

Easter 3  
April 19, 2015  
Luke 24:36-49  
Our Twofold Easter Legacy  
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Dear Friends in Christ,

When we think of a legacy, we think about something someone has handed down. It might be in connection with death. The deceased passed along a legacy, a gift to the living. In addition, it may be the passing along of a benefit. For example, a student gets into a prestigious college because his or her father attended there. The student gets the benefits as a legacy of the father.

With Christ, it is the second meaning not the first. Our benefactor is not dead but alive. Oh, he died all right. But today he lives and everything is all right. Jesus has passed along his legacy to us, his benefits to us. We were dead in our trespasses and now live by the power of his resurrection. Our Easter legacy is twofold.

The Holy Scriptures had predicted this divine legacy for centuries. The Son of God established this legacy by appearing in the flesh. He then endowed his church. The Holy Spirit summarizes all of this concisely as Luke's pen describes the risen Christ's appearance to his disciples on Easter evening.

Immediately Jesus endows **Our Twofold Easter Legacy**. First, divine peace through the resurrected Christ. Second, official work as Jesus' disciples.

Jesus' disciples' reaction behind closed and locked doors when they saw him is not without precedent. The judge of Israel, Gideon, saw the "*angel of the LORD*", the Son of God, and his reaction was fear. Gideon was afraid because he had seen God. The disciples were frightened because they thought they were seeing a spirit, a ghost.

The angel of the LORD said to Gideon, "*Peace! Do not be afraid.*" [Judges 6:23]. Jesus used this same greeting common among God's people to endow his legacy to the confused and startled gathering of those who had witnessed Jesus' death on the cross.

The disciples were confused because some of them and some of their women claimed to have seen Jesus alive earlier that Sunday. Two who had walked and talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus related the account of "what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread."

The man standing before them was not a spirit. Jesus was there in his physical, glorified flesh and blood. He told them as he would tell the absent Thomas a week later to touch him. He would eat a piece of boiled fish, not out of necessity but as evidence of his power as St. Augustine once said. By this living man, not a dead one, came our legacy of peace; peace through the resurrected Christ.

Peace in Hebrew conveys the ideas of health, soundness, prosperity. Jesus' word, "Peace be with you" did more than merely wish those blessings. As with everything Jesus said, his words actually conferred, the things those words mean. Jesus' resurrection endows the peace and the joy he had promised them before his death. He had promised them "the joy no one can take away." [John 16:22]. St. Paul also mentions "peace through his blood shed on the cross." [Col 1:20]

On the one hand, Jesus rebuked the disciples for their fear and their doubts. Just as quickly, Jesus dispelled those doubts by letting them touch him and watch him eat. Now peace and joy

displaced fear and doubt as the dawn's light displaces the night's darkness. The power of Jesus' words and their own eyes assured them that what they earlier had heard was indeed true.

Peace through the resurrected Christ is our Easter legacy first and foremost. It is a legacy not from the dead but from the living. It is a legacy of peace that works as it takes us from death to life. Christ's resurrection gives us spiritual health, soundness and prosperity. It is our legacy of the forgiveness of our sins and our place at the banquet table at the marriage feast of the lamb in heaven.

The second part of our twofold Easter legacy is work; not just any work but official work as Jesus' disciples.

Jesus had gone away for a couple of days and had come back to his disciples. A week later, he would appear again. Thomas would believe because he had seen Jesus. Already on Easter night Jesus would begin to prepare his disciples for the office of ambassadors. He would leave them still again soon, and they would continue the work of publishing peace as Isaiah had written, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace." [52:7]

So that they could do this work, Jesus continued what he had done on the road to Emmaus, "He opened their minds so they could understand Scripture." The Old Testament Scriptures had foretold everything that had happened to him. The message of peace the disciples would share in his name would become the New Testament Scriptures. They would preach "repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem." They would take out into the world the witness of Jesus' resurrection.

We learn from the evangelist John that Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on them for this official work. They received the Spirit now as the power for the ministration of the gospel not the law. Later Jesus would pour out the Spirit on them on Pentecost in a fuller measure to give them courage and tongues for the rapid dissemination of the gospel.

This official work as Jesus' disciples continues through us. The Holy Spirit opens our hearts and minds to the Scriptures. We see Jesus and his work as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures and the message of the New Testament Scriptures. This is our Easter legacy. While we await another legacy in the fullness of eternity, our days are full of using our legacy to bring sinners to Christ and into the fellowship of the holy Christian church.

In the Beatitudes Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called the sons of God." That is our official work. We carry out that work in the peace of Jesus' resurrection as his disciples. That is our twofold Easter legacy. We have received it not from a dead man but from the Living One in whose name we have live and work. Amen. <SDG>