

To Know Christ

Luke 24:13-35

Series: The Climax of the Cross (Luke, Spring 2020)

Preaching Date: April 12, 2020

Worship: He is Alive

Key Sentence: The resurrected Christ is known through the Scriptures and personal encounter.

Outline:

I. Knowing about the resurrected Christ (Luke 24:13-24)

II. Knowing the resurrected Christ through Scripture (Luke 24:25-27)

III. Knowing the resurrected Christ through personal encounter (Luke 24:28-35)

Luke 24:1-12 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” ⁸And they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

Luke 24:13-35 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.

²²Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

²⁵And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

²⁸So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” ³³And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

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Luke 24:13-35

Welcome and Prayer

Prelude and Scripture

Luke 24:1-12 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. ²And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. ⁵And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” ⁸And they remembered his words, ⁹and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, ¹¹but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹²But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

Two or three songs

Children’s Corner

The Scripture we just read is the greatest good news of all. “He is not here, but has risen. Remember what he told you.” Listening to me over the months of our Luke study you might feel I’ve been too focused on Jesus’s great prophecy. If so I’m in good company. These angels, two men in dazzling white, are content to quote just one thing the Lord had said in his incarnation: “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.” Over and over Jesus said these things, yet the disciples never got it. They didn’t process his prediction of crucifixion, didn’t want it to be true, and were clueless about the resurrection. In fact his enemies took his words more seriously than his friends did. That’s why, in Matthew, they insisted the tomb be guarded. They remembered he had said “On the third day I will rise.”

But now the women have found the stone rolled away. Now they have found the tomb empty. Now the angels have come and have said “We can explain this. He has risen.” Now it is finished. Now sin is atoned for. Now Satan is undone. Now death is defeated. Now life has won. Now eternity had begun. Now the age-long promise that we will be his people and he will be our God is fulfilled. Now Jesus is alive. Now Christ has rescued. Now the Son of God who is the Son of Man takes up his reign at the Father’s right hand. Now his compassion and rescue can go forth. He has risen and everything has begun to come right.

In Luke’s account Jesus does not appear to the women. They return to the disciples with this story of an empty tomb and the testimony of the angels. And the men do not believe. They call the women’s words “an idle tale.” Woman talk, I’m afraid. They did not have as much trust in women as Jesus did, who made them the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection. Oh to be sure, Peter runs to the tomb and does find it empty, but that is not enough to move him from fear to faith. John, whom John’s gospel says ran with him, does believe at this point, but Peter just kinda wanders off. We’ll catch up with him next week.

So this first little chunk of text leaves us rejoicing mostly over an empty tomb and the promise that a promise has been fulfilled. The words of Jesus, the angels say, have been proven in the last detail. Now at this point, before we sing a little more and move on to the rest of our text for the morning, I’d like to tell the children a story. It’s called Jeremy’s egg: “Jeremy was born with a twisted body and slow mind. At the age of 12 he was still in second grade, seemingly unable to learn. His teacher, Doris Miller, often became exasperated with him. He would squirm in his chair, drool and make grunting noises. At other times, he spoke clearly and distinctly, as if a spot of light had penetrated the darkness of his brain. Most of the time, however, Jeremy irritated his teacher.

One day, she called his parents to come to St. Theresa’s for a consultation. As the Forresters sat quietly in the empty classroom, Doris said to them, "Jeremy really belongs in a special school. It isn't fair to him to be with younger children who don't have learning problems. Why, there is a five-year gap between his age and that of the other students!" Mrs. Forrester cried softly into a tissue, while her husband spoke. "Miss Miller," he said, "there is no school of that kind nearby. It would be a terrible shock for Jeremy if we took him out of this school. We know he really likes it here."

Doris sat for a long time after they left, staring at the snow outside the window. She wanted to sympathize with the Forresters. After all, their only child had a terminal illness. But it wasn't fair to keep him in her class. She had 18 other youngsters to teach, and Jeremy was a distraction.

