

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Luke 24:36–49**

**Sermon: The Joy of Easter**

We are in the third week of the Church’s celebration of Christ’s resurrection. The proximity of the day to Easter provides reason for the Christian to experience great joy. Seemingly ironic is the juxtaposition to the theme of repentance in the lessons. Peter’s sermon to the gathering Jerusalem crowd in the First Reading urges them to ***“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). Likewise, the Epistle exhorts Christians to put away the practice of sinning: ***“No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him”*** (1 John 3:6). In short, what do repentance and joy have to do with one another? The Collect for the Day reminds us that “perpetual gladness and eternal joys” are ours “through Jesus Christ, our Lord” as he has rescued us “from the peril of everlasting death.”

A young boy once received a brand-new toy starship as a gift for his birthday. It was a wonderful gift, the best of that particular line of toys, with all the best characters and lots of new and innovative features. The boy was ecstatic. He couldn't wait to open his new toy and build it and begin to explore pretend galaxies. But then, reality hit home. It was a school day. It was his parents' rule that he could open his gifts before school but then had to wait until he returned home to begin playing. He would have to wait. The boy got dressed and ready and traveled off to school.

While at school, his mind drifted back to that new toy starship waiting for him at home. He imagined all the fun he was going to have when he finally got home. But that was just it—there was still a whole day's worth of school to sit through before he could go home and play. Unless . . .

The boy's mind hatched a plan. There was one way to speed this process along! He could leave school early, make it home before the end of the day, and begin playing with his new toy.

All he would have to do was lie to his teacher and tell her he was sick. So that's what he did. The boy pretended to be sick, his mother was called, and she came and got him and brought him home from school.

In our text from Luke 24. The resurrected Jesus interrupted a gathering of the disciples as they were assembled to discuss the sightings that had occurred this day. Peter had seen Jesus, and he was amazed. Two disciples walking to Emmaus had seen Jesus, and they marveled. And now, all of a sudden, they all had seen Jesus because he was standing right in front of them. Jesus stood before the disciples, and we're told that they disbelieved for joy.

It's easy to relate to this joy. If any one of us suddenly saw a deceased loved one back from the dead, we would also experience disbelief and joy. We'd be glad because one who'd been lost to us had been regained. What's more difficult to grasp is the juxtaposition of repentance to this joy. As we proceed further into the text, we hear Jesus teach his disciples that *“repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations”* (v 47).

In addition, the other passages of Scripture for this day suggest a connection between repentance and joy. In our Acts reading, Peter preaches at the temple gate that the worshipers assembled there should ***“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 Christians that Christ appeared ***“to take away sins”*** (1 John 3:5). As those who abide in him, we should put away sin and practice righteousness (3:7). These are themes consistent with repentance. The Introit for the day talks about the “joy [that] comes with the morning,” and the Psalm talks about the abundance of joy that’s more than when grain and wine abound (Psalm 4:7).

Yes repentance and joy go hand I hand. Indeed, Jesus himself, appearing to his disciples in our text, introduced into their experience of joy the need to teach and talk about repentance.

The boy with the toy starship wound up back home with his mother. She brought him up to his room and tucked him into bed so he'd 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 and caught in his sin. This is never a pleasant or joyful place to be for any of us. The boy felt a sudden tinge of panic and guilt. He was faced with a dilemma: Should he own up to his sin or continue to lie and cover his tracks? His instinct, influenced by his old Adam, told him to lie. He decided to follow his instinct. He told his mom he truly was 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. It makes us irritable or angry. We feel the need to justify ourselves. A guilty conscience can make us absolutely miserable. It can throw our life into turmoil.

The initial sin and temptation cause us to compromise ourselves and set aside what we know is right to fulfill the desire influenced by the temptation. But once the sin's been committed and we have to live with it, there's fear that manipulates us and controls us and pushes us into further and further sin. Our life, which had been nice and well ordered with a well-ordered conscience and well-ordered relationships, is turned upside down. The boy and his toy starship were caught in that dilemma.

The resurrected Christ has come to set us free from just such a dilemma. Jesus sets us free from sin and a guilty conscience through repentance and forgiveness. The resurrection of Jesus brings joy, even joy in repentance.

When Jesus stood before his bewildered disciples as they were hiding and discussing the fact that apparently he was alive, he told them that repentance and the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations. The disciples at that moment were overjoyed. Jesus was alive, and he stood before them, face-to-face.

He even ate a meal with them. They received joy because they were with Jesus. It was Jesus' desire that they share the Good News of his resurrection with the whole world so that the whole world could also receive joy. There is joy for the Christian in the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness.

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

This 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 even have consequences to face. But he also knew he was forgiven. There was joy to be found in that forgiveness.

How much greater is the joy when we discover that for the sake of the death and resurrection of Jesus our sin against God has been forgiven! God has spared no expense to pay the debt for our sin. He sent his only Son to die on a cross in judgment for us. He paid the penalty we owe to heaven through the sacrifice of his own body and blood on the cross for us. And God has accepted that sacrifice. It is enough. It is sufficient. There's no more payment to be made. Jesus who was dead is alive because all our sin has been accounted for.

Therefore, the resurrection of Jesus is for our joy. He who was dead is alive. So we repent of our sin before God and know that he has forgiven us. Live in the joy of the Gospel. Repent of your sin before one another. Give forgiveness freely as you have been forgiven. Live in the joy of restored relationships with one another.

The resurrected Jesus instructed his disciples that ***“repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations”*** (v 47). Jesus has died and is now alive. Repent of your sin. Receive God’s forgiveness. Live in the joy of the Gospel.

Amen