life, should be part of our everyday experience, seeking for that newness.

Now, of course, these were amazing times, and I'm sure it's one of the things that we always want to reflect upon, is the empty tomb, and is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 21] But the wonderful thing is that this risen Savior is as much in one place as in another today. I think I've said this before, but just to highlight the very thing that I'm saying, I remember many years ago, being in Israel, I was on a bike ride there, and it was an amazing experience, and I know many of you have been to the, it's a foreign land, the Holy Land, many of you, and it's, if you have never been, then I would recommend highly, if you ever get the opportunity, it is certainly worth a visit.

Because one of the many things it does, it makes the reading of the Bible more real, where you see the actual places.

You're in Nazareth, and you say, well, this is the town that Jesus grew up in. You're in Canaan, you say, well, it was here that he performed his first miracle. You cross the Sea of Galilee, and so much of the narratives of Jesus' life are centered on that sea.

And you go to Bethlehem, and you think, well, this is where Jesus was born, and you're in Jerusalem, and it's all these places that are talked about, and you're so familiar with.

But one of the things that I had so thought when I was there, was that I would, in some way, have some profound spiritual experience, where Christ would come, in some way, closer than ever before.

[7 : 54] And for a while, I was disappointed, because that never happened. And while I was there, thinking about that, and thoroughly enjoying the experience, the words came to my mind so clearly, he's not here, he is risen.

And we're as liable to find Christ here this morning, and we should be, because wherever the Lord's people come together, he has promised to be there.

So, we don't look necessarily for the risen Christ in some physical location. It is spiritual, and that we should be seeking him, and so we should be seeking him wherever we are, in every opportunity.

And so the Lord is as much with us in one place, as in another. Wherever the Lord's people meet together, we should be able to look for him.

And so he's a savior that is alive, alive forevermore. That's our great hope today. You know, you're able to say like Job said, I know that my Redeemer liveth.

[8 : 58] You're able to say like the apostle, I know in whom I have believed. And you know, that's a wonderful thing. To know in whom you have believed.

You know him. Nobody can take that away from you. It's real. It's present. It's powerful. And you know the reality of this in your life.

Now, last week we looked at these two on the road to Emmaus, and after they had had this amazing experience of Jesus revealing himself to them, they went as fast as they could to Jerusalem to tell the disciples.

And they met the eleven, and they began to tell them what had happened. And just as they were busy talking and sharing, and as they were talking about these things, Jesus stood among them and said to them, Peace to you.

Now, we've said this before, but we can never talk about Jesus. But Jesus, through the Spirit, will communicate himself to us. If you want a sense of the Lord's presence and nearness to you, speak about him.

[10 : 09] Worship him. Be in his company. Seek his company. You know, you cannot seek the company of the Lord. And I know, we know that the Lord is present with us all the time.

He always, he said he will never leave, nor forsake. And we know that. Even if we forget about him, even if we spend a day or a week forgetting about him, which we ought not, but supposing we did, he still wouldn't leave us or forsake us.

That's not what we're talking about. But where we're seeking, seeking the Lord, seeking his companionship, seeking an awareness, where we're wanting to worship him. We love him.

Don't you think for one moment that the Lord is going to say, I don't want that company. I don't want that fellowship. Of course he does. He loves us.

He loves us far more than we love him. Whatever love we have to him is but a reflection, in a sense, of his love to us. We love him because he first loved us.

[11 : 10] So he will always respond to the soul that is seeking, seeking companionship, seeking fellowship, seeking company. And so we find it here.

Jesus comes and he presents himself with them. These disciples, as we know, they had been hurt and confused and as we said, their world was thrown upside down.

But Jesus said to them, peace be unto you. And as we said earlier, he invites him to feel him to sow. And that shows us that the resurrected body is, while it retains, and we don't, we cannot understand, but it obviously is a body.

And it's the same body. We don't get another body. It is the same body. But obviously, it goes through changes. And it's not bound by the laws, obviously, of this universe, obviously the laws of gravity.

It operates in a different way because it's a body that can appear and disappear. It isn't bound by the restrictions that we have in this world.

[12 : 21] And so Jesus greets with a message of peace. And that is the way Jesus always comes. He comes with a message of peace. When Jesus comes, remember, he's a prince of peace.

