

Easter 3

April 15, 2018

Luke 24:36-49

The Risen Christ Endows Us with Our Twofold Legacy

Rev. George Ferch

Dear Friends in Christ,

A legacy is something someone has handed down to us. It might be in connection with a last will and testament. The deceased left a legacy to the living. It may be the passing along of a benefit. A student gets into a prestigious college as a benefit because his or her father attended there. They even refer to that student as a 'legacy.'

With the risen Christ, our legacy falls in the second category. It can't be the first because our benefactor is not dead but alive. He lives and reigns while we enjoy the legacies he has left us.

The Holy Spirit mentions these legacies concisely as Luke's pen wrote about the risen Christ's appearance to his disciples on Easter evening.

Immediately **The Risen Christ Endows Us with Our Twofold Legacy**. First, divine peace through his resurrection. Second, official work as Jesus' disciples.

Jesus' disciples' reaction when they saw the risen Christ 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 had seen God. The disciples were afraid because they thought they were seeing a spirit.

In Judges 6, we read that 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 first legacy. Its recipients were the confused and startled 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 their account of "what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread."

The risen Christ 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 ate a piece of boiled fish; not out of necessity but as evidence of his power as St. Augustine once said. The Christ, alive and well not dead and decaying, endowed his church with the legacy of peace through his resurrection.

'Peace' in Hebrew incorporates the wishes of health, soundness, prosperity. Jesus' blessing, "Peace be with you" did more than merely wish those benefits. Jesus' words actually conferred the things those words meant. Jesus' resurrection endows the peace he had promised the disciples then and now before his death. St. Paul mentions to the Colossians the legacy the risen Christ has endowed to us, "peace through his blood shed on the cross." [Col 1:20]

Jesus did rebuke the disciples for their fear and doubts. Just as quickly, Jesus dispelled those fears and doubts by having them touch him and watch him eat. 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 left his disciples for a three days and now had come back. A week later, he appeared again. Thomas believed because he had seen Jesus. Already on Easter night Jesus began to prepare his disciples for their office of ambassadors. He would leave them still again in 40 days. They would continue the work of publishing peace as Isaiah had written in chapter 52, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace." [52:7]

In order that they could do this work as Jesus disciples, the risen Christ repeated 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 carry into the all the world their eyewitness 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 to give them courage and tongues for the rapid dissemination of the gospel.

This official work continues through Jesus’ disciples, 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 second Easter legacy. While we await still a third legacy in the fullness of eternity in heaven at the right hand of God, we fill our days using our legacies of peace and discipleship to call sinners to Christ so the Spirit joins them with us in 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 us. We carry out that work in the peace of Jesus’ resurrection as his disciples. We have received it not from a dead man but from the Living One in whose name we live and work. We benefit because of our Father. We are ‘legacies’. Amen. <SDG>