



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 22, 2012
3rd Sunday of Easter
Sermon Text: [Luke 24:36-49](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Acts 12:1-19](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 118](#)
Second Lesson: [2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 24:36-49](#)

Put Fear To Flight

With a mind opened to Scripture
With the power of the Holy Spirit

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Heights, flying, public speaking, spiders, clowns...all those things are various phobias that some people have, an irrational fear of those items or being in the presence of those items. I don't know if any of you suffer from it, but I have to believe it isn't a whole lot of fun to have that kind of fear seize you and paralyze you because you see Bozo. I don't think I would enjoy that. We call them phobias, I believe, because they are kind of an irrational fear that just seizes you and paralyzes you.

All of us are going to face fears that cause us trouble, cause us difficulty, cause us anxiety, that aren't really rational and they are there all the time. We live with them in our daily life, fears that at times almost paralyze us. Fears that come about because of financial difficulties, because of relationship difficulties. Fears that come about as you sit in the doctor's office waiting for the test results. Fears that come about as you are leaving the doctor's office after you've heard the test results. Those are the kind of fears we live with every day. Fears that come about in worries and anxieties when we lose a loved one.

If you can relate to those kinds of fears, you know where the apostles are sitting when we meet them again today, this time from the Gospel of Luke. We find them at the same place we looked at them last week in the Gospel of John. It's the first Easter. They are in that room with the doors locked because they are still scared. Their fear is understandable, isn't it? You can relate to this fear. This isn't irrational.

They had seized Jesus. They had been there a few nights earlier when a mob came with torches and swords like he was Frankenstein or something and they seized him. They beat him, tortured him, killed him. Now that morning they heard reports that the body is gone. They heard reports from some of the women that they had seen him. Maybe by this time the two guys on the way to Emmaus had made it back, or they were on their way, but these reports keep coming in that the body is gone, we've seen him, what's going on. They still don't know what to think, but they are afraid. The doors are locked because they are afraid of what might happen to them. The doors are locked I think because their fears paralyze them in a very real sense. What do we do?

All of a sudden, behind locked doors, here comes Jesus. He greets them with a common greeting of the day. Peace be with you. I have to believe this greeting is not just a "Hi. How are you" conversation filler until you talk about something else. This is a greeting of what he wants them to have. He wants them to have this peace which he goes ahead and tells them they could have had all along. Their reaction when they see him? They were startled and frightened. Fear was still seizing them. The doors were locked and all of a sudden a new person is in the room. I can understand being afraid. I can understand that throwing you off. I'd be kind of creeped out if all of a sudden someone was standing next to me in this pulpit. It isn't that big to begin with. That's what they went through.

I can understand it. I can relate to it. But Jesus can't. Did you notice this? Jesus can't relate to that fear. Look at what he says to them. "Why are you troubled? Why do doubts rise in your mind?" He sees what's in their heart. They were troubled and they were afraid. They were doubting that they were actually seeing Jesus. He says they shouldn't have. They should have known better. Their fear that had seized them was there because they didn't know better. They hadn't paid attention to everything Jesus had said. Can I understand that? Can I understand their forgetfulness? Can I understand all this? Yes, but Jesus, we are told in another Gospel, rebukes them because of their fear and their uncertainty and their doubts.

We are told that when he said this, he had showed them his hands and feet. He said "Look at me. I'm not a ghost. I have hands and I have feet. I have flesh and bones as you can see." It says they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement. That word for amazement there, guess what the base meaning of that word is. Just take one guess. They didn't believe because of joy and a type of fear. Fear kept them from focusing on Jesus. Fear kept them from focusing on what Jesus had told them. Fear kept them, even when their eyes could see Jesus, still from not believing it. Fear was an impediment in their walk with Christ.

I think that has to be relatable for you and me. As we go through life and we face those things that make us fearful and anxious and uncertain and troubled, does it harm you in your walk with Jesus? Does it take your eyes off of God and his promises and put them on your worries and your concerns? How are we going to do this? What is going to happen with that? Do we forget at times about who God is and what he has said and what he has done because in the front of our vision and the only thing we can see in our vision is the trouble, the sickness, the anxiety about finances, the anxiety about relationships? All these different things crowd into our eyesight and we can't see the promises of God. Just like with those guys, God would come to us and say the same thing. "Why do doubts rise in your mind? Why aren't you looking at me? Why are you so slow of heart to believe everything I said to you?" It's a rebuke. It would kind of sting. But it's what we would need to hear.