When Jesus was born into this world, that was the message that was given. Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace and goodwill to all men. And when Jesus Christ works in a person's life, he comes to bring peace.

And when Jesus brings the greeting of peace, he doesn't just say the word peace. You know, we could say the word peace quite easily to somebody. I could say to somebody, oh well, peace be to you.

And I might be full of anger and looking for a fight, but I could actually say the words, but my heart could mean something completely different. Jesus never operates in that way.

When Jesus says, peace be to you, he doesn't just say the words as a form of greeting. Jesus actually communicates peace to us.

[13 : 29] Because his word, his word brings. He brings himself. He communicates himself. And so this is a great thing. This is how you have it illustrated in the life of Jesus often.

For instance, on the storm. And the disciples were beside themselves with fear. And Jesus just, he commanded and he said, peace, peace be still. And the waves, which were, were soaring and plummeting and the, you could imagine it if you had looked out in the sea, it would be nothing, but these white horses just white breakers and all of a sudden it's a flat cam, like a mill pond.

Absolutely extraordinary. These men who witnessed that, they were fishermen and they were used to the storm and they were used to understanding it and they were so frightened by it.

This, this was a real storm and yet in a moment the storm was changed into a cam. And while that was done in a physical way, Jesus continues to do that spiritually.

He does it in people's lives. And that's one of the things, one of the wonderful things that salvation brings. And if you're outside Christ, my dear friend, you might be enjoying life just now.

[14 : 42] Life might be running very smoothly for you and that is great. Thank the Lord for it. But the one thing you cannot really have, you can have deadness, which is not peace.

You can be dead spiritually, so there's a deadness, deadness to anything spiritual, which is really an awful state to be. But that is not peace. But the peace that the Lord brings is a sense of identity, a sense of belonging, a sense of being right with God, a sense of knowing who you are, of where you're going, of your purpose here in this world, and all these things which are so absolutely essential to our existence here.

it brings life to a new dimension and gives this sense of tranquility and calmness. I know why I'm here. I know where I'm going.

I know who I belong to. And so there's this sense of belonging where the Holy Spirit ministers with our spirit, assuring us of our friendship, our love with the Lord.

We can't work this peace up in ourselves. You remember the great movement? There was a great movement, the peace movement, the hippie movement of the 60s. And you know, while there was great intentions and there's no question whatever, there was a real intention for peace and a wanting peace and many a patient for a while thought they were enjoying peace and maybe they were.

[16 : 20] And we know, and I would be a liar to say, that outside Christ I've never experienced peace in my life. Of course there are times that you do and enjoy life. But there's still an emptiness.

You're still craving something. It's not something, it's someone. Jesus makes such a difference. When Jesus comes into the life, he comes in.

And as he comes in as the Prince of Peace, he brings that peace. And that's what a passion who has come to faith in Jesus Christ is able to say, I have peace. Now that doesn't mean that in your life you'll never lose peace.

It doesn't mean that for one moment. We can, because of various things within our lives and within the circumstances of lives and all these things, that can happen.

That we do not enjoy the peace that maybe we once did. but despite even the turmoil, underneath, there is still a peace.

[17 : 24] When you strip away all the other things, that peace still remains. And so as Jesus reveals himself, this visit, as you can see, is a very personal visit. Earlier on, Jesus the Lord had sent an angel to communicate the message.

But on this occasion, he comes himself. It's personal. And the seeking soul will always have a personal visit from the Lord. A sense of his nearness.

He himself will come and touch your soul. And you know, the wonderful thing is that you will recognize the Lord when he comes. Because the eye of faith will see and you will say, this is the Lord.

This is him. And then we find when they recognize him and see all this, there is still this sense of disbelief. But it's a strange expression in verse 41. And while he still disbelieved for joy.

Some people say, well, that's a strange thing. How can you disbelieve for joy? Well, I think really what it is saying there basically is, it's too good to be true. You know how sometimes in our own experience, in our own life, something happens.

[18 : 33] You say to yourself, you know, this is too good to be true. This is overwhelming me. This is almost more than I can take you. We talk of the wow factor.

Well, I'm telling you, this brought their life to a new dimension. As we said, I think before, it's like Psalm 126. They were as men when God turned back Zion's captivity.

