

“Recognizing the Risen Christ”—Luke 24:25-27

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Recognizing the Risen Christ”, is Luke 24:25-27 → *Jesus said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.*

This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“Do you believe there is a god?” “Do you believe in life after death?” “Do you believe in angels?” Such questions are constantly being posed in an effort to ascertain a person’s “religious belief system.” While they may appear to be questions of “faith” in reality they are questions which simply reveal opinions. They are no different than asking if you believe there is life on other planets. Such questions actually serve the purpose of hindering you from recognizing the risen Christ.

The risen Christ cannot be recognized by human analysis, academic exercise or beliefs conjured up by some kind of “proofs.” The record of Jesus’ appearances to people following His resurrection attests to the fact that faith which gives eternal life is based upon the Holy Spirit’s work

in your heart.

Our text records the words of Jesus to a couple of guys on their way to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection. As He joined them, He heard them discussing the events that had just taken place over the past few days in Jerusalem, events which would have been considered “front page news.” When Jesus asked them what they were talking about Cleopas responded with surprise. How could this man have just left Jerusalem without knowing about the events of Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection? Maybe he figured it would have even been difficult for an uninterested bystander to miss the events of the past three days.

Yet, one could also be surprised that Cleopas and his friend didn’t recognize the resurrected Christ standing right in front of them. If they knew so much about these events why didn’t they recognize Jesus? Well, Luke 24:16 tells us that *their eyes were kept from recognizing Him*. But why? Wouldn’t it have been very beneficial and wonderful for these guys to see the risen Christ to lift up their spirits and verify their faith? Maybe. However, Jesus doesn’t just want people to believe that He died and rose again. **He wants them to actually trust in His atoning death and resurrection by repenting and submitting to Him, based upon the Holy Spirit working through the written Word of God.**

When Cleopas said that they *had hoped that He was the one to redeem Israel*, (cf. Luke 24:21) his hope, along with so many others, was

grounded in a misunderstanding of the Person & Work of Jesus. It is the same misunderstanding of so many today who claim to be “Christian” or “believe in God” or are “religious.” Many understand Jesus to be the giver of “the good life” filled with prosperity now, with the absence of any physical need or suffering now. They perceive Him as the giver of a pain and tragedy-free life now. In their world “faith” becomes the way to secure this good life now. Unfortunately, such faith will not sustain them when they encounter the ugly affects of sin in their “good life” and many are downcast with Cleopas saying, “I had hoped He was the one to give me what I want.”

Jesus not only needed to clear up their misunderstandings about His work as Redeemer but also how they recognized the risen Christ and His redemption everyday **by faith**. Recognizing Jesus doesn't happen when He somehow “proves” His existence to us. **It happens when the Holy Spirit gives faith on the basis of God's timeless Word of promise and fulfillment in Jesus.**

How many of us would have expected Jesus to respond differently to these men? Seems it would have been very natural for Jesus to say to them, “Look guys! Its me . . . in the flesh!” When Jesus appeared to the eleven apostles *He showed them His hands and His side.* (cf. John 20:20) However, Thomas refused to believe that Jesus was alive simply on the

basis of his fellow apostles' words. When Jesus appeared to them again eight days later Jesus said to Thomas, *Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.* (cf. John 20:27)

Keep in mind that Jesus was not out to “prove” anything to anyone. He wanted people to trust in His atoning work for the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life **on the basis of the Holy Spirit working faith in their hearts. Such faith comes through the proclamation of God’s promises and their fulfillment in the written Word.** The sight of the risen Christ humbled Thomas so intensely that He confessed in submission to Jesus: *My Lord and my God.* (cf. John 20:28) Recognizing the risen Christ by faith happens when you trust in Him as a sinner in need of forgiveness, not analyze Him as a person in need of proof. Faith and submission are inseparable.

This is why Jesus used the approach He used in our text. He rebuked them as *foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Where have the prophets . . . spoken? Verse 27 says: And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them **in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.** Jesus pointed them to the Scriptures which were right before their eyes and in their ears all along to tell them about Himself.*

The written Word of God must be the basis for your faith because “proofs” are subject to your own human standards which are constantly challenged because they are not sufficient to deal with your sin. A “spiritually intense” experience can be doubted in time and will not sustain your relationship with the Lord.

This was the point of Jesus’ parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When the rich man was suffering in the anguish of the fires of hell he begged father Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers to warn them about coming to hell. Abraham’s response? *They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.* The rich man figured that wasn’t enough. After all, he had the written Old Testament Scriptures and ended up in hell. So the rich man said, *“No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.* Who could refuse to believe a person come back from the grave to warn him? Apparently even those closest to Jesus didn’t believe Him after rising from the dead! So father Abraham replied, *If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be **convinced** if someone should rise from the dead.* (cf. Luke 16:19-31)

These men on the road to Emmaus *were kept from recognizing* the risen Christ so that they could recognize Him properly—their hearts burning within them as the Holy Spirit created faith! No longer downcast, hopeless and disappointed they went back to Jerusalem and confessed

confidently to the rest of the believers that they recognized the risen Christ!

How about you? Do you recognize the risen Christ? Do you recognize Him in the proclamation of God's Law and Gospel in the Bible, repent and trust in His atoning work for the forgiveness of your sins? Do you encounter Him in Scripture and in humility confess Him as your risen God and Lord? Romans 10:9-10 says: *If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* The work of such saving faith in you is the work of the Holy Spirit based upon the written Word of God! Amen.

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him.

*Though you do not now see Him, you believe in Him
and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,
obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

(1 Peter 1:8-9)

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