

Luke 24:36-49

April 22, 2012 – THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER

No Ghost for Easter

✠ Eating in peace (vv.36-43)

✠ Witnessing in hope (vv.44-49)

In the name of Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord, dear fellow disciples, hopeful witnesses:

One question as we jump into the end of Luke's last chapter. Did you wonder when I read the first verse, "What is *'this'*?" Luke writes, "***While they were still talking about this....***" We're talking about an evening run, like a marathon for most of us. Exciting news none of us have witnessed – yet. A band of scared disciples, huddled behind locked doors, wondering about all the reports that keep coming in. Women said they saw Him alive, but sounded like unbelievable "***nonsense***" (v.11) to the men. Peter, the denier, said He appeared to him. Then formerly depressed and tired Emmaus disciples reported how they did not realize they were walking with Him, until He broke bread in their home. They hurried back six or seven miles to Jerusalem to tell the others ***how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.*** (v.35) ***While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them.... "This"*** was an event of epic proportions! Those downhearted, depressed disciples had **No Ghost for Easter!**

✠ Eating in peace (vv.36-43)

Too bad for too many Americans. One mom spent hours every year on a family tradition. She mixed up dough to make Easter bunny tracks all over the house. Couldn't eat them. Had to scrape them up out of the carpet. But did her children know the true story of Easter? I don't know. Isn't it fair to ask, "If we spend so much time convincing our kids of make-believe, will they believe us when we tell them the truth?" Have fun with holiday traditions, dear loved ones of the Lord. But don't let them cause your kids to stumble like so many seminary professors these days. All they've got is a **Ghost for Easter**.

We've got the Holy Spirit's security camera with a live feed on that locked up room. Maybe more people would believe it if they saw it on TV. Look at the Holy Spirit's monitor in your mind's eye. Ask yourself, "What kind of ghost comes to his friends and says, ***'Peace be with you'***?" Who of us has not locked away some hidden place in our hearts where we try to close the door on shameful words and deeds? Professor Deutschlander told our Pastoral Conference this week how he wondered what would be his Christian cross to bear in his new care facility. You know where he found it? In memory: what he should have done, missed opportunities over the years, failed attempts at doing good. The older I get, the more I can relate. Your conscience comes calling in that hidden room of your heart. How desperately we all need the Holy Spirit to break through our defenses with Jesus' greeting: ***'Peace be with you.'***

Sometimes it seems we criticize the disciples for dumb things they did and said – as if we never could ourselves! But do not fail to notice one thing about them. That first evening of Easter they were all together. Only Thomas was missing, and he paid for his absence with a whole week of doubt and dismay. The rest were not home alone, gone fishing, or separated from the fellowship. They were all together when Jesus came to chase away their doubts and fears. Love the fellowship of believers, dear friends!

Remember being together for the *strepitus*? Toward the end of our Good Friday Tenebrae we wait in the darkness for that loud thunder which signifies the rending of Christ's tomb. It makes you jump – like these disciples when Jesus suddenly appeared. ***They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."*** Why do so many seminaries say, "The disciples just wanted Jesus alive, so they imagined it"? Christ's security footage tells the real story. They doubted and disbelieved, but Jesus took their fear away. He told them to touch him. "Let your hands confirm what your eyes are seeing." Listening to this,

maybe you should slap your arm. Notice something. No matter how hard you hit yourself, your hand does not go through. Wow! You are flesh and bone. So is Jesus in His resurrected, glorified body!

He showed the nail marks still in His hands and feet, trophies from His sacrifice for every bad memory you have locked away somewhere. The blood of Christ washes all your regrets, and God can turn even our mistakes into blessings by the power of His grace. Man with the memory, believe! ***“The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.”*** (1 John 1:7) Sister, trust the tender loving care of Him who loved you even to the point of death. See His hands and feet – for you!

Lest there be any doubt about **No Ghost for Easter**, this Prince of Peace proved His name was not Casper the friendly ghost, but Christ our crucified and risen Friend. ***While they still did not believe because of joy and amazement....*** See how human emotions love to play tricks on you? But the risen Christ had a request. It’s not that He was hungry. His glorified body can never die again. Neither will your glorified body after you rise totally free from pain and weakness. ***“By the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, [He] will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”*** (Philippians 3:21 NIV84) Jesus had something to prove: **No Ghost for Easter**. They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, he ate, and guess what? No mop required. No food fell out. This is our flesh and blood Savior who promised to eat with us at His wedding banquet in heaven, ***“the best of meats and the finest of wines.”*** (Isaiah 25:6) ***“I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.”*** (Luke 12:37) Every meal here on earth, invite our Lord Jesus to come and be your guest. You will be **Eating in peace** on earth until you are **Eating in peace** forever in heaven. All because we have security in Him who is **No Ghost for Easter**.

✠ Witnessing in hope (vv.44-49)

That’s why we keep **Witnessing in hope**. At Conference this week they told us how other church bodies are watching the WELS Bible translation decision. Apparently, we’re giving more thought to this than most, especially with the three-way comparison this summer of ESV-Holman-NIV2011, for which your pastor was assigned the book of Romans. The heart of our concern is what **No Ghost for Easter** said to His disciples. Now watch His lips. Hear the recording. ***He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”*** That’s why I preached Psalm 8 on Palm Sunday and Easter. Why we meditated on Psalm 16 for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. That high Holy Week just had to be. God promised. There was no other way. Jesus had to drink the cup of suffering for our sins in order to rise again for our justification. ***Tetelestai!*** It is finished. We stand acquitted before God!

Luke’s last paragraph reminds me of a joker who must have been tired of secular humanists. He admitted, “I used to have an open mind..., but all my brains fell out!” Without God, ears stop up, hearts harden, and brains run ragged in that tiny space we call, “the skull.” But all who have knelt at the Place of the Skull, Golgotha, can see why Christ did this: ***Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ [must] suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”***

“Repentance” means a change of mind about yourself, about your sin, about your God and His forgiveness. **“Forgiveness”** in Latin means, “remission,” or “sending away.” Like the baby who says, “Aw gone!” our sins God has plunged into the depths of the sea, promising to ***“remember them no more.”*** Let the Lord change your mind by Word and sacrament, not like the woman who led her husband away because, “They won’t let me take Communion there.” She didn’t stay long enough to let God’s Word convince her of the close, family Communion in our Lord’s Holy Supper. We want everyone as soon as possible to enjoy the Holy Spirit’s power to keep **Witnessing in hope**. That’s our Easter tradition. So much to tell! So little time! Let’s be busy inviting to this: **No Ghost for Easter**. Amen.