It says, as men that dreamed were we. They could hardly believe it. But Jesus had told them before he went away, this was going to be their reaction. You know, in a sense, before and after, before Jesus went to the cross, it was like a jigsaw where you scattered out all the pieces.

In fact, they were all upside down. And as Jesus was speaking to them before his death, and he spoke to them often, they often didn't understand. They couldn't put any of the pieces together.

But you know, after he rose from the dead, and he was revealing himself to them, and teaching them, it was like putting all the pieces together. Another piece, and another piece, it was all beginning to fit in.

[19 : 46] And you know, sometimes it's like that for ourselves. That as we go on, the pieces are coming more and more together, and we're beginning to see how the Lord worked. And we understand things as we go on.

And even things that we've come to understand as time was gone, we realize more about the very thing we had began to understand. We say, oh, I thought I understood that completely.

But now I'm seeing new depth to it. I'm getting a new insight in it. I'm beginning to understand it in a new way. And that's what, it will go on, and on, and on like that.

And I believe that's part of what will make glory the wonderful place it is. It will be an ever, a never-ending journey of discovery, where we are seeing more, and more, and more, of the glory, and the wonder of God, and the salvation that God has worked for us in Jesus Christ.

And so, Jesus had told them, prior to, in John chapter 16, he said to them, so also you have sorrow now. They were sorrowful, because he had told them he was going, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

[21 : 05] That's what he had told them. They obviously hadn't remembered that. Their faith was in the depth, because the one thing that was absent at this particular time was joy.

But you know, now, they disbelieved for joy. They were just, it was so overwhelming. And you know, the joy never went away. And no one will take your joy from you.

You go, if you were to read through Acts of the Apostles, which Luke continues to write, that was one of the features that we find running all the way through is the joy of the believer.

The joy of the apostles. Oh, there were times they were put in prison. They're rejoicing. There were times they were beaten. They're rejoicing. Nobody could take that joy away. And so Jesus had promised them that.

And so we see the beginning of that, the fulfillment of this promise. And you know, as we said, we can never see this without again thinking of heaven. Where every sorrow and trial and temptation and everything will be taken away.

[22 : 14] Where death will be swallowed up by life. It's not an amazing thought. You say to yourself, how can death be swallowed up by life?

Well, I think the best way we can describe it is in the same way as the day swallows up the night. Pitch dark. Here's the night.

And then the day comes. And there is no trace of the night. It is gone. It's obliterated. The light has removed it completely.

You can't try and get it back. Where's the night? Gone. Any sign of it? No. It's away. And you know, that's what it's going to be like in glory. Where death will be swallowed up by life.

Death will be no more. No sign, no trace, no evidence. And all that's attached to death. death. The smell of death. The sorrow of death.

[23 : 15] The pain of death. All these awful things. Gone. Never to be seen again. No wonder the Christian gospel sets out before us so much hope.

And then we find that Jesus begins to teach them from the word. And really the heart of what he's saying is that the crucified Messiah was not an adjustment in God's part.

But this was part of God's plan all along. Because for some of them they may have thought, oh this, what happened? Was there a mistake?

And Jesus is saying, no. It's not an adjustment of God's plan. This was the road. This was the path that God had planned all along. Everything in the law and the prophets must be fulfilled.

Emphasizing must as part of the divine plan. God's plans will never be thwarted. And then Jesus tells them in light of all that has happened what they are to do.

[24 : 22] And you know, that's one of the things that the word is always teaching us. You find it, whether it's here in the gospels, all that the teaching has an effect.

We don't just look at it and say, oh well that's wonderful. It has to be worked out in our own lives. All Paul's great teaching, you go through Ephesians and Colossians and Philippians and all the great teaching, there was all and there always is a practical side to it.

You don't just swallow it up and say, well that's wonderful. All I want, give me more, give me more, give me more. I just want more and more and more and more. I just want to sit here and be taught and taught and taught and taught and that's it.

yes, we want to have a hunger to learn more and understand more, but it has to be put into practice and that's why you find all Paul's great teachings ended up in practice.

Always in the final sections of these great epistles, Ephesians and Colossians, it turns from all the great doctrine into the application of these for our lives.

