

He is Risen ... to give our lives Purpose!

Luke 24:36-48 ³⁶ While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ 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.” ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence. ⁴⁴ 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.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ 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.”

God says, “**This is the day the Lord has made.**” Days are not accidents. Not for this world, and not for anyone in this world. So, as you enter the house of God today, the question stands. Why did God decide to let you walk another day on this earth? What is it God intends for you to accomplish today that mattered so much, he gave you another day on this earth? On the surface, the question of purpose calls forth many answers.

There are immediate purposes which catch our attention each day, things like taking a shower or making sure we get a cup of coffee. Then there are the secondary purposes our life obligations bring our way, the purposes that accompany being a husband or wife, a child, a family member, an employee, a student. And then there are the wider purposes that we build over time: career goals, life achievements connected with our jobs, our futures, our plans. But finally, there is the ultimate goal, the reason God gave you this day to live. What is it? The answer lies in the Easter

message, the message of the Resurrection. In these weeks that follow Easter, we have been noting the difference the resurrection makes in our lives. Last week we learned of the peace the resurrection gives us. God brought us here today to learn the Resurrection Gives Us Purpose.

And if ever there was a group of people in need of purpose, it was the disciples of Jesus in the aftermath of the Good Friday. For three years purpose was always clear, every day. The disciples simply followed Jesus. They spent every day listening to his teaching, seeing his miracles, following his path of ministry. They did what Jesus said. They went where Jesus told them. The path of life each day was very clear. Then came Good Friday. They watched as their Lord died and was buried. And now on Easter Sunday came the confusing news of the empty tomb. Suddenly life and purpose were not clear at all.

And in the midst of this confusion, the risen Lord appeared among them. Luke tells the story in these words. ³⁶ **While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”** ³⁷ **They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.** ³⁸ **He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?** ³⁹ **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.”** ⁴⁰ **When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.** Jesus’ first task was to show the disciples what they knew on that first Easter. They knew Jesus was alive and had risen from the dead. Jesus then made the knowledge so clear, they could not deny it. ⁴¹ **And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”** ⁴² **They gave him a piece of broiled fish,** ⁴³ **and he took it and ate it in their presence.** Jesus flesh was not an illusion. He was risen physically from the dead and standing in front of them.

Next Jesus showed them what this meant for the world. ⁴⁴ **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.”**⁴⁵ **Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.** ⁴⁶ **He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day ...** Jesus showed the disciples the full and completed plan of God. Using the Bible Jesus explained that God sent his Son into this world to take the place of mankind, to suffer the punishment for all sin, including death on the cross, and to rise on the third day in triumph. Jesus explained what this plan accomplished, namely forgiveness of all sin through this Savior.

Easter was news that changed everything. Now a world filled with sinners standing before an angry holy God could be assured of full and free forgiveness. In a world filled with cemeteries, Easter meant death was defeated through faith in Jesus. In a world filled with challenges that tax the strongest human, through faith in Jesus every person could be assured of the full favor of

God. In the world at that time, there were only eleven men who knew this truth. Eleven men had knowledge that every person needed and wanted.

You might not realize it, but the people in this room are in that same position today. On the surface, it feels as if everyone knows the news that Christ is risen on Easter Sunday. We consider Easter to be common knowledge. We can ask just about anyone in this city of Appleton if they have heard of Easter, and we expect that all will be able to tell us the general Easter story. Yet the news of the resurrection of Christ and the difference that makes in this world remain hidden knowledge.

People in this world may be able to tell the story of Jesus' resurrection, but the Easter they celebrate is one of chocolate Easter bunnies and eggs rolled on the lawn with spoons. And in this world of Easter bunnies and colored eggs, by God's grace the people in this room are as certain as the disciples that on Easter Sunday Jesus rose from the dead and changed the world forever. God has in his grace opened our eyes to see what the disciples saw. We know that Jesus lives and in a world full of funerals, we know there is no more death for those who believe in him. We know that the living Lord rules this universe and walks by our side each day, eager to bless us. We live secure each day knowing that at any moment we can go to God in prayer and he is eager to answer. We live secure in God's love each day. This resurrection equips us to face each new day with hope and confidence. And today God wants us to see that he has given us this knowledge for a reason and in that reason, we find our purpose.

To the disciples, Jesus said, ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.** ⁴⁹ **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.** Here was their new purpose. They were witnesses of these things. They saw and knew what Jesus had done. Now Jesus was sending them into the world with this knowledge to tell everyone else. Each new day God gave them was for this purpose. And you know the result. Eleven men filled with the knowledge of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ carried that message into the world, and the world changed from that time on.

Those disciples have passed this purpose on to you and me. God gives us new days so that we can share what we know and the hope and the confidence it gives us, with everyone we meet. It is in fact that purpose in the mind of God which brings you here today. We are here to share with one another what we know, and there are people here who need that good news.

I know it is not apparent on the surface. You and I work hard to look our best when we come to the house of the Lord. I can tell you that normally I do not look this pretty. It takes hours of work. I tell you that because I know that it is the same with you. We come here clean and

scrubbed, wearing our best smiles, looking as if all in our life was wonderful. When church people ask us how we are, we say that we are fine, and often that is true.

But there is another truth as well, always present when we gather. Some here today are not fine. There are people here today who feel alone, as if no one cares about them. Can you imagine, in a room filled with people, some here feel as if they are all by themselves. There are people who come into God's house with hearts filled with worry about some problem in their lives or in the lives of their family or in regard to their job. To them it feels like the problems are too heavy and they have to carry them by themselves.

All these people are here today and that is why God brought you. To the people who feel alone, you can comfort them with the news that God is with them. By taking the time to care about them, you can demonstrate that they are not as alone as they thought. To the people who are worried and afraid, you can assure them that a God who cares about the sparrows of the field surely cares about them and will help them. Christ is risen. The living Lord walks by their side. You know that no matter what worries their heart, all is going to be okay. God gave you the knowledge of the risen Christ so you can share your hope and confidence with people in this room right now. These are the people God had in mind when he gave you another day.

And that is only the start. If there are people in this room who need to know what you know, you can be sure there are people out there who need it even more. You may find them in your homes waiting for you to return from church. They may be at your job or in your school or living in the houses next to yours. God placed you in their lives so you can share what you know. You know Jesus lives. You have a hope and a confidence they need.

There is one more truth we should note when it comes to purpose in our lives. We all know that all days are not the same. There are "good days" and there are "not such good days." The difference between the two is purpose. We will find that the more we use a given day to touch other people with the hope we have, to live our purpose, the better that day will be. The best days God can give us are the days when we use them to share the hope and confidence we find in the living Lord with people who lost sight of him. May God bless your days as you eagerly join the disciples in "speaking what you have seen and heard."