



Christ Lutheran Church

605 South Fifth Street • Norfolk, NE 68701

Share God's Word, share His love, and do it now!

Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

“Joy in the Freedom Repentance Brings.” – Luke 24:36-49

3rd Sunday of Easter – April 15, 2018

Pastor Chip Winter

Grace to you and Peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. The text for our sermon is the Gospel appointed for the day and already read for us from St. Luke, chapter 24.

My dear family in Christ, in adult Bible class last Sunday we had a wonderful comment about how Christians are often seen in the negative, pointing out the sin of the world as if our Bible were only a rule book. True, there is law in the Bible, and that law always accuses. But, we share that truth because there is the wonderful follow-up to it: in our repentance there is complete forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, and in that forgiveness there is great joy – indeed, never-ending joy. We are ALL in need of that forgiveness – and there is enough forgiveness and life for every last one of us!

Imagine a young boy receiving a brand new toy for his birthday. The family's custom was to open presents at the start of the day, but this was also a school day. His toy, a brand new starship – the flagship of a particular line of toys, complete with right characters and innovative features – would have to wait until after school to explore new galaxies. So, he got dressed and headed off to school.

But throughout the morning his mind drifted back to the new starship awaiting him at home. He imagined the fun he would have when the school day was finally over. But that was just it – he had a day’s worth of school to sit through before he could go home to play. Unless...

Well, there was one way to possibly speed this process along! He could lie to his teacher, tell her he was sick, and then he could get home earlier. So, that’s what he did. He pretended to be sick, his mother was called and she came to get him to take him home.

In our text the resurrected Jesus interrupts a gathering of His disciples. They were assembled to discuss the sightings that had occurred this day. Mary had seen Jesus, and she was amazed. Two disciples walking to Emmaus had seen Jesus and they marveled. Now, all of a sudden, they had all seen Jesus for here He was standing right in front of them. We are told they “disbelieved” for joy.

It’s not hard to relate to this joy. I’ve had dreams in which friends or grandparents – people who had died decades ago – were there. I can remember the feelings of disbelief and joy. I imagine some of you have, too.

What’s more difficult to grasp is the juxtaposition of repentance to joy in this text. To couple those words seems counter-intuitive. But later in this text we hear Jesus teach His disciples that **“repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations”** (47). Also, the other passages used today connect repentance and joy. In the second reading, from Acts, Peter preaches at the temple gate **“repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”** (Acts 3:19-20). In John’s epistle he reminds us that Christ appeared **“to take away sins”** (1 John 3:5). Abiding in Him we are to put away sin and practice righteousness (3:7). These are themes consistent with repentance. As our fathers in the face placed these lessons together for this day’s worship they

would have us place these two things side by side: repentance and joy. And Jesus, appearing to His disciples, introduced into their experience of joy the need to teach and talk about repentance.

The boy with the starship would up back home with his mother. She brought him to his room and tucked him into bed, so he could rest and feel better. No sooner was he in bed than he began to ask his mother about getting out the new toy. She suddenly saw through his deception and confronted him. The boy was caught in his lie, in his sin. Such is not a pleasant or joyful place for any of us. Feeling both guilt and panic he face the dilemma: own up to the sin, or build up the lie? He followed his instinct and told his mother he was truly sick. She took his word for it and left him in his room, alone with his guilty conscience.

One thing worse than repentance is trying to live with a guilty conscience. It introduces fear and irritation, as well as the need to justify yourself. The initial temptation to which you fell, the eventual sin caused you to compromise yourself, to set aside what you know is right. But then, once the sin is committed and you have to live with it, there is fear that manipulates you, controlling you and pushing you into further and further sins and lies. The boy with his toy was caught in such circumstance.

The risen Lord Jesus has come to set us free from just such circumstances. Christ Jesus sets us free from sin and a guilty conscience through repentance and the forgiveness He secured by His suffering and death.

When Jesus stood before the bewildered disciples, He told them that repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations. The disciples were, of course, overjoyed that Jesus was alive, standing before them, eating with them. They received joy because they were with Jesus. That joy is what Jesus wanted them to share with the whole world in the good news of His resurrection.

The boy stewed away in his room in his feelings of guilt and fear and regret. He knew he'd lied both to his teacher and to his mother. He wanted to make it right, but he was afraid. He was ashamed of what he had done, and he knew what was right. He also remembered the lessons he'd learned from his mom and dad about saying you're sorry when you've done wrong, so he took heart. With courage, he went down to his mother and told her what he had done.

It was terrifying at first. But once the sin was off his chest, he was relieved. He was even more relieved when he felt the warm embrace of forgiveness from his mother. He knew he'd done wrong. He knew he might have consequences to face. But he also knew he was forgiven, and there was joy to be found in that forgiveness.

How much greater is the joy when we discover that for the sake of the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus our sins against God have been forgiven. God the Father spared no expense to pay the debt for your sin and mine. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross in judgment for you. He paid the penalty you owe to heaven through the sacrifice of His own body and blood on Calvary's cross. And the Father accepted that sacrifice – it was sufficient. There is no more payment to be made. All of our sins have been accounted for by this Jesus Who was dead but is alive forevermore.

Dear brothers and sisters, the resurrection of Jesus is for your joy. Repent of your sin before our Father in heaven and know that He has forgiven you. Live in the joy of that Gospel as you repent of your sins before one another. Give forgiveness freely as you have been forgiven. Live in the joy or restored relationships with one another. And share this news with the world as our Lord Jesus taught in today's Gospel – with repentance for the forgiveness of sins being proclaimed to the world in Jesus' name. Amen.