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Easter VII & Confirmation Sunday  
June 1, 2025  
Text: Acts 1:12 – 26  
Title: Now What?

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. “It’s been forty days,” Peter thought to himself, “Forty days since that incredible Sunday morning when the Lord, Jesus walked out of His tomb.” As he thought about it, he realized that he hadn’t questioned the reality of it anymore since Thomas was convinced it was true a week after that first day. Now, as they walked a Sabbath’s Day distance out to Mount Olivet on the Northeast side of Jerusalem, Peter thought about everything that had happened during the past 5 ½ weeks.

First, of course, was when the women went to finish the proper preparations for the Lord’s body. They sure didn’t expect to find what they did, and when they came back to tell everyone, Peter had to see for himself. He had run full speed to the tomb, and saw the head cloth neatly wrapped and placed on the slab. Then Mary Magdalene came back to the upper room saying that she had actually spoken with the Rabbi, Himself, and that He was alive! Peter had left the room to take care of something, he didn’t really remember what it was, but that was when He saw Jesus for the first time Himself on that day! He went directly back to the others to confirm what Mary Magdalene had been trying to convince them of all day. That the Lord Jesus really was alive!

Peter was starting to get really frustrated with the others when two more men ran into the room, and described to them how the Lord had walked with them during their trip to Emmaus that very afternoon. Cleopas told everyone that they were discussing everything that had happened to the Rabbi, and then a man they didn’t recognize was suddenly walking with them. He asked what they were talking about, and they couldn’t believe that He didn’t know about the

betrayal, trial and crucifixion. So Cleopas said that He filled the apparent stranger in on the news, including the discovery of the empty tomb that very morning. “I still can’t believe that I described His own death to Him,” Peter remembered Cleopas saying. “It just never crossed our minds that this was the Lord walking right along the road with us.”

Then Jesus began to tell the two travel companions that everything that had happened occurred to fulfill all of the Scriptures about the Christ. As they reached the end of their trip to Emmaus, they knew that they couldn’t just let this stranger go on alone, so they persuaded him to eat the evening meal with them. That was when the man took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. “When He handed us the bread, I suddenly realized that this was the Lord Himself. And then He was just gone. I don’t know how He disappeared like that, but we knew that it was really Him because we could remember a burning power inside of us while He spoke. Only the Rabbi ever had that effect on me before!”

They were still discussing all of this when Jesus suddenly appeared in the middle of the locked room with them! They should have been terrified, but Peter still remembered how calm he instantly felt when Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you.” All of them looked at Him, and examined the evidence of His wounds that this really was Jesus in the room with them. Then He actually asked for something to eat, and had a piece of their broiled fish! That’s when Peter knew for certain that this was no ghost. Who ever heard of a ghost eating?

All during that week, they tried to convince Thomas that they had really seen Jesus alive. He was so stubborn, and just flat out refused to believe any of them. Peter could remember being so frustrated with him that he almost wanted to shake some sense into him. But Thomas said that the only way that he’d believe it was if he got to see the Lord and feel the wounds for himself. “I’m sure that Thomas knows now to be careful of what he asks for,” Peter chuckled to

himself as he walked along with the others. He could still see the look on Thomas's face as he slowly put his trembling hand into the spear wound in the Lord's side.

The next time that Peter remembered seeing Jesus was one night that he decided to go fishing in the Sea of Tiberias. He couldn't remember exactly when it was over the past 40 days, but it didn't really matter. He said to the others that he was going, and six of them decided to join him. They were out on the water all night long, but didn't catch a thing.

As the sun was coming up on the water, they noticed a man standing on the shore, and He called out to ask them if they had any fish. When they told the man that they didn't have any, He suggested dropping the net on the right side of the boat, and when they finally did it there were so many fish in the net that they weren't able to pull the load into the boat. It was John who first made the connection, and he said with that quiet intensity of his, "It is the Lord!"

Peter remembered quickly throwing his clothes on, and then diving into the water to swim the last hundred yards to shore as the others dealt with the nets. When they reached land, Jesus was sitting by a fire cooking fish, and He invited them to come and cook some of their fish as well. He still didn't know how he did it, but Peter managed to pull the net onto the shore all by himself as the others counted 153 large fish in it. But even with all of that weight, the net didn't have a single tear in it. He couldn't believe it!

It was what happened next that Peter knew he would never forget, and he never wanted too. After they finished eating, Jesus looked at him and asked him, "Do you love me?" There was no hesitation in his answer, "Yes Lord; You know I love You." This happened three different times in just a couple of minutes, and each time that he assured the Lord of his love, Jesus told him to feed and tend to His sheep. The Lord was welcoming him back as a disciple, even after he had outright denied even knowing Him during the trial. Jesus then said to Peter the

very words that He had first spoken to him, “Follow me.” And with those words, Peter knew that even though he had betrayed Jesus as Judas did, he was now forgiven.

Peter was brought back to the present by the sudden appearance of Jesus right there on the Mount of Olives. He was telling them to go back to Jerusalem and stay there until the promise of the Father was fulfilled, and that would be when the Holy Spirit arrived “not many days from now.” They gathered together around the top of the rise, and then someone asked, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

They should have known what the answer would be, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Then, suddenly, Jesus seemed to get taller, and suddenly Peter realized that he could see the Lord’s feet over the heads of the others. He was rising off the earth! As they watched, He rose into a cloud, and that was the last that they saw of Him. The Lord Jesus had gone back to His Father, and as they strained to see if they could spot Him again two angels appeared. “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Then they were alone, and looking at each other asking, “What now?” They all turned and headed back to Jerusalem. “We need to replace Judas,” Peter thought as they went along, and when they got back to the city to wait as Jesus told them to do, Peter stood up to announce that very thing. They cast lots, and chose a man named Matthias who had seen all of the essential things that the other apostles had witnessed also.

After everything that they had seen over the past 40 days, and actually over the past 3 years, the apostles still don’t really get it. Their question about restoring the kingdom to Israel

makes it seem like they're still looking for Jesus to drive out the Romans, but Jesus makes it clear that they don't need to worry about the when as long as they are confident that it will happen. In the meantime, He makes it clear that there is work to be done. The Good News about Jesus Christ is supposed to be spread to the very end of the earth. This news is too good to keep in Jerusalem, and it won't be long before the Holy Spirit arrives to lead them out of the city.

It's easy to sit here and feel superior to the apostles when we have the 20/20 hind-sight of history and the completed Scriptures, but the fact of the matter is that we fall into the same pitfalls that they did just as easily and sometimes even more so. We doubt the reality of God's power in the face of human logic and reason. We deny our relationship to Jesus so that we don't appear to be "holier than thou." And we definitely miss Jesus when He's right before our eyes at times like this when His Word is read or when the Lord's Supper is celebrated.

Thankfully we have a Lord and Savior that is willing and able to forgive and restore us to our place in His family, and who continues to grow His family even today as these young confirmands confess their own faith in Him. Jesus took the time to forgive Peter for denying Him so blatantly, and He is ready and willing to forgive us in the same way. There is no sin, including denying that we even know Him that is too great for Him to forgive. As long as we draw breath in this life, He will forgive and remember our sins no more. It's what the Easter season is always about, and what the Gospel of Christ always proclaims to the world until He returns in the same way that He left. We proclaim that Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.