

The Glory of Jesus' Suffering, Death, and Resurrection

Lesson Eight

The Victorious One Sends His Gospel to the World

*They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn—for he has done it.
(Psalm 22:31)*

1. Two lost disciples found on the road to Emmaus
2. A surprise guest appears behind locked doors
3. Jesus makes a special appearance to a doubting disciple
4. A final mountaintop experience

Worship

Read responsively hymn 147, stanza 5, from *Christian Worship*.

A: For the joy your advent gave me,
B: For your gospel's great reward,
A: For your baptism which has saved me,
B: For your supper and your Word,
A: For your death, the bitter scorn,
B: For your resurrection morn:
A: Lord, I thank you and extol you,
B: And in heav'n I shall behold you. Amen.

Introduction

Scripture references:

Matthew 28:16-20

Mark 16:12-20

Luke 24:13-53

John 21:19-22:25

Acts 1:1-11

1 Corinthians 15:1-7

Picture a father who has just experienced the birth of his firstborn. It is almost impossible to imagine him keeping the news to himself. The excitement and joy overflows from him as he shares the news—even with total strangers. It would be unnatural to keep it to himself. So it is with the news of Easter. Our brother has risen as the firstborn from the grave. Left behind in defeated disarray are sin, death, and hell. All that remains is for us to pass through death to life with him. Such news was never meant to remain hidden away. Let's take a look at the dual emphasis on comfort and proclamation that dominates every Easter and post-Easter appearance of our risen Lord.

Background

Scripture lists at least 11 appearances of the risen Christ from Easter morning until Ascension. At every one of these appearances, Jesus was establishing witnesses of the resurrection who could proclaim what they had heard and seen. The 11 appearances listed by the gospel writers include Jesus appearing to

1. the women on their way back from the tomb (Matthew 28:9,10)
2. Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-18)
3. Peter (Luke 24:34 and 1 Corinthians 15:5)
4. the Emmaus disciples (Mark 16:12 and Luke 24:13-35)
5. the disciples early Easter evening (Mark 16:14,15; Luke 24:36-48; and John 20:19-23)
6. the disciples including Thomas on the Sunday after Easter (John 20:24-29)
7. several disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-23)
8. five hundred disciples (1 Corinthians 15:6)
9. James (1 Corinthians 15:7)
10. various disciples on a hill in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20)
11. various disciples on Ascension Day (Mark 16:19,20; Luke 24:50-53; and Acts 1:1-11)

Two lost disciples found on the road to Emmaus

We cannot be certain about the location of the village of Emmaus. All that we can say with certainty is this: if you would draw a circle around Jerusalem with a seven-mile radius, somewhere within that circle would be the ruins of the village to which these two disciples were headed. We are also sure that their attitude would change dramatically from the time they left Jerusalem. They left with faces downcast. They returned with hearts burning within them!

Read Luke 24:13-35.

1. Why do you think Jesus veiled his identity for a time from Cleopas and the other disciple?
2. List the misunderstanding and unbelief you hear coming from the mouths of these two confused and bewildered disciples.
3. How did Jesus put an end to their perplexity about the events of the past three days?

4. They had just told Jesus not to go any farther because night was coming. But after Jesus revealed his identity, they quickly returned all the way to Jerusalem. Why did they do this?

5. A sick child's father once said to Jesus, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). Why is this a good prayer for us to pray?

6. What hinders us from sharing the good news of a risen Savior? What lessons can we learn from the account of the Emmaus disciples?

A surprise guest appears behind locked doors

Imagine the combination of fear and faith that filled the room that first Easter evening! The joyful evidence of Jesus' resurrection had been mounting all day. However, fears and doubts were still lurking close to the surface. Suddenly, the gloriously risen One stood in their midst.

Read John 20:19-23.

1. Jesus words "Peace be with you!" were the standard greeting of the Jews. What greater meaning did they take on when they were spoken by Jesus that first Easter evening?

2. What double comfort was gained when Jesus showed his disciples the marks of the nails and spear?

3. What were the disciples to do with their Easter joy?

4. Agree or disagree: Since Jesus was primarily speaking to the Eleven when he said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you," these words don't really apply to all Christians. They only apply to those who serve in the public ministry.

5. We call what Jesus gives to his church in verse 23 the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Why are the keys central to our carrying out the gospel ministry?

Jesus makes a special appearance to a doubting disciple

The apostle Thomas will forever be ingrained in our minds as doubting Thomas. While we don't know what caused him to be absent on that first Easter evening, his doubts about the resurrection of his Lord are very well known.

Read John 20:24-29.

1. Explain: All the disciples doubted, yet Thomas' doubting demands were especially dangerous to his spiritual life.
2. What comforting truth do we learn about Jesus as we see him give his personal attention to doubting Thomas? Consider Isaiah 42:3: "A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out."
3. What did Thomas confess?
4. Can you think of some examples of when you have refused to believe until you have seen?
5. Why are we more blessed when we believe without having seen?

A final mountaintop experience

With his work complete, on the 40th day after his resurrection, Jesus ascends into heaven.

Read Acts 1:1-11.

1. What persistent misunderstanding about the kingdom of God still troubled the disciples?

2. While it wasn't important for them to have an explanation of just when and how the kingdom of God would become visible on judgment day, what did they need to know?

3. What's the point of the angels reminding the disciples that Jesus would be coming back in glory just as they had seen him go?

4. Evaluate this statement: It is a little unrealistic for Jesus to expect each of us to reach the ends of the earth with our witness about his gospel.

5. Where is our Jerusalem? our Judea and Samaria?

6. What adds to our sense of urgency to reach out with the gospel?

During the week

Reread the references listed for Lesson Eight. Consider again how each appearance gives you *personal comfort* that you have a risen Savior and *personal conviction* that your risen Savior has commissioned you with the task of being his witness to the ends of the earth.

Pray that God's Spirit would work through these familiar accounts to keep your heart burning with faith in our Savior and with eagerness to reach out with the gospel!

Oh, where is your sting, death? We fear you no more;
Christ rose, and now open is fair Eden's door.
For all our transgressions his blood does atone;
Redeemed and forgiven, we now are his own.

Then sing your hosannas and raise your glad voice;
Proclaim the blest tidings that all may rejoice.
Laud, honor, and praise to the Lamb that was slain,
Who now sits in glory and ever shall reign. (CW 143:4,5)