

“This is what you are called to do” Luke 24:36-48

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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 you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

We are still looking at events surrounding Jesus resurrection. We shouldn't be surprised, for this is, on the one hand, the foundational event for Christian faith, on the other hand, it is the most unbelievable event. We should meditate upon it every day, not just every Sunday. Blessed you are if you do!

Today we'll look at how Luke describes what happened on that day, when Jesus rouse from the dead, and how it helps us to understand what it means to be a Christian, what we as Christians are supposed to do.

Luke spends entire chapter in his gospel account describing what happened on the third day. It is also good for us to see, how Jesus disciples were struggling to come to terms with what had just happened – the resurrection.

Of course it was, it is the most unbelievable event. You know that we may have a nice conversations with non-Christians talking about what Jesus taught us, what a nice and loving person He was, what a great example. How much we can learn from Him, and so on.

People can understand it, and they can appreciate it, and they really do, and this is as much as they are happy to take from Christianity. Great principles for living and wise suggestions.

But, what happens when we want to talk about Jesus death and resurrection? Yes, people begun to roll their eyes. Resurrection?! M-m. Resurrection from the dead?! M-m. You poor Christians, do you still believe these stories?

Aren't you living in the 21st century? How could you still take seriously these fairy tales? Common! Grow up! Sure there are many good things in Christianity, no one doubts it. If only you could get rid of these weird myths about the resurrection of the dead and begin to live following Jesus example. That would be great.

That is how non-Christians often perceive Christianity. That Christianity is basically a set of principles teaching how to be a good, moral person, but, unfortunately, it contains those ancient myth about the resurrection and the miracles.

These people are right, partly. The Bible reveals God's wisdom. It reveals God's design for our lives, and when people try to live according to these guidelines, they flourish. That is how Christianity created the Western world. Living guided by the Creator's wisdom.

You don't even have to be a Christian, if only you follow God's guidelines, God's commandments, it will make your life much, much better. It will make you wiser, it will prevent you from harming yourself and others, everyone wins.

This is what people can understand. For this is about principles. About laws that govern our lives. But this is not what Christianity is about. The very essence of Christianity, the very heart of Christianity is the message of Jesus' resurrection.

This is what Christianity truly is. We are people of the risen Lord. Take it away and we are left with a set of nice principles, which we can only partly follow, because there is something intrinsically wrong with us.

So, the resurrection. How can we still believe it? Are we still as foolish as those early Christians, who believed that Jesus actually rouse from the dead? The answer is, yes, we are to a great extent the same.

Except, they were not foolish. They understood the great truth of this world as well of even better than we do. One of these great truth is – that there is no resurrection of the dead. If someone has died, they are dead. Period.

To tell someone that a certain man has risen from the dead sounded to people at that time as foolish as it sounds to us today. Look at how Luke described that day.

First, women went to the tomb. They found it empty. Two men in dazzling cloth told them that Jesus has risen, as He Himself has foretold. As Jesus Himself had told it many times. Go and tell the other disciples! So they did.

But for the disciples, “these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” (Luke 24:11) For how could you believe that someone has risen form the dead, right?

Peter went to the tomb. It was empty. So “he went home marveling at what had happened.” (Luke 24:12) Two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus joins them. They converse about what has happened. They couldn't make sense of it.

Some women, who went to the tomb, had told that Jesus was alive, which obviously couldn't be true. Only when Jesus had explained them from the Scriptures that this was exactly what had to happen, the eyes of these two disciples were opened and they recognized Him, the risen Jesus. So they went back to Jerusalem and shared it with others.

Then, a little later, "Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit.

As we can see from Luke's account, all disciples, women and men, were strong believers - that there is no such a thing as the resurrection from the dead. They knew that such a thing is not possible, as well as people do today.

It didn't matter that Jesus had spoken about it before, again and again. It didn't matter that He had said that He will rise again on the third day. It didn't matter that the tomb was empty.

It didn't matter that angels spoke to women and sent them to the disciples. It didn't matter that Peter had found the tomb empty. It didn't matter that Jesus had revealed Himself to the disciples at Emmaus.

When He shows up in their midst, they still couldn't believe. They thought He was a ghost. Jesus had to do everything to persuade them that that was Him. The same Jesus. Risen. Alive. Exactly as He promised.

"Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see." "Have you anything here to eat?" Give it to me, and see, that's me, Jesus.