I firmly believe that's why God puts us together with other Christians. At times we need a fellow Christian to be Christ to us and say to us, look at Jesus. Look at who he is. Look at what he's done. We need someone else when we are in the midst of those

doubts and those fears and those anxieties to say look here. Look at who Jesus is. Look at what he did for you. He loved you so much he left heaven. He lived perfectly in your place because you can't. He died for your sins. He isn't going to abandon you now. You need to turn and look at that promise. You need to focus on that. Pick it up like a diamond and turn it around. Look at all the different facets of God's love for you in Christ, and there you'll find strength. There you will put fear to flight. It might not fly away forever. It comes back because you and I are sinners and we doubt and we worry and we don't trust God's promises perfectly, but God's Spirit blesses us when someone else leads us to turn back and look at him again.

That's what Jesus did for the disciples. He said, "This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything has to be fulfilled that was there in the prophets." Then I think the next paragraph there at the end of what I read to you really explains the next 40 days of Jesus' time. After his resurrection, until his ascension, he took the time to teach the disciples over and over about who he was and what he had done and told them what Scripture said. This is what it had to be. Just like he did with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. He opened their minds so they could understand Scripture. When Jesus disappeared from their sight, they didn't say "Hey! That was Jesus!" They said, "Didn't our hearts burn within us as he opened Scripture to us."

The Word of God is God's powerful and effective means of grace that changes us, that shapes us, that makes us something we are not. It makes us people who have the confidence that heaven is ours because of Jesus. It makes us confident that our God loves us no matter what our eyes see or our motions feel. Jesus lived and died for you and for me, and that love is rock solid and certain. It can't be taken from us, no matter what we go through.

Then you look at these guys that locked themselves in the Upper Room. Did you notice the next time we see Peter locked up, what I read to you a little bit ago from the Book of Acts? He's locked up in a prison because he couldn't stop talking about who Jesus is and what Jesus had done. How do you get from locked up because you're afraid of what people might do to you, to locked up because you can't help talking about Jesus? That's where Peter was. That's what you heard. And you saw how God delivered him and you heard this incredible thing that happened to him. How did he get there? The Word of God. Jesus opened his mind so he could understand Scripture. God poured out power from on high that was going to clothe him. "Stay in the city until you've been clothed with power from on high."

That power from on high was not a gown so now all of a sudden he can talk because he's a pastor. That power from on high is the same power that lives in your heart as a Christian. That power from on high is the Holy Spirit who opened their minds and their hearts and put into their mouths the words to speak. And speak them they did. It cost James his life. It was about to cost Peter his life until God intervened, but the fear was put to flight, right?

Do you think Peter laying in that prison was a little anxious thinking “tomorrow they might kill me”? I have to believe he was anxious. I also have to believe he turned to the Word and the power of the Spirit strengthened him to keep doing what God had called him to do.

There are times you and I in our lives are going to feel like we can't keep doing what God has called us to do, whether it's in the various vocations we have in our life as a spouse, a parent, an employee, an employer, as we serve our God in all these different ways. There are times when fears paralyze us and we think, “I can't keep doing this.” That's when you and I need to flee to the power of the Holy Spirit which comes in the Word. That's when you and I need to find a good Christian friend and sit down and say to them, “Hey, I'm struggling. Tell me again about how God loves me because I'm really struggling.” That's what God has called us to do.

When you and I do that, this is what God will do for us. He won't remove the fear completely until we get to heaven, but he'll help us through it all. He'll help us to grow through it so that after we've come out on the other side, we can be the voice of Jesus that says, “I know it's tough. I know it's hard. But I know God's love will never abandon you.” That's why he puts us together. That's why he gives us the Word. That's why he gives us voices.

So where you have failed in the past to speak, know God has taken away that sin. As you go forward and God puts opportunities in front of you that you might not expect to talk about God and his love or to talk about sin and how it separates us from God and then to show people that Jesus took away that sin, put fear to flight that keeps you from speaking and trust God's promises and share the love of Christ. Amen.