

Fountain Park - May 3rd 4 "Why are you troubled and doubt?"
- Luke 24:36-49

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Hello Church! My name is Aaron Yurk, and before we get into the message, I just want to take this moment to thank you for the opportunity to stand before you and deliver the Word of God. It is always an honor and a blessing to be able to proclaim the truth of Jesus! So, thank You Father for allowing me to do this, and thank you all for having me.

-Let's pray-

Paul tells us in his second letter to the Corinthians; Chapter 3 v. 16-18

"When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

This walk with Christ down the narrow road to life everlasting is led by the Holy Spirit from glory to glory, as He transforms us into the likeness of Jesus. From glory to glory - mountain peak to mountain peak.

What we need to grapple with through this life is what happens in-between mountain peaks, when this walk leads us through the valleys. We all love the view from the top of the mountain - it is the beauty God allows us to see Him working out on this side of eternity - but the Holy Spirit doesn't often pick us off of one mountain top and place us on the next, we have to trust His guidance and walk behind Him as He leads us down the mountain, through a cave, over a rickety bridge, and through the valley; eventually leading us up another mountain to reveal a beautiful view of His glory.

Sometimes these valleys are deep... and dark... and wide, taking us a long time to navigate through them; in these excurses through the wilderness, but these seasons are where we are tested and refined. It's here where our dead branches are pruned out of us, so we can bear more fruit. Where God grows us and matures us into His very nature - but, it is in these valleys where we will assuredly experience doubt; a lack of trust in God's direction. It's where our faith in His goodness is tried.

The Reformer, Martin Luther, gave us a proverb which I love dearly when he said, "you can't stop birds from flying over your head, but you don't have to let them make a nest in your hair." He said this about unwanted thoughts or suggestions that come into our minds. Where it isn't a sin to have these thoughts or experiences, letting the birds nest can lead us astray from Truth and steal our focus from Christ. In the same way, doubt itself is not a sin - but what we do with it can easily ensnare us and lead us to unbelief and disobedience to God. We can either turn to Jesus in our burden of doubt and work through it with Him righteously; or we can turn from Him, harden our hearts to Jesus, and try to work through it our own way.

See, doubt is a very real aspect of humanity that we all experience from time to time; and the last thing we should place on ourselves when we experience moments of doubt is shame and extra burdens. This can cause us to spiral and attempt to put our eyes back onto ourselves to solve the problem, taking our focus off the problem-solver, Jesus. What we can and should do is bring those doubts to God and let Him shine His light on them - and in doing so we will find that our moments of honesty with our God will prove to deepen our intimacy with Him. God already knows our hearts and we can't fool Him with false piety - so why would we not come to Him naked and vulnerable, offering Him our doubts, and allow for Him to reassure and heal our hearts? Jesus doesn't respond to our doubt with shame and indifference, we have no reason to hide those parts of ourselves from Him. He is kind and gentle, loving and reassuring. So we shouldn't deal harshly with ourselves either for experiencing moments of humanness.

Where we do see a Biblical exhortation to not doubt, we also see a compassionate God dealing with us tenderly through those moments; and instead of Shame, God does a couple of things to comfort us and redirect our minds back to His faithfulness. Because doubt stems from a root of mistrust, Jesus in His infinite wisdom points us back to the reasons why He is trustworthy, His great love for fallen humanity, and how He sees us as His children.

We see this play out with John the Baptist - the man Jesus tells us is the greatest man to live. John, while sitting in a prison cell, experience doubt in Christ as the promised messiah. Even though he had the insight to see Jesus and declare to the people, "Behold the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world," and even though he saw the heavens open up and the Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove, and even though He heard the voice of the Father from heaven declare to Jesus, "You are my beloved son" - still John has a moment of doubt when his valley got dark. We see John's response to his doubt is to give it to Jesus - and he sends 2 of his disciples to ask Jesus the doubt-filled question:

"Are you the one who is to come, or should we wait for another?"

Jesus doesn't shame him for bringing this doubt to him, instead He offers reassurance and displays His power by healing many in their affliction that very hour and then sending the messengers back to John with the report saying:

"Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them - And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

And in the sight of all the people, Jesus begins preaching from the scriptures - quoting Malachi 3 and Exodus 23 - Refocusing the hearts of the people back to His works and His holy Word.

We see Jesus play this out in a similar way as we learned last week, with the grieving couple on the road to Emmaus. Jesus doesn't withdraw from these people because of their doubt, but instead He draws near and walks with them through their doubt and grief - for several hours, seven miles - and in that time He redirects their hearts back to the Scriptures. Jesus reminds them of the necessity of His death to enter into glory, and we're told,

"beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

When It says "beginning with Moses" its not talking about the man, but rather the writings. The Torah. The first 5 books of the Bible, and the prophets not the men but the writings. This is telling us Jesus uses the entirety of the Old Testament to point to Himself.

