

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>, April, 2021

**STICK TO THE PLAN!** - Luke 24:36-48

The disciples were terrified. They hid together in their dwelling in Jerusalem, trembling with fear. They didn't know if Roman soldiers or temple guards might burst through the doors at any moment and arrest them all. They might all die, just like Jesus died, scourged with whips, and nailed to wooden planks. They didn't know what would happen.

But something was strange about how Jesus died. There were a series of strange reports. There was an earthquake while Jesus was on the cross, and before the earthquake there had been 3 hours of darkness, from noon until 3. The two women who went to the tomb said they saw Jesus there, and he was alive, but most of the disciples didn't believe it.

Rumors spread that the cloth barrier that separated the holy of holies in the temple had been torn in two from top to bottom, the massive quilt barrier that separated the people from God in the temple, at the very moment Jesus died.

What was happening? What was going on? In the Gospel of Luke chapter 24, verses 36-48, we see Jesus has been crucified, and his followers are hiding.

Two of the disciples had just arrived. And they tell the story of how they walked on the Emmaus road and were talking to a fellow traveler. They talked for some time, and then they realized that the man walking with them was in fact Jesus! And then he suddenly vanished. What a strange story!

Then Jesus suddenly appears right in front of all of them. And he says "I'm alive! It's me!" The disciples are terrified and they think they're seeing a ghost. He tells them that he is no ghost, he is real. He shows them his hands and feet, the holes where he was pierced in his flesh. Those wounds would never fully heal, never. Think about that, what God himself was willing to do for you and me.

Jesus did something eternal for us. Today he bears those same marks.

He still has the hole in his side where the spear was driven into his abdomen.

Jesus is still alive and he is hard at work in many beautiful ways. He's active in the world through his body, the church, which is you. He's active in heaven, the reality beyond this world, where God lives.

He is actively interceding for us, that is, talking to God on our behalf, and asking for God the Father to have mercy on us who are in the world. Jesus is also active preparing our dwellings in the eternal city of God, which will come down out of heaven when God remakes the world.

Why then are we so often like the disciples? Why are we so afraid? We often fear and misunderstand what God is doing in our lives - just like the disciples didn't understand that Jesus intentionally went to the cross for the purpose of being a sacrifice for our sins.

It's scary when things go wild in our lives. We often don't understand what's happening, especially when something terrible happens. But often it's a blessing in disguise, even if simply for the fact that it's molding us into the image of Christ.

The disciples must have thought it was over. Jesus had died, and that was it.

Why did the disciples doubt Jesus? I mean they could see him and touch his hands and feet. He was right there in the room, yet they were still doubting.

We often have the same problem today. We've seen how Jesus has transformed our lives. We've seen how Jesus has changed the lives of our loved ones. We've seen it all. Yet often we still doubt.

I suppose it's natural to doubt the supernatural. We don't normally see things like resurrection, or miracles. But it's really not that difficult when you think about it.

I mean, think about it, God made everything we see - the whole world, from nothing.

How hard is it then for Him to resurrect Jesus from the dead?

In any case, it's wise to examine all the facts in a situation.

Consider this quotation from Timothy Paul Jones, author & VP of the Southern Baptist Seminary;

"The central claim of the NT is that Jesus was physically resurrected after being crucified.

If this claim arose from decades of embellishment instead of historical truth, then Jesus is dead, the apostles were liars, and our faith is worthless (1 Cor. 15:14-17).

But evidences from the first and second centuries reveal that eyewitness testimony about Jesus emerged rapidly and circulated reliably.

The NT texts relied on testimonies from apostolic eyewitnesses, and all of these texts were completed while the eyewitnesses were still alive.

That's why we can declare with confidence: Don't worry; I read the book.

He didn't stay dead."

That is really powerful historical evidence for the resurrection. Atheists often try to make it seem like we Christians believe in some legendary myth, but any real historian knows the Christian faith is rooted deeply in history.

Let's direct our attention to verse 44, where Jesus plainly tells his disciples, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Jesus is saying, essentially, I told you this would happen. This was the plan all the way back to four thousand years earlier, when it was promised that one in the line of Adam would crush the head of Satan. Everything in the Old Testament was pointing forward to the coming of Jesus...Genesis, Exodus, every book, it all points to Jesus.

The text in verses 46 through 48 is **really** powerful:

46 Jesus said "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.48 You are witnesses of these things."

We serve a holy God, who commands us to repent of our sins. What does it mean to repent? It means to own up, apologize and ask Christ to help you going forward, to live the way God wants you to live.

Jesus essentially told his disciples: This is the plan. I died on the cross, I was resurrected on the third day, and now the plan must move forward. Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all the nations. People's lives will be changed completely...and that's exactly what has happened over the last two thousand years. The message of the gospel has spread across the face of the Earth, from Jerusalem, across Europe, down into Africa, to the east, to the north, and today here in North America, and if you think about it, virtually every nation on the planet has heard the gospel. It's changed billions of lives. Jesus' plan is being fulfilled.

When Jesus appeared to the disciples they went from men and women whimpering in fear to mighty proclaimers of the resurrection, unashamed to witness for Christ. We too can be such witnesses.

Stay on fire for God. Live out your faith in Christ because Christ is alive right now.

AMEN