HE HAS RISEN!

Luke 24:1-49

Key Verse: 24:5b-6

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee.”

Happy Easter! We want to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, his resurrection from the dead. Throughout human history, we have never heard of one who rose victoriously from the dead but the one named Jesus. The core of our Christian faith is our faith in his death and resurrection. His resurrection is the confirmation of his atoning death for our sins and so sureness of our salvation. And the resurrection is the solid foundation of his coming again and the kingdom of God. On this Easter 2022, we are going to study Luke 24, the longest description of Christ’s resurrection among the four gospels. In this passage, three different groups of people encounter Jesus’ resurrection. May we newly see the presence of the risen Christ through the living words of God.

**First, women at the tomb (1-12).** On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women who watched the crucifixion of Jesus and his burial took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. The hearts and footsteps of these women who went to the tomb must have been heavy with no human hope at all whatsoever. Despite their love and faithfulness to Jesus, their lives were at the end of the rope, full of sorrow and despair. Going to the tomb to embalm the body of Jesus was all they could do. Then what happened at the tomb? When they went there, they found the stone had been rolled away from the entrance of the tomb. But when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. Luke specifically wrote that they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus instead of the body of Jesus. During his earthly messianic ministry, Jesus had a mortal body as a man. Then it is obvious that the Lord Jesus no longer has a mortal perishable body, but a glorious imperishable body. So, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Subsequently, what happened? While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” What a question! It can be a most sensational question in the history of mankind. All who died in all the past generations joined the dead, and all who die in the present and succeeding generations will join the dead. All who were became the dead and all who are will become the dead. The two, who were angels according Luke’s description in verse 23, asked, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” What is the answer? It is because they could not distinguish between the living and the dead. They thought Jesus also joined the dead after his death. But he did not. Jesus is the living One. In Revelation 1, when Apostle John saw the risen Jesus, he was overwhelmed by his glorious appearance that he fell at his feet as though dead. Then the risen Christ placed his hand on John and said, “Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever!” (Rev 1:17-18) Jesus is the Living One. And our God, the LORD God is a living God. When he appeared to Moses in a burning bush, he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” (Ex 3:6) He did not say, “I was…” Jesus quoted these words and said, “He is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Lk 20:38). In Christ Jesus, we are also the living, not the dead, for death has no power over us in the risen Christ. In John’s gospel, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (Jn 11:25-26). And then Jesus said further, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (Jn 11:40) Our Christian life is to see the glory of God as the living ones in Christ Jesus.

After saying, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” the angles continued, “He is not here; he has risen!” Obviously the Living One who has risen can never be found there in the tomb. The message “He is not here; he has risen” is written in Matthew and Mark also, and the message is followed by the words, “Come and see the place where he lay” in Matthew (28:6) and “See the place where they laid him” (Mk 16:6). However, in Luke the words to be followed are “Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee.” The angels’ one command is “Remember.” That means the women’s problem was not remembering the words of Jesus. The angel continued, “The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.” Luke commented in verse 8, “Then they remembered his words” implying that they believed the resurrection of Christ Jesus.

How important it is to remember the words of God in critical times in our lives! Often, we see our problems are too big for us to handle. But the solution begins when we remember Gods’ words we have heard. That’s why Luke wrote in 8:15, “But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hears the word, retain it, and by persevering produces a crop.” Jesus said in John 8:32, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Also, this is the reason Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, “I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”

In verses 9-12, when they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened. Surely, the strips of linen lying by themselves could be a clear clue of Jesus’ resurrection. However, Peter’s mind could not go in that way, just wondering to himself the mysterious event otherwise. It could be an indication that Peter did not remember any words of Jesus, although Jesus had told him concerning his resurrection repeatedly. We see the limitation of the human mind regarding Christ’ resurrection without the words of God.

**Second, two disciples on the road to Emmaus (13-35).** Verses 13 and 14 say, “Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.” These two disciples must have greatly despaired at the crucifixion of Jesus, so they were going to their hometown, ending up their lives as disciples of Jesus. Their footsteps were very heavy. It seemed that they totally failed in their lives. They knew everything that had happen in the city of Jerusalem for the last three days and talked with each other about all such things on their road to Emmaus. Who on earth could help these pitiful guys? But help came in their unexpected way, out of nowhere. Verse 15 says, “As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them.; but they were kept from recognizing him.” What a beautiful description of Jesus’ intervention with his initiative in their lives even after his resurrection! In the most difficult time of their lives, Jesus came up and walked along with them incognito. This is the faithful Lord, whose calling never fails. He never abandons his people. He never leaves any of his people alone.