Furthermore, he would never learn to read and write. Why waste any more time trying? As she pondered the situation, guilt washed over her. "Oh God," she said aloud, "here I am complaining when my problems are nothing compared to that poor family! Please help me to be more patient with Jeremy!" From that day on, she tried hard to ignore Jeremy's noises and his blank stares. Then one day, he limped to her desk, dragging his bad leg behind him. "I love you, Miss Miller," he exclaimed, loud enough for the whole class to hear. The other students snickered, and Doris' face turned red. She stammered, "Wh-why that's very nice, Jeremy. N-now please take your seat."

Spring came, and the children talked excitedly about the coming of Easter. Doris told them the story of Jesus, and to emphasize the idea of new life springing forth, she gave each of the children a plastic egg. "I want you to take this home and bring it back tomorrow with something inside that shows new life. Do you understand?" "Yes, Miss Miller!" the children said, all except for Jeremy. He just listened intently; his eyes never left her face. He did not even make his usual noises. Had he understood what she had said about Jesus' death and resurrection? Did he understand the assignment? Perhaps she should call his parents and explain the project to them. That evening, Doris' kitchen sink stopped up. She called the landlord and waited for him to come and unclog it. After that, she still had to shop for groceries, iron a blouse and prepare a vocabulary test. She completely forgot about phoning Jeremy's parents.

The next morning, 19 children came to school, laughing and talking as they placed their eggs in the large wicker basket on Miss Miller's desk. After they completed their math lesson, it was time to open the eggs. In the first egg, Doris found a flower. "Oh yes, a flower is certainly a sign of new life," she said. "When plants peek through the ground we know that Spring is here." A small girl in the first row waved her arm. "That's my egg Miss Miller," she called out. The next egg contained a paper butterfly which looked very real. Doris held it up. "We all know that a caterpillar changes and grows into a beautiful butterfly." Little Judy smiled proudly and said, "That one is mine!" Next, Doris found a rock with moss on it. "Moss too shows new life." Billy spoke up from the back of the classroom, "My Daddy helped me!" he beamed.

Then Doris opened the fourth egg. She gasped. The egg was empty! Surely it must be Jeremy's, she thought, and of course, he did not understand her instructions. If only she had not forgotten to phone his parents! Because she did not want to embarrass him, she quietly set the egg aside and reached for another. Suddenly Jeremy spoke up. "Miss Miller, aren't you going to talk about my egg?" Flustered, Doris replied, "But Jeremy - your egg is empty!" He looked into her eyes and said softly, "Yes, but Jesus' tomb was empty, too!"

Time stopped. When she could speak again, Doris asked him, "Do you know why the tomb was empty?" "Oh yes!" Jeremy said, "Jesus was killed and put in there. Then His Father raised Him up!" The recess bell rang. While the children excitedly ran out to the school yard, Doris cried.

Three months later, Jeremy's illness worsened, and not long after, he died. Those who paid their respects at the mortuary were surprised to see 19 eggs on top of his casket, all of them empty.

Acts 2:29-32 "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

Two more songs

"Offertory" Prayer

"Greeting" Time

Video

Message

To Know Christ Luke 24:13-35

The resurrection makes all the difference for all of us. We do not serve a dead Savior who could not keep his promises. Therefore we can take the words of God as true and the promises of God seriously. More than that, we have a living Savior who makes himself known to us. This morning we'll see those things in an event that happened hours after the resurrection. But the resurrected Christ has made himself known through the Scriptures and personal encounter countless times over the centuries. You and I can know Christ this way today.

In Luke 24 we have the account of two disciples on the road to Emmaus who came to truly know Jesus through the Scriptures and through personal encounter. Luke 24:13-24 *That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" ¹⁹And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²²Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."*

"That same day" in this text is the day of the resurrection, the same day the women brought their report of the empty tomb. By that afternoon at least two of Jesus' disciples have left and are headed from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. Remember that the word disciple or follower is used both of the specific group of twelve whom Jesus chose, and the larger group who simply followed. These two were in the larger group. We're not told both names, only one, Cleopas. Some people think the other disciple may have been Cleopas' wife. That would be why she's not named, why they live in the same house in Emmaus.

They were on their way home. They had given up in defeat the idea that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel. They had left as soon as possible after the Sabbath. But as they walked they couldn't help but talk about all that had happened. And as they talked a stranger came and walked with them. It was Jesus, resurrected, but they didn't know him. This could be because he didn't appear quite the same. It could be because you don't expect a dead man to walk with you. It could also be Jesus kept himself from being known to build their faith.