[25 : 34] and so Jesus is teaching them here from the Psalms, from the prophets, showing what has happened to them and he says, now because of this, you are to be my witnesses.

You are to go out and to tell people and you'll notice that the great message that they were to give is repentance and forgiveness of sin. Repentance, that should be the response in people's hearts as Christ has proclaimed and forgiveness, that should be its effect.

You see, repentance is an activity. Repentance, in a sense, to repent, is to agree with God's assessment of the situation.

You think you shall, right Lord, this, what you are saying, is right. God is seeing sin in a way that you and I cannot see it.

We don't understand sin. We belittle sin. We are often comfortable with sin. We join in with sin. It's natural to us.

[26 : 44] That's the kind of people we are. We're sinners. Jesus has come, of course, to deal with that and to take our sin upon himself. But you know, when a spirit of repentance is given to us, we begin to see sin in a new way, in a new form.

And we see it as offensive to God, like David did. David lived for quite a period of time after his great sin of his adultery and murder.

And he lived in this state for quite a while. He was still a good man. But it wasn't until he was made aware of what he had done and he saw it from God's point of view.

He saw it from God's perspective and David changed. Psalm 51 is the great psalm of repentance. Where there is an agreement with God. I am that man.

Against you, you only have I sinned. You say done this ill. We find David pleading and pleading for forgiveness and being persuaded in his pleading that God will forgive him.

[27 : 50] And that's what repentance is. Where we're agreeing with God and coming. And the fruit of that repentance, the discovery that we discover is forgiveness of sin.

Because if we truly repent, God will forgive us. So like the disciple, we are to be witnesses for the Lord. We can't be witnesses in the sense that they were witnesses.

We haven't seen the actual risen Lord physically. but we are witnesses to what Jesus has done and has revealed to us in the word.

We are to witness by our life and by our speech. We are to share Jesus with others. And as we were talking about on Wednesday, there has to be, remember, in our witnessing, there has to be a matching between what we are and what we say.

Because if we don't live what we say, then people won't listen. It will be like water off a duck's back.

[28 : 57] As we said, as we were saying there on Wednesday, if we are people who are really angry in life and rant and rave and fly off the handle at the least thing and unreasonable and irrational in our behavior and then say to people, ah, you've got to know the love of Jesus, they will say, excuse me?

They'll say, you're not showing the love of Jesus. You see, there has to be a consistency. There has to be this. Again, we use the example of somebody is forever gossiping and putting down on people and saying bad things about people and undermining people and then at the same time says, ah, you've got to know Jesus to discover the peace of Christ.

You'll say to yourself, you're talking rubbish. I'm not listening to you because your life does not show that peace. You see, when Jesus comes into a person's life, Jesus, as the prince of peace, will bring a life of peace.

The believer is a peacemaker. The believer is somebody who's wanting to build up rather than to break down. And all these things carry great weight. You look back over your Christian life.

as I will look back and you remember that many of the people who had made the greatest impact upon your life were those who were almost more than what they said.

[30 : 23] But when these people who lived a life that radiated Christ when they spoke, you listened, you believed, you heard. that's the kind of witness that Jesus is looking for.

And that is what we are to be witnesses. But the final thing that we'll say is that when we go out witnessing for Jesus, that we don't go out in our own strength.

We are empowered by him. And you see that, for instance, in the life of Peter. Because of Peter before, you see him with a threefold denial. You see the Peter after, and you hear Peter preaching away there, and showing the great power that has come upon him.

You remember, my friend, when you seek to live for Jesus, and you seek to witness for Jesus, to do so in his power, in his strength. Because it's Jesus you're living for.

It's Jesus you're witnessing about. And ask Lord, empower me to shine for yourself. Let's pray. Oh Lord, oh God, we pray that Jesus might become ever more real and precious to us.

[31 : 34] Forgive us for our sin, and forgive us, Lord, for how often we do not take our Christianity as seriously as we ought. Help us, Lord, to walk daily, focusing upon thyself, and forgive us for our inconsistencies and failure, but that there might be within us an ever greater desire to show the life of Christ in our own life.

Do us good, we pray, bless us in everything, and we pray to bless a cup of tea or coffee in the hall afterwards, and time of fellowship. Do us good in everything, we pray, and take away all our sin.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. Amen.