Let’s see how Jesus helps them. He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” This is the starting point of their conversation. In this way Jesus drew their attention. They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?” It could mean, “Do you have only a visiting visa and didn’t you read even the headline news in ‘Jerusalem Star’”? This was a type of indirect ridicule. Yet, Jesus did not mind as long as he could help them. “What things?” Jesus asked, though he knew everything that had taken place and he was the very focus of the latest news in Jerusalem. It was to bring them out of their despair and let them speak somehow.

When Jesus asked, “What things?” they relied, “About Jesus of Nazareth”, and gave a long speech about him. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hope that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” Their long speech was very factual and comprehensive, and the conclusion was “him they did not see.”

At this point Jesus spoke out, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” Their concern was to see Jesus with their eyes as the proof of his resurrection. But Jesus rebuked them for their slowness of heart to believe all the words of the prophets. Jesus continued, “Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” All the prophets’ main teaching was Christ’ suffering and glory directly or indirectly. For example, Isaiah talked about Christ’s being pierced for our transgression and crushed for our iniquities and his seeing the life of life after the suffering of his soul (53:5, 11) and his glorious kingdom of righteousness and peace. In the book of Daniel, he saw the vision of one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven (7:13). While on earth Jesus liked to call himself the Son of Man, who was likened to a suffering servant. Christ’ suffering and glory are always linked together. Even one whole book of Jonah is about Christ’s death, burial and resurrection. Jesus said in Matthew 12:39-40, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Christ’ suffering and glory cannot be separated. It is not suffering only or glory only. As for Christ, there was suffering before glory, and glory after suffering. This is the truth of the Christ. Christ’s suffering and glory is the whole teaching of the Bible, and God wants us to believe this. Here verse 27 says, “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” How gracious, sharp-witted and pointed the Lord Jesus is!

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was with them at the table, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’” Here we learn an important thing about how the risen Jesus helped the two disciples. Jesus did not perform miracles before them, or something specular. He had Bible study with them and had an ordinary meal together. Through this Jesus opened their spiritual eyes to recognize him and opened the Scriptures until they could understand the Scriptures. The risen Jesus blesses our Bible study and he is willing to open the Scriptures to us.

When they encountered the risen Jesus in this way, they lost no time to return to Jerusalem, which they may have thought they would never come back in fear and deep sense of failure. They witnessed to what they experienced to the Eleven and those with them.

**Third, the Eleven with others assembled together (36-49).** Verse 36 says, “While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’” How did they respond? Did they say, “Lord, we were just talking about you, and you came on the right time. Praise God!”? No. They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled and why do doubts rise in your minds? 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.” How wonderful it is that the risen Jesus glorified with immortal imperishable body still had wounds in his hands and his feet! They are the eternal mark of his eternal love for forgiven sinners. Jesus came into this world with human flesh. He was not just a spiritual being like a ghost. Coming in flesh he died for our sins and rose again with that same body and appearance yet glorified.

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. Jesus got into their troubled hearts and doubtful minds and helped them on their level, though the effect to this was questionable, for they were still unbelieving. The resurrection of Christ Jesus was too good, too amazing, too joyful to believe. Verses 41 and 42 say, “And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.” Very interestingly Luke did not comment on this at all, whether they finally believed. Here we are reminded of Luke 16:31, which is what Abraham said to a rich man who was suffering greatly in hell and asked Abraham to send Lazarus to his brothers so that they would not come to the terrible place of torment, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

What is further written in Luke’s gospel here is this. Jesus 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.” Then he opened their minds, so thy could understand the Scriptures. He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.” The core of the Scriptures is Christ’s suffering and his rising from the dead on the third day just as God promised. Paul said in Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” At that time confessing that Jesus is the Lord out of faith in his death and resurrection was like committing a social suicide, inviting persecution upon themselves. Yet, the early Christians did so, because Christ’s death and resurrection were true to them.

According to Jesus here is one more point. Jesus continued in verse 47, “and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” We are also reminded of 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” We also remember what Lord Jesus promise in Matthew 18:20, “Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” and in Matthew 28:20, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Finally Jesus said in verse 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.” May we continue to seek to have the power of the Spirit as witnesses of Jesus.

We thank and praise God for the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead. One’s faith in Christ’s suffering and death and his resurrection and glory based on the Scriptures is truly great now and forever. Christ Jesus is the Living One. He is alive in the words of the Bible and in the hearts of those who believe. May we keep his words in our hearts and live with him in our day-to-day life and live as his witnesses in this world.