**Sermon Luke 24:36-48 14/4/24**

Sermon Video link: <https://youtu.be/StcizaCUikM>

It's the Sunday after Jesus was crucified. The room is abuzz with excitement. Some of the women had seen the tomb was empty and angels told them Jesus was alive. Then Simon Peter reported that he had seen the risen Jesus. Now a couple of other disciples Cleopas and his companion arrive and talk about meeting a man while they were walking home and how they finally recognised Jesus when he broke bread at a meal in their home.

The room is full of excitement, but also fear. Fear of the authorities who had arrested and crucified Jesus and now may turn on his disciples. Fear that the stories of a raised Jesus are too good to be true and what was really happening, because in the real world, death is the end of our story. Fear that having denied and abandoned Jesus, if he has risen, he may be angry and upset with them…

Peace be with you!

That is the first thing they hear when the risen Jesus appears among them in that place. Peace be with you! That is exactly what they need, peace to calm their anxiety and fear. Peace knowing that all is forgiven.

When the risen Jesus comes, he comes bringing peace.

Jesus came with peace, but they were still fearful. Worse they were terrified because dead people don’t rise. It must be a ghost, they think. But it isn’t a ghost. You can’t touch ghosts. You can’t touch a ghost’s wounded hands and feet. You can’t handle a ghost! You can only do that with a person who has flesh and bones. Then they touch him…

Imagine a close relative or long-time friend living overseas or interstate suddenly appearing at your front door for a surprise visit. At first, you may be in shock and feel a little disorientated and confused. You might even think you are imagining they are there standing in front of you. Then they say “Hi, it’s me…” and say their name. Maybe you embrace and begin to realise that they are really there. You begin to experience joy and amazement but still can’t quite believe it. You feel like it’s too good to be true and you feel like pinching yourself.

After touching Jesus, the disciples are still confused. They think it is too good to be true. They are beginning to feel joy, but also amazed and still not quite believing. Jesus asks for a piece of fish and eats it. Ghosts can’t eat fish or any other food for that matter. Finally, their minds begin to accept that their Lord and friend is alive, loves them and forgives them.

Jesus comes bringing peace and Jesus is a living, breathing, living human, raised from the dead. Jesus is alive and that changes everything. It changes everything in the room where the disciples are staying. It changes everything in the world. It changes everything in the universe.

Once and for all, dying, death and decay are no longer the end, resurrection and life are the end. Sin is no longer the end, forgiveness and redemption are the end. Broken relationships can be fixed, and broken lives can be repaired. There is hope for everyone, there is hope for the world, there is hope for the future.

Then Jesus opens their minds so they can understand the scriptures and he reveals that everything that has happened was planned and foretold. The scriptures are the key to understanding what happened to Jesus as Messiah, including his suffering, and rising from the dead. Everything that has happened is exactly as it should be.

God has a plan for his Son, Jesus. God has a plan for the disciples of Jesus, God has a plan for the world and all of Creation. God has a plan for you! God is in control and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus we know that God’s plan has everything to do with God’s love for Creation and God’s love for each and every human being.

Knowing that Jesus has defeated death, sin, and Satan. Knowing everything that happened to Jesus was in God’s plan, and knowing God is in control. Knowing that God loves us and considers us dearly beloved children. All these things help to take away our fear and give us peace.

Every week we come to worship, and we are reminded of this good news. We enter worship with our sins, failings and fears and Jesus forgives us. Jesus speaks to us through the words of scripture and opens our minds to understand how he fits in and how we fit into God’s plan. Jesus comes to us in the flesh, giving his body and blood to us in bread and wine and we leave, less fearful, full of the peace of the lord and ready to face the week.

Then we go out as people filled with hope from our resurrected Lord and we do what our Lord has called us to do. We share the peace we have received with the people we touch. We pour out peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope into people’s lives.

If people ask, we tell them the reason for our peace and hope in the face of life’s many difficulties. We bear witness to Jesus, the one whose resurrection fills us with hope. Our risen Lord who is always with us, bringing us the peace of God. A peace that displaces fear. A peace that is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand (see Phil 4:7 Living Bible).

Amen

Pastor Rolf Lungwitz