

**Christ Episcopal Church, Valdosta**

**“God Has Already Turned toward You” (Luke 24:36-48)**

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In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In today’s gospel passage Luke tells us the Risen Jesus appears to his frightened disciples, and proclaimed, “Peace be with you.” Jesus further quelled their fears, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” Initially the disciples thought this was too good to be true as Luke notes, “while in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering” but then Jesus eats with them to demonstrate that yes, he had indeed been raised from the dead—and not as a ghost but as our glorified Savior with flesh and bones and blood just like us (Luke 24:36-43).

Then Jesus told his disciples the entire Old Testament scriptures pointed to him, and that as the Messiah he had fulfilled them, all of them, completely:

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:44-48).

Many years ago my family and I went to see one of the Harry Potter films—I can’t remember which one—in 3D. As the theater darkened and the movie began we all donned our 3D glasses. It was the first time I had ever attended a 3D movie, so out of curiosity I took off my glasses to see what the movie would look like without them. Of course, everything on the screen was extremely blurry—so blurry I could barely distinguish what was on the screen and I quickly developed a wicked headache. But the second I put the 3D glasses back on I was stunned by how clear and detailed everything on that giant movie screen became—it blew my mind.

Reading the Old Testament in and of itself is always a good thing, because it is the inspired word of God—but reading the Old Testament with the 3D glasses about how those scriptures are all fulfilled in Jesus