Jesus asks "What are you discussing as you walk along?" Cleopas replies "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" There is grief in Cleopas' response, a grief that seems to lead him to lash out. Jesus doesn't take offense. "What things?" They say "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word." They call Jesus a prophet, not the Messiah. I'll bet if you'd asked a week before they'd have said he was. Maybe they had looked for a political Messiah, a 'triumphal entry' Messiah. But they'd seen their chief priests and leaders hand him over to death. they had seen him crucified. Now their hope was gone. He may have been a prophet, but not one who would redeem Israel.

Even the early reports from the tomb had not pulled these two from the pit. Cleopas tells Jesus what they had learned from the women, how they had gone to the tomb, had not found his body and had seen angels. In his skepticism he calls it "a vision of angels." Maybe their imagination. Cleopas doesn't even mention that these angels had told the women Jesus was alive, risen from the dead, or how the angels had reminded them of Jesus' promise of resurrection.

None of this was enough to impact the disappointment and grief felt by Cleopas and his wife. They'd heard the promises, they heard the reports, but they hadn't put it all together on either the head level, through knowledge of Scripture nor on the heart level, through personal encounter and faith. They probably let their preconceptions of Jesus, as a political Messiah, outweigh what they'd heard. This still happens today. The cultural image of Christianity as patriarchal, homophobic, ignorant and cruel stands in the way of a true perception of Jesus in the Scriptures and a true encounter with Jesus by faith.

Today I want to share the testimony of named Martin Wolf, who was in the same position. His preconceptions of Christianity kept him from putting it together on the head level through knowledge of the Scripture, and on the heart level through personal encounter and faith. He says "I was born in a Jewish home and brought up in the traditions of my people. In our home, Sabbath was faithfully kept. On Friday night, as the sun went down. my mother would light the Sabbath candles, and my father would say the prayer.

Although I didn't appreciate having to go to synagogue or Hebrew school, as I look back, I am very thankful for my religious training. For example, in my mother's life, and the lives of the men at the synagogue, I saw a true respect and reverence for God's word. I thought, "You don't show such reverence to a book of fairy tales." Thus, I learned to respect and the Word of God."

"I also learned about the Messiah and was eagerly awaiting His coming. I was taught to say: 'I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah ... [and] I believe with perfect faith that all the words of the prophets are true.'" But that faith in the Old Testament led Martin into an awareness of sin. "How could I have contact with God as did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the prophets? What could I do to be forgiven for my sins? As Yom Kippur approached in the year of my Bar Mitzvah, I wanted to really know. I was in the synagogue and saw an old man two or three rows ahead of me. He had a long prayer shawl, and he was praying to God and beating his chest. I thought, "This man must know all there is to know about forgiveness" I waited until the end of the service, then said, "Sir, do you know that your sins are forgiven?" I can still see the tears coursing down his face. 'Son,' he said, 'I only hope so; I only hope so.' I thought "If he doesn't know that his sins are forgiven, how can I know?" I tried to put the issue out of my mind. But as I grew older I realized that going through the rituals did not satisfy the longing of my heart."

Martin Wolf, at this stage, was someone who knew about the Messiah, who even knew about his need for forgiveness, but he didn't know Christ. He needed somebody to open the truth of Scripture to him so that he could know the way of salvation and the power of resurrection. This is what the two on the road to Emmaus received from Jesus himself. Luke 24:25-27: *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

This is one of the two or three times in Scripture that I most wish I could have been there. Christ himself explains how all the Old Testament applies to him. He begins by rebuking these disciples. "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart." To be foolish, in the word used here, is to be without understanding. It is to have knowledge without having the wisdom to apply that knowledge. But he also calls them slow of heart. This was not just a mind problem, it was also a problem of the heart, because a true knowledge of Jesus Christ is not just head knowledge, it is also a heart knowledge. Jesus says that both the head and the heart have to be engaged. But he goes first to the head. He shows them "all the prophets have spoken," that they might believe it.

Jesus claims that the prophets correctly understood, show that the Christ had to suffer the way Jesus suffered before he entered His glory. He explained what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. That's the part I'd like to have heard. Jesus went through the Scriptures (book by book?) and pointed out each part that showed him as Messiah. This would have been so cool. We can see much that the Scriptures say about him, but he knew it all. He later did the same for the disciples, and I'm sure many of the Old Testament fulfillments the disciples wrote about in the New Testament came out of that teaching.

