

Sing of the Lord's Goodness

Ernest Sands

Jesus told them,

"This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Luke 24:46-48

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

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*Old Orchard Church
Third Sunday of Easter
April 22, 2012—10:15 - 11:50 a.m.*

Celebrating The Immortal Jesus

as

The Resurrection Community of Witness

From Mary Magdalene and the women on Easter morning,
To the ten disciples on Easter night,
To the 500 who saw him at one time,
Jesus' followers came to understand One Great Thing:
They had been chosen to bear witness
To the greatest thing the world had ever seen—
A dead man resurrected to the energy of an indestructible life!

And this is how the power of the gospel is manifested:
As we bear witness to the witness
Of those who saw Jesus alive after his death,
God confirms the truth of Christ's resurrection
In the minds and hearts of all those he reconciled to himself
In the death of his eternal Son.

O Jesus, we are grateful for the privilege of bearing witness,
Of being a living letter from you
To someone in despair, To someone who grieves,
To someone alone,
To someone who doubts,
To someone self-satisfied.
Blessed be your Name for calling us to take up our place
In the outer edge of that great cloud of witnesses!
Alleluia and Amen.



Today's Scripture

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 61:1-4, 10-11
Gospel Lesson: John 20:24-31

Today's Sermon

“Walk With Me, Tell Me a Story”

Deuteronomy 5:32-33; 6:1-9; 20-23

Mark Robertson, Director of Ministry to Youth & Families

On Being Witnesses

None of us who believe in Christ's resurrection ever saw him alive. No matter. Others did. And that's absolutely critical—that **someone** saw him alive after his crucifixion. After Thomas disbelieved the resurrection in spite of the testimony of the others who saw him alive, Jesus said to him, *Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.* (John 20:29)

Jesus was not commending a mindless assent to the reality of his resurrection that dispenses with such annoying things as evidence. He was gently rebuking Thomas for setting aside the evidence of eyewitnesses and setting up instead his own direct experience as the criterion of all truth.

As we bear witness to the truth and power of Christ's resurrection and announce it to those around us as the key to any program of renewing the world, we must never say to people, “Just believe it.” There is **evidence** for Jesus' resurrection: credible witnesses saw him alive. And with our neighbors, friends, and families we are called to bear witness to those witnesses as well as to the resurrection power of Christ which has invaded our own lives. If Jesus is not really alive; if the remains of his body are dust somewhere outside Jerusalem even now, then whatever we think we see of Christ's resurrection power at work in each other's lives, there is some other explanation for it all. Perhaps some of the Christians we know are just exceptional.

But as modern people can we *really* believe in a physical resurrection of Jesus? Especially given the current exaltation of science, it is important for Christians to insist that there is nothing in science that rules out the resurrection of Jesus. Ambrose Fleming, one of the great scientific minds in England in the early 20th century, once said that if a careful study of the miracles narrated in the Gospels

is pursued with what eminent lawyers have called a willing mind, it will engender a deep assurance that the Christian Church is not founded on fictions, or nourished on delusions, of, as St. Peter calls them, “cunningly devised fables,” but on historical and actual events, which, however strange they may be, are indeed the greatest events which have ever happened in the history of the world.

Faith does not dispense with evidence. Faith believes the evidence. We must not forget that as we bear witness to Christ in the 21st century, and as we wait for our resurrection, and for the resurrection of all who cast themselves on Christ. What a hope we have! It truly lifts our spirit. That's why the deepest prayer in the hearts of God's people is always, *Come, Lord Jesus!*

—Ron Lutjens