

## Luke 24:13-49 [46-49]

### Witnesses of the Crucified and Risen Christ

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Not long ago I attended a pastor's conference and a professor of a seminary asked us this question: what is the heart of the gospel? He said the gospel may be summarized in five words. With his one hand, he held out his thumb and fingers: Jesus died and rose again.

This is the way to remember the heart of the message of the Bible, boys and girls. "*Jesus died and rose again.*"

The gospel is not so complicated. It's so simple, a small child can understand; yet so profound 深奥的 that a 95 year old can never fully comprehend its stunning 足以使人晕倒的 wonder. From the tomb, bursts forth life and light. Jesus conquers death. He, the light, conquers darkness. He bursts forth to give new hope and everlasting life to His people.

The tomb is empty. Praise God for His work! The old creation [self] is something that belongs to the past; behold a new creation in Christ has come!

About these things you are witnesses. As Jesus says to His disciples in verse 48: "**And you are witnesses of these things.**" We may fairly ask, 'what things?' Well, "these things" which are mentioned in verses 46-47:

- that Jesus died and rose again
- through repentance, there is the promise of forgiveness of sins and new life

This is also a joyful reminder that you, too, belong to the company of witnesses from Luke 24: Jesus died and rose again. Now you who believe have the privilege of continuing to share this message of Christ's victory with others.

From Luke 24:46-49, I bring God's Word: You are Witnesses of the Crucified and Risen Christ. In this we see,

1. the authority in our witness [verses 46-47]
2. the power in our witness [verse 49]
1. **the authority in our witness** [*"thus it is written and thus it was necessary...."*]

The authority in our witness is Christ, who is the Word. This is why Jesus points to Himself who fulfills the written Word of God.. "*Thus it is written...*"[v.46]. Jesus points to Himself. In verse 44, Jesus says, "*all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me*" [v.44].

"*It is written*", therefore "*it was necessary for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day*" [v.46]. Jesus fulfilled what the Word has spoken. He died and rose again.

That early Sunday morning when the women came to the tomb, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. The tomb was empty. They expected to see his dead body in there. They prepared the spices for His dead body. Finally, two angels appeared before them, announcing to them: *“He is not here, but is risen!. Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying “The Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.” [24:7].*

The women then share their witness to the eleven disciples and the rest. We are told that at first the witness of the women seemed to the eleven disciples as idle tales, and they did not believe the testimony of the women [v.11].

However the risen and living Christ confirms the witness of these women in the presence of His eleven disciples. He did this by showing them His hands and His feet; those hands and feet which were nailed to the cross [24:40]. The scars confirm Christ's testimony: He lives! Even then they had a hard time believing it. So He ate a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb in their presence [v.43].

And who opens our eyes so that we believe and accept His witness? The risen Jesus does. Until this point, the Scriptures were like a big jumbled up 混乱的 jigsaw puzzle to His disciples. It's not until He, the risen Jesus, opens their minds and hearts, that they could say, “Now I see. Now I understand!”

- Think of the two men on the road to the village of Emmaus [24:13ff]. On the way, as they were talking, the risen Jesus drew near and walked with them. *“But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him”* [v.16]. Jesus then joins in their conversation, explaining the Scriptures concerning Himself. Soon, *“their eyes were opened and they knew Him”* [v.31]
- Also in verse 45, we read about His own disciples, *“And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.”*

Thus it is written and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day. Only by God's grace through faith, are our eyes opened to see the reality, the truth. His death and resurrection is the key that unlocks the Scriptures, the perplexities 困惑 of life. Jesus is the key to understanding the Scriptures and making sense of God, the world and ourselves. He restores to us the life we had in the beginning with God. That life was ruined by our disobedience. He paid for our sin through His death on the cross and arose to restore this life to us.

Jesus died and rose again to give us new life, a new heart, a new mind, a new understanding, a new outlook. It's a gift, every bit as much as Jesus opening the eyes of blind Bartimaeus was His gift. Jesus died and rose again. This is not myth; this is truth, God's revelation to mankind. His testimony is true.