My key thought this morning is that the risen Lord is known through encounter with the Word as well as through personal encounter. Verse 32 tells us, belatedly, of the impact this scripture had on their hearts. "Did not our hearts burn within us when he opened the Scriptures to us?" The Scriptures reached their hearts. This reminds me of John Wesley's story. The founder of Methodism was already an Anglican minister, a missionary to Georgia, when he recognized that he himself did not know Jesus. Then one day in London, at a small chapel on Aldersgate Street, Wesley heard a man reading a sermon on the book of Romans, a sermon written two centuries before by Martin Luther. This sermon described real faith that did not rely on good works. Wesley could not let go of this thought. That night he wrote "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins." His heart was strangely warmed. Biblical truth has incredible power, through the Holy Spirit to bring men and women to conviction and faith.

Martin Wolf's story is a modern version of the encounter with prophecy the two had on the Emmaus road. He says: "In college I studied French, for I planned to be a teacher. At a French Club dinner, I met the young woman who later became my wife. After we were married we went to France to further my education. While there, my wife suggested we read the New Testament aloud together. Thinking over her suggestion, I reasoned. "No one in my family would know or could object." So I opened the New Testament and saw the first verse in Matthew. "The genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." I said, "David, Abraham? These people I know. What does a Christian man, Matthew, know about these Jews?" Then I found out Matthew was a Jew. I read a little further, "All this was done to fulfill that which was spoken about the Lord by the prophets." The prophets? What prophets? The Old Testament prophets, I was told. So, for the first time I really studied the prophets, though with a belligerent attitude. My purpose was to prove that Matthew did not know anything about the Old Testament. But little by little I began comprehending for myself the prophecies about the Messiah.

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” I found in Isaiah 53 (which is not read in the synagogues) these words “He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” As a Jew I had to be honest. “If my own prophets tell me about Yeshua, the Messiah,” I reasoned, “why shouldn't I believe them?”

Isn't that an incredible testimony? These are the same Scriptures Christ shared with the two on the road to Emmaus, now being used to bring Martin Wolf to the point of faith in the Messiah. And Jesus is just as desirous of opening your heart by the Word as he was those two disciples or John Wesley or Martin Wolf. The time you spend reading and studying and meditating on Scripture will not just have an impact on your mind and your learning, but on your heart.

But even this is not enough. If all you ever have is an encounter with Scripture, you will not truly be transformed, even by the truth. Jesus himself, the Risen Lord, wants to have a personal encounter with you. Listen to the end of this walk to Emmaus. Luke 24:28-35: *So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, ²⁹but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” ³³And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

Emmaus is about seven miles from Jerusalem. At normal walking speeds, it would take about two hours to get there. The day was nearly over. Jesus appeared to be going on, but the two, no doubt influenced by the fact that their hearts were burning within them, urged him to stay. So, he did. He went in with them, and they prepared a meal, and when they sat down, he took up the bread to give thanks. Almost certainly he blessed it using the traditional Hebrew blessing, the same one we use at our Seder celebrations.

But something about the way he said it, or some action of the Holy Spirit caused them to recognize him when he broke the bread. Luke tells us their eyes were opened, and then he disappeared from their sight. Now it is possible these two had been at the Lord's supper, but there is no evidence that others apart from the twelve were there. Maybe the disciples had told the story of that meal in such a compelling way it made a strong impression. Or maybe this blessing, breaking, and giving was such a customary action of Jesus that the familiarity of it cut through their blindness. Whichever it is, it's clear that the Holy Spirit had been keeping them from recognizing him until this moment.

What better testimony could there be for us, for future generations than for these two to say "We recognized Jesus when he broke the bread." For those who are believers, the reality of communion should be that we recognize Jesus when he breaks the bread. But whether it's at that moment or in some other situation, all of us need this moment of personal encounter, when our eyes are opened to the presence of the risen Christ. It's been called many things by the church over the years: repentance, conversion, being born again, accepting Jesus, coming to faith, becoming a believer. All these require a personal encounter with a risen Savior. You can't have a personal encounter with a dead man.

