

It was only a few hours into the first Easter morning following the resurrection of Jesus and Luke records it this way:

Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread.³⁶ And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said.³⁷ But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

³⁸ "Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt?"³⁹ Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it's really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do."⁴⁰ As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

⁴¹ Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?"⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish,⁴³ and he ate it as they watched.

⁴⁴ Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.⁴⁶ And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.⁴⁷ It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.'⁴⁸ You are witnesses of all these things.

⁴⁹ "And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven."

Luke 24:35-49 NLT

In this story we see Jesus ministering personally to the men that had left all to follow Him. He offered them encouragement, enlightenment and empowerment. What Jesus offered them is also a reflection of what the church should be offering the world.

Think about this statement: The ministry of the risen Christ to the Church determines His ministry through the church. It is through the ministry of the church (Christ body) that His message is proclaimed. To prepare the early church for what would come later He ministered to them and left us an example of what we the body of Christ should be.

Today I want to look again that these three characteristics of Christ only this time apply them to our church and who we are called to be as Christ body.

1. The church should have a ministry of encouragement

³⁶ *And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. “Peace be with you,” he said.* Luke 24:36 NLT

- a. We should be a people of peace

He spoke peace to them just as He does today through His body the church. When you hear the word peace in the context of Jesus Christ you have to think of His own words when He said,

²⁷ *“I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”* John 14:27 NLT

There is nothing that can replace the peace that Christ gives us.

- b. We should lead people to encounter His presence

The body of Christ gathered on earth should be a place where His presence is the norm.

He also left us the example of enlightenment.

2. The church should have a ministry of enlightenment

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. Luke 24:45 NLT

We are called to be people of the word of God. We are charged to know the message, live the message and share the message.

We should do this in two ways:

- a. We should share words of revelation

“When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Luke 24:44 NLT

There have been other times of revelation in the life of a Christfollower.

He reveals Himself in our vocational choices.

He reveals Himself in our relationship choices.

He reveals Himself in our morality choices.

He reveals Himself in our moments of crisis.

He reveals Himself when we open His word and read about Him or when we sing a song or listen to a sermon.

But He also enlightens us by illumination.

b. We are charged to be people of illumination.

To understand the scripture requires more than human ability. It requires divine illumination. He gives them a special window into three essential theological truths when He appears to them in this story.

Let me quickly give you the references and you can study them for yourself.

The suffering and resurrection of Christ (v. 46) ⁴⁶ *And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day.*

Man's need to repent and God's forgiveness (v. 47b) *'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.'*

The global intention of His message (v. 47a) *It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem:*

All of us need enlightenment. We need to know who we are and who God wants us to be.

Do you know the answer to those questions today? Are you allowing Christ to guide and enlighten your life? Has He helped you determine who you are and why you are here on this earth? Do you know your purpose or are you just bumping along the road of life with very little meaning?

When you know what Jesus wants to do through you He offers you something else even more wonderful.

3. The church should have a ministry of empowerment

There is one last thing that Jesus gave these first disciples following His resurrection. He gave them the ability to be empowered to things beyond their own strength. Look at this last verse:

And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven." Luke 24:49
NLT

There are two things that Jesus promised His disciples before He went back to His heavenly Father. You and I are the recipients of these as well.

a. The promise of the Father

In John 15 and 16 as well as many other places Jesus refers to a coming Holy Spirit.

“But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going.⁶ Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you.⁷ But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate^[a] won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you.⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

*¹² “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now.¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.¹⁴ He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’” John 16:5-8, 12-15
NLT*

The Holy Spirit is the promise of God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the manifestation of God sent to be with us until Christ returns to earth.

b. The purity and power of the Spirit

Alone we are nothing. With Christ and His Spirit we can be and do anything He asks us to do. We can be in places that are beyond our ability to see right now. We can do things that are beyond our ability to even process.

Personal: I have often told you that I am the last person in the world that should be standing here talking to you. If you know me at all you will still see signs of my introverted personality. I would much rather be in the back of the room. I would much rather slide into the corner table at the restaurant. I don’t like being on display. I am loaded with insecurities in myself. I am very comfortable spending hours alone in the evening and have the tendency to hide myself away from the crowds.

You may not believe but it is so true.

But when God “called or knocked on my door” and left me with the feeling that He wanted to use me, I had no choice but to answer and allow the power of His Spirit to be IN me.

There was an prophet in the Old Testament that God asked to do something and then He reminded him that it would be by His Spirit that the work would be done.

Then the angel who had been talking with me returned and woke me, as though I had been asleep.² “What do you see now?” he asked.

I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl of oil on top of it. Around the bowl are seven lamps, each having seven spouts with wicks."³ And I see two olive trees, one on each side of the bowl."⁴ Then I asked the angel, "What are these, my lord? What do they mean?"

⁵ "Don't you know?" the angel asked. "No, my lord," I replied.

⁶ Then he said to me, "This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: **It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.**⁷ Nothing, not even a mighty mountain, will stand in Zerubbabel's way; it will become a level plain before him!"
Zechariah 4:1-7 NLT

What God is calling you to do He will give you the ability to do it through His Spirit.