Because His testimony is true, this leads us to our 'second necessary' in verse 47. Verse 47 flows out of verse 46.

This witness of Jesus and Scripture calls for a response, a response of trusting in Jesus, the risen Christ.. Verse 47, *"and [thus it was necessary] that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name...."* Forgiveness and new life comes through repentance and faith. What does repentance and faith mean? It means dying to sin [repentance] and rising with Christ to a new life [living the forgiven life]. It is sharing in His righteousness which He has won for us.

This is why it was necessary for Jesus to die and rise again from the dead. His death and resurrection is the soil out of which a new plant grows and flourishes 茂盛 in the light of the sun. It is a new creation; the old has passed away. Repentance and forgiveness of sin is a fruit of Christ's resurrection power at work in His people. The apostle Paul prays, *'that you may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead...'* [Ephesians 1:19-20]. This new life through repentance is as powerful as Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. More than that, Jesus` resurrection is a guarantee to us that our bodies, though they die, will be raised from the dead.

It is this message of hope with the promise of forgiveness of sins which must be preached. In whose name must we proclaim this message? And to whom must we proclaim this message? Jesus says, *"in His name to all nations...."* One name and only one name; and this witness of the living Christ must be brought to all nations.

One time someone told me, 'yes, Jesus is the only way. But then he went on to say, "But when Jesus said this, He was speaking to His disciples, who were Christians, He was not speaking to Buddhists and Muslims." In other words, he was saying that Jesus is the only way for Christians, but not the only way for others.'

But Jesus is the Life and He is the one who conquered death and the power of sin. His name is Jesus. No other name has conquered death and lives, except for Jesus! Jesus says that it is necessary, therefore, *"that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preaching **in His name** to all nations..."* Only one name!

Jesus won over Satan, death and hell. He won over the war against sin. Now in His name we are to bear witness to this awesome reality in history. And, beloved, our witness on behalf of this name is the announcement of victory: He won! He won!. At the same time our witness is a declaration of war against the defeated enemies of Christ:

- our old sinful self, the world and Satan
- the names of all other gods and those who serve them [it slays]
- the vain reasoning of those who don't believe.

Forgiveness comes through repentance in His name, the 'Name which is above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow. . .and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" [Philippians 2:10-11].

And this lead us to our second point.

2. **The power of our witness** [*“Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you . . . you are endued with power from on high”*]

Congregation, the power of our witness is the power of Him who raised Christ from the dead. He who so graciously opens your eyes by His Spirit also opens your mouth for witnessing, for bearing true witness to those who do not believe. Verse 49 says that Jesus has clothed us with power to do so. This was fulfilled at Pentecost, when Christ poured out His Spirit on His church.

You are now witnesses of these things, says Jesus. What are these things? These things are the things spoken of by Jesus in verse 46: Jesus died and rose again. You are witnesses of these things. It's not a call, but an expectation!

Congregation, we join the witnesses in Luke 24. Look at verse 9: the women *“returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.”* The two men of Emmaus also *“told the things that happened on the road”* when they were with Jesus [v.35]. And now having open the hearts of His disciples, Jesus says to them, *“you are witnesses of these things”* [v.48].

True, not all are called to be preachers as the eleven who became apostles. But all believers are witnesses. You don't need special training for this. Just share Jesus with others. Talk about Him with others as these witnesses in Luke 24 did. They were very ordinary, plain women and men whom Jesus had changed. Jesus used them and built His church through them.

Second, the power of Christ's witness is not primarily seen in miraculous signs and wonders. It's seen in a changed life. A changed life is a sign and a wonder. Disciplined children, loving marriages and families, the fruit of the Spirit, wholesome talk, bear powerful witness to the reality of Christ's resurrection as well.

Beloved, the message of Easter is simple: Jesus died and rose again! This is the heart of the gospel. If you cut out this heart, you have no gospel left.

It was necessary for our salvation that Jesus died and rose again. And that salvation comes through repentance. It's this gospel that must be proclaimed in His name to all nations. You have been endued with 赋予 power from on high. Spread the good news of Jesus! Amen.