Then He reminded to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you [...] that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Jesus disciples were anything, but naïve when it came to believing the resurrection. We can see how hard it was for Jesus to persuade them. It is difficult to believe something that goes against everything you know and everything you have experienced.

Later Jesus disciples, the apostles, sacrificed their lives testifying others about their risen Lord. They didn't do it because they were such naïve people. They did it because they had seen Him.

Because they had touched Him, because they had eaten together with the risen Jesus. They knew that as Jesus was risen, He will also raise them. And He will also raise you in new bodies, to be with Him forever.

Now, what does it mean for us as Christians? These words are the key. “It is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations. You are witnesses of these things.”

You are witnesses of these things. This is what you are. Witnesses. It has very practical implication for our lives. You all are chosen by God. Think about it. That’s a rather big deal. That’s why you are here, where He comes to bless you.

This is why John wrote: “Beloved, you are God’s children now, and what you will be has not yet appeared; but you know that when he appears you shall be like him, because you shall see him as he is.” (1.John 3:2)

What a wonderful words! You are God’s children, and there is so much more to come for you. So much more, that we can’t even comprehend it. But you can be sure that when Jesus Christ appears, you shall be like Him, because you will see Him as He is.

Whenever God calls someone, He calls them so that He can send them. He has called you to be with Him, but also - to send you. To do what? To be His witnesses. What exactly does it mean?

What does a witness do? They testify about what they have witnessed. We just read what Peter was preaching in the temple. He simply told what had happened and said: “To this we are witnesses.” (Act 3:15) Thus Peter said in every sermon.

What was Peter doing? Was he presenting some kind of a new teaching? Some new principles for better living? No! He was simply witnessing to what had happen. He was witnessing about the event of Jesus death and resurrection and it’s place in God’s plan for us.

It is exactly what we are called to do, when we are sent to share the good news about Jesus. We are not sent to share ourselves or to show that we are somehow better than others. “I was bad, now I am good.” Or, “you know this rotten society, we are not like them.” Or “Look at how friendly we are.”

There are so many moral people who have not yet come to Christ, and there are many really broken people whom Christ has already called to Himself. Why would we even compare them?

We are not sent to teach principles for better living either. “If you live this way, you will prosper”. The Bible is not a handbook for better living. Of course, there is a place and time to share our personal testimonies, or share with others what we as Christians do for the sake of others, or to teach God’s wisdom to people.

But these things are not the main points in our message. We are sent to be Jesus witnesses. Sure, none of us have seen the risen Jesus with our own eyes. But we

have received these testimonies about Him, from those who were as skeptical as we could ever be.

The risen Jesus overcame all their doubts, He made sure that they could fully experience the reality of His resurrection, so that there were no doubts left anymore. So that they could go and be Jesus' witnesses, even if their lives were at stake.

They called others to continue to witness, and they others, and others. That's what the Church is. Jesus' witnesses. That's what it means to be a Christian. A Christian is someone who testifies about what the Triune God has done in our history.

It is a very serious task. It requires certain qualifications, that's for sure. You can share only what you know well. It means that we all need to know well what God has done in our history.

We have to be able to witness as well as possible. For God uses us to call others to Himself, when they learn about Jesus Christ, about what He has done and is doing for us.

It means, we need to read, to study, to memorize, to meditate upon God's message. To take it in, so that we can share when opportunity comes along. This is what it means to be a Christians. One who is Jesus' witness.

Now... let's do it. How? Each of you, think about a person, whom you know well enough, and who don't know the truth about Jesus and His resurrection, and about the forgiveness and eternal life that is being offered to them in Jesus name.

Choose someone. Pray so that the Holy Spirit would open for you an opportunity to witness them about Jesus Christ. Pray for God's wisdom to do it well.

You can discuss with other how to do it, what their experiences are. You can talk with you pastor, and I'm sure he'll do as much as he can to help you with all that he knows. Have this as your mission, for this is your mission. This is what God has called you to do.

To witness about Christ. "That all has happen as it was written. That the Christ suffered, rouse from the dead, and now - repentance and forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in His name to all nations.

Jesus Christ has introduced this new reality. He is the harbinger of the new creation, the new heaven and new earth, where there is no more death, nor pain, only peace and joy in God's presence. You are witnesses of all these things.

Read about it more, meditate upon this new reality, pray for the guidance and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and share what God has done for your neighbor. These are a very good news.

Amen.