This is a point we really need to understand - THE BIBLE ISNT ABOUT US! The scriptures are pointing us to Christ - and this is the exact seed Jesus uses to remedy our doubt. HIMSELF! His word and His works. It is this very reason John ends his gospel by telling us the purpose of his book is that we "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that by believing we may have new life in His name."

So Jesus plants the seed of His word into the hearts of this couple on the road to Emmaus, and when He broke the bread their eyes were opened - they SAW Him for who He is! And then He vanished from their sight. He was gone. Astonished by this exchange they just had, this couple rushed back to Jerusalem to find Jesus' disciples and tell them all about the experience they had just had with the risen King.

~Read with me then today's passage - Luke 24:36-49 - Pew Bible pg. 909~

This exchange is fascinating - Jesus breaks bread, blesses it, gives it to a couple and then disappears, and when they start telling the story to His disciples, Jesus reappears before them. "Hey guys, I'm here now."

He says "Peace to you." - It's no wonder why they are startled and frightened thinking they see a ghost! To the one's telling the story He had

just vanished and reappeared before their eyes; and to the disciples listening, the last time they saw Him He was hanging lifeless on a cross. And now here He is standing among them. I think we would all be startled and a bit frightened in this moment.

So Jesus asks them: "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

But this isn't Jesus wagging His finger at them in shame and disappointment, no, this is Jesus beginning the process of comforting them. He is doing exactly what He did with John the Baptist - displaying His power and redirecting their hearts to His word.

Jesus, knowing their thoughts, corrects and reassures them with the truth - "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself.

Touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as I have."

He is offering them proof of assurance - SEE & TOUCH - experience me with your tangible senses. Know that I am resurrected bodily. I'm physical. I'm here. And He is showing them His hands and His feet saying - "Look! these are the wounds of my crucifixion! These wounds are proof that I am He who was hanging on the cross! I told you I would lay my life down for my sheep and bring it up again, and look, I'm here now!"

These people didn't immediately erupt with joy. The word says they were 'marveling' which means they were filled with wonder or astonishment. I think they were in shock, and also still a little dense to what Jesus had been teaching them for years. These disciples consistently did not understand Jesus' teachings about His death. Luke 18:31-34 tells us that right before the triumphal entry back to Jerusalem for the very appointment of His death, Jesus told these men for the 3rd time: "See, we are going to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. For He will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging Him, they will kill Him, and on the 3rd day He will rise."

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V.34 - "BUT THEY understood NONE of these things. This saying was hid from them, and they did not grasp what was said."

Jesus couldn't have been more direct with them. He told them bluntly - "We're going here for me to die, but I will rise again." And still they didn't understand. Maybe we can find a little comfort in the patience of God when we don't understand direct things He tells us, like we're toddlers. I know I can be just as dense as these disciples.

So just to calm their disbelief and marveling, Jesus sets to prove He is really risen bodily, and He asks for some food. Surely a ghost can't eat fish, right? So He took it, and ate it in front of them; And in this moment He repeats what He had told them 1 week earlier - "That everything written about me in the Law, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."

And As He spoke, He lifted the veil off their eyes and opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. - So that which was hid from their understanding was now revealed so they could grasp it, and He continued saying
"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the 3rd day rise from the dead."

You have no need to doubt, for God is true. He will fulfill His word. And if we see Him consistently doing what He said He would do, we can rest in knowing He will make good on every promise He has made. He is worthy of our trust, and He is patient when we don't understand, and He is gracious when we doubt. That is the character of God, embracing us as His little toddlers, His precious little children.

Jesus ^{then} gives them their mission, gives us our mission, That in the name of Jesus, according to His will and character, repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed to all nations beginning in Jerusalem.

I want to break this down so we can better understand what we are called to do with the knowledge of Christ.

The word nations is gentiles. This is referring to the people who collectively make up communities. So Jesus is telling us to proclaim in His name

to all people - starting in Jerusalem. The audience of people He is talking to is in Jerusalem - so Jesus is saying, right where you are, in your community, start telling all the people.

What is it that we should start telling all the people in our community about in Jesus' name?

The things that they are witnesses of, that He is explaining to them, that He has opened their minds to, that He just told them - that it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead. And Behold - the risen King is Here!

that He has done it! That through His death and resurrection He has forgiveness of our sins! So TURN - that is what repentance means, to turn - TURN TO CHRIST for the forgiveness of sin that He offers as a free gift.

And in your turning ^{in faith} to the risen King, He offers a promise that we can trust - the Holy Spirit to come and make His home within us, that we too will share in the glory and resurrection of Jesus.

- Let us pray -