

I Come With Joy – Forgiven, Loved and Free

Scripture: Luke 24:36-48

April 19, 2015

SERMON POINTS/OUTLINE

- From the General Board of Discipleship Worship Planning page: ...forgiveness is God's response to us when...we confess our sin and seek God's help to break free of its continuing power in our lives. We do not offer sacrifices in order to be forgiven. We offer ourselves at the Lord's Table in a sacrifice of ***praise and thanksgiving*** [emphasis added] precisely because we have already confessed our sin and, by God's grace, have been forgiven. (<http://goo.gl/jV6V3M>)
- We all sin, and we are recipients of forgiveness and grace. It is sometimes easy for us to forget that we are in need of forgiveness. Forgiveness frees us and brings us deep joy!

A Guide for Daily Reading and Meditation

A Prayer for Every Day: We come before you, O God, in Easter joy, seeking to be a people of the resurrection. Be known among us; assure us of your presence, your love, your forgiveness, and your renewing power. Through your Word and Spirit, reveal your purpose in our lives. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.¹



MONDAY

Read Luke 24:36-48 (NRSV)²

³⁶ While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹ While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence. ⁴⁴ 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, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

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Last week we focused on a very similar story in the Gospel of John. Thomas is not mentioned in this week's scripture. In fact, the story in Luke says that "the eleven" (see verse 33) were present when Jesus appeared on Easter evening. Why do you think the stories could be so similar and yet so different? What purpose might be served to have one of the eleven disciples express doubt in one gospel but "the eleven" be present together in another gospel?



TUESDAY

Re-read this week's scripture lesson, focusing on verses 46-48.

In the sermon that mentioned on Sunday, my friend described a day at camp when he was required to pick out a rock and carry it with him all day. He wrapped a BIG rock in a sweater and wrapped the sweater around his neck so that the rock hung down on his back. That night at the campfire, the counselor told the campers that Jesus had forgiven them of their sin and that they would then throw the rocks into the fire – they were free and forgiven! My friend said that it was a **huge** relief.

What sin are you carrying around with you? Can you hand it over to God and hear the message of forgiveness? If not, what do you need in order for you to be freed? Do you need to ask forgiveness from someone you have hurt? Do you need to talk with a pastor or a counselor?



WEDNESDAY

You may never have considered this story or the Emmaus story as Communion stories before. There is some evidence in very early writings that some Christian communities included fish in communion. From the General Board of Discipleship site:

... when Jesus asks for fish, and eats it among them, he's doing more than showing that despite his entrance through a locked door, he is physically present among them. He's also showing who it is that is physically present among them when they gather around the Table— it is Jesus, their master, risen from the dead, the very one who had made of five loaves and two fish a meal that satisfied thousands. (see reference url above)

Being at table with Jesus is an important biblical concept. Jesus ate with sinners. He ate with the disciples. Table fellowship meant that Jesus was caring for those that ate with him. Our Lord's Table in communion signals the same kind of care from Jesus. When we come to communion, Jesus is at the table with us – cause for joy and celebration.

Yet, many people come to communion as though it is a somber occasion. Some come to the table as if taking communion is the source of forgiveness rather than a celebration of grace and forgiveness.

How do you think about communion? What would it take for you to see communion as a celebration of grace?



THURSDAY

From the very beginnings of Methodism, John Wesley taught that the communion table was to be open to all. As I've said before, John's mother Susannah Wesley was converted at the communion table, realizing that her sins – even hers – were forgiven. (a little Wesleyan language there) The Lord's Supper was a frequent topic of John's writing and preaching, and his brother Charles wrote many hymns for the sacrament.

One of the hymns is *Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast*. There are actually *two* versions of this hymn in our hymnal, one in the Communion section (first column below - #616) and one in the Invitation section (right-hand column, #339). Read both versions of the hymn. How do you respond to the text?

- What phrases of the hymn speak to you of Christ's grace and hospitality?
- I wonder if some of the phrases feel judgmental. If so, re-read them with the assurance that this hymn is about grace. Without robbing the words of their forgiving power or diminishing the effects of sin on your life, how would you change the words to speak grace and forgiveness to you?

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| 1. Come, sinners, to the gospel feast,
let every soul be Jesus' guest.
Ye need not one be left behind,
for God hath bid all humankind. | 1. Come, sinners, to the gospel feast;
let every soul be Jesus' guest.
Ye need not one be left behind,
for God hath bid all humankind. |
| 2. Do not begin to make excuse;
ah! do not you his grace refuse;
your worldly cares and pleasures
leave, and take what Jesus hath to give. | 2. Sent by my Lord, on you I call;
the invitation is to all.
Come, all the world! Come, sinner, thou!
All things in Christ are ready now. |
| 3. Come and partake the gospel feast,
be saved from sin, in Jesus rest;
O taste the goodness of our God,
and eat his flesh and drink his blood. | 3. Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,
ye restless wanderers after rest;
ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind,
in Christ a hearty welcome find. |
| 4. See him set forth before your eyes;
behold the bleeding sacrifice;
his offered love make haste to embrace,
and freely now be saved by grace. | 4. My message as from God receive;
ye all may come to Christ and live.
O let his love your hearts constrain,
nor suffer him to die in vain. |
| 5. Ye who believe his record true
shall sup with him and he with you;
come to the feast, be saved from sin,
for Jesus waits to take you in. | 5. This is the time, no more delay!
This is the Lord's accepted day.
Come thou, this moment, at his call,
and live for him who died for all. |

FRIDAY

Today, re-read the full scripture text. Write a prayer of thanksgiving or a poem expressing what it's like to be forgiven or draw a picture capturing how you feel when you know you have been forgiven.

~ Rev. Vivian McCarthy, Pastor
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