Text: Luke 24:36-49

**Introduction**

I suppose there might be a lot of WW3 sermons today. Maybe a lot of Israel sermons – pro and con. But Jesus and the Bible more broadly is pretty clear about those things. Nobody knows the end. There will be wars and rumors of wars and nation against nation. As someone with two boys at or approaching draft ages, trust me, the developing major three front war we seem to be sleepwalking towards is more than concerning. But I don’t attach religious meaning to it.

Likewise with Israel. The biblical definition of Israel is the people of God by faith. In prudential wisdom you can think whatever you want about the modern nation state of Israel. I’ve joked around with David that betting against the Jews has never been a good bet in thousands of years of recorded history, but that is not a religious judgement. That modern state the biblical Israel are two radically different things. Biblical Israel is the people washed in the blood of Christ.

So those things might raise the general anxiety, and Jesus has something to say about that anxiety, but what I know a lot of sermons will be wondering into today is an abuse of the pulpit.

**Text**

Our Gospel text today is a good one to remind us of what this pulpit should be about. I think there are four things emphasized and we will walk through them. But I’m going to do something I don’t normally do and list them upfront here.

1. The resurrection of the body.
2. The role of the Old Testament specifically and the scriptures overall
3. The calling of the apostles and those who would follow
4. These are spiritually discerned things.

**The Resurrection of the Body**

So let’s turn to that first one – the Resurrection of the Body. Jesus appears among his disciples and lets his peace rest upon them, but they are startled and frightened because they think “they saw a spirit.” And I think our translators should have just said “they saw a ghost” because that is the implication. They think they are seeing some non-material manifestation of their dead friend Jesus. They are frightened because who knows how ghosts act? You’ve got Caspar to Goser the Gasarian.

And what does Jesus do? Tells them to stop being troubled and doubting. Shows them his hands and his feet. Urges them to touch him. “A Ghost doesn’t have flesh and bones as you see I have.” And when none of that erased all doubt, He asks them for something to eat and then eats it.

The resurrection of the body is important to the Christian Faith. It is important because when God created the world he created it good. And the resurrection is the first act of the new creation or the re-creation. God didn’t make a mistake when he made flesh and blood – the material world. That’s the judgement of most of philosophical paganism. Flesh and blood is a trap. Whether you are trying to escape the wheel of Samsara and its endless rounds of reincarnation, either toward The One as a Hindu or toward Nirvana (nothingness) as a Buddhist, or to get out of the Cave and see the forms directly no longer blinded by the Demiurge as a Platonist, or the list could continue almost indefinitely. The material world in pretty much every other religion ever is as best neutral, but always something to be escaped from. Only the Jews emphasized that God himself made it good. And only Christ emphasized the resurrection of the body.

God himself took on flesh – conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. The flesh is important. What we choose to do with this flesh: from war to peace, from things of death to things of life, can have eternal meaning. Because there is the resurrection of the body.

**The Role of the Old Testament/Scriptures**

Now a doctrine like the resurrection of the dead – or a guy returning from the dead like Jesus – if we were talking from human wisdom only, might have logically said – “Throw everything old out.” But The second thing that Jesus says here is exactly the opposite. “Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

This would be the Reformation slogan – Word Alone or Scripture Alone. I prefer a slightly different dogmatic phrase – the norming norm. The Christian life – proclamation, doctrine and practice – is always normed by the Scriptures. And those scriptures always talk about Christ.

If we want to know what Israel means? Search the scriptures.

If you want to know why we should not ultimately fear wars, or the world or even Satan. Yes, they can temporally kill the flesh. But Christ rises form the dead on the third day. And all who are baptized into him will share a resurrection like his. Fear the one who can destroy both body and soul. Do not fear those who can only one destroy this body. This body that is already wasting.

The message of all the scriptures is seen in the life of Christ. He suffered and on the third day rose form the dead. And he did this for you. He did this that all who hear might repent, receive the forgiveness of sins, and proclaim his name to all the nations.

Our anxiety is often because we don’t know what comes. But what comes has been revealed to us in the scriptures and the life of Christ. The devil and the world are defeated. They are judged the deed is done. We await one final word. And our flesh shall be renewed. In Christ you have been given the victory. In Christ do not fear what may come. Because God is working it all out for the good of his people.

**The Calling of the Apostles**

“You are witnesses of these things.”

Now that was said originally to the apostles who were literal witnesses of the resurrection. But I think Jesus means this is much that same way for us. Our calling is to live lives of those who believe in the bodily resurrection. To live as those who have heard and believe what the law, the prophets and the psalms tell us. It is primarily our lives that witness.

Yes, I get up here and preach, and those scriptures say that faith comes by hearing. The purpose of preaching is hopefully to make real the scriptures. Or at least perplex a bit that you might seek – and seeking find. But do we find that treasure in the field and just walk away. Or do we find that treasure and go and sell all we have to purchase the field?

The witnesses of these things are those who just might upend their lives to buy that field.

**Spiritually Discerned**

But now for the last one. After all this Jesus tells those disciples to “stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Earlier the text tells us that “Jesus opened their minds to understand the scriptures.”

The bodily resurrection, the scriptures as the norm of belief and life, the call to witness – how these all hang together on Christ. To the natural human mind it is all nonsense. A stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the gentiles. If there is one thing we know, dead people don’t rise. You mean a book collected from the stone age to the iron age is the best norm for life in the 21 century? And that book includes such ideas as pick up you cross as the path of witness? We are all of the flesh enough to understand the problems.

But these things must be Spiritually discerned. Jesus says wait, “I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.” That promise was the promise of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit. That the Spirit at this time would be poured out on the entire world. What Moses has longed for when Joshua was complaining about Eldad and Medad, has happened.

Without the Spirit we cannot understand the scriptures. It is only the Spirit that calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the entire Christian Church on earth.

It is also that Spirit who is said to be our consolation. Absent the Spirit, the anxieties of the world can overpower. We are awfully small creatures in a world coming apart at the seams. In a world grown old and used up.

But in the Spirit we know that these are the birthpains of the Kingdom. The groans of a world that longs to see the revelation of the Sons of God. In the Spirit we look for the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. The things that causes us so much worry are lite momentary afflictions. And tomorrow breaks a yet more glorious day.

We pray for a double portion of that Spirit.

Amen.