I read the story of a man who was converted from Islam to Christianity. His friends asked him, "Why have you become a Christian?" He answered, "Suppose you were going down the road and suddenly the road forked in two directions, and there at the fork were two men, one dead and one alive. Which one would you ask which way to go?" It is the risen Christ who speaks to us through Scripture and tells us which way to go. It is the risen Christ with whom we have a personal encounter through faith.

I'm convinced it was the wonderful reality of his resurrection that burst in on them at this moment. Suddenly this familiar person, was sitting with them doing the familiar thing, but this person had been dead the day before. If he can walk with us, talk with us, break bread with us, he's really alive. What he has taught is true. All these Scriptures are verified by the fact of His resurrection. All his suffering and his dying was part of this Scriptural plan, that he might save us from sin by bearing our sins. His death, as Isaiah said to Martin Wolf, had a purpose. It was a substitution. He was separated by our sin from his Father and he bore the punishment our sin deserved. He suffered as a servant, just as the Scriptures had said he must. There must be a sacrifice for sin. He was that sacrifice. And in rising from the dead, He proved that death was defeated, that his promises were always kept, and that the future held eternal life. He is a risen Savior with whom you can have a personal relationship.

That's what these two are eager to report. They get up at once and return to the city. I'll bet they had a lot more energy for the trip back. When they arrive they find the eleven assembled, and before they can even share what has happened, they're told "It's true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." We have no record of that appearance, but as I've often said, it was extremely significant for Peter, a personal encounter with the Risen Savior that changed his life. His report was already believed, but then these two chime in with theirs, of the Scripture Jesus had shared, of the way they recognized Jesus.

What we see in this Scripture, an encounter with the risen Savior, is the same thing that we need in our lives. We need that encounter through Scripture, reading, studying and meditating. We also need it through personal experience of him. He's risen, he's alive. As we trust in him, a heart trust, we receive that life through the Holy Spirit. Have you had a personal encounter with the Risen Savior? If you haven't you can. In fact you must. Seek him today. Seek him with all your heart. He once said: "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away."

Before I finish the story of Martin Wolf, let me assure you that I've experience his resurrected presence. I came to the point when I was thirteen years old where Scriptures were shared with me that burned into my soul. "All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God." That was me, a sinner. "The wages of sin is death." That was my fate. "God demonstrates his love for us in this - while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" That was my hope. "And to all who received him, to those who believed on his name, he gave the right to become children of God." That was my response, to believe in him and receive eternal life. Those Scriptures that evening drove me to tears, first to tears of sorrow, and then to tears of joy as the loving presence of my Savior filled my soul.

Let's close with the words of Martin Wolf. "It was with fear and trembling that I considered believing in Messiah Jesus, because here was something that I never thought would happen, never in a million years. "How do I know for sure?" I asked my wife. "Well, you pray," she said. "I'm a good Jew. I've prayed," I said. "You have to pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus," was her astounding reply. I couldn't imagine doing that, but I did want to know for sure, so I decided to ask God. I do not even remember the words any more, but as I lay awake in bed one night I looked up toward the ceiling and told God that if Jesus was really the Messiah and would forgive my sins I would accept Him. "If this is all true, then I ask this in Jesus' name." I thought the ceiling might cave in on me, so different was this prayer from any I had ever prayed. But the ceiling did not cave in. No lights flashed; no bells rang. Into my heart, however, came such peace that I knew the prayer was right.

I knew I had found the Messiah and had passed from death into life. I had forgiveness of my sins, not because of anything I had done, nor because I deserved it, but because of what He had done for me. I had come to Him with my burdens, and He had given me rest. I thank Him for it. If you, who read this account,” Wolf says, “have not yet found the Messiah and believed in Him, you have missed the purpose of life. I sincerely invite you to consider the Scriptures which describe the Person of the Messiah. As you search the Scriptures with an open heart and open mind you too will find the peace of the risen Savior.”

The risen Christ is known through the Scriptures and through personal encounter. We say over and over on Easter “He is Risen.” But you won’t really know that until you’re convinced from Scripture and from the experience in your heart of his loving and saving present presence. And when you’ve had that encounter, it’s the reason to celebrate this day. He is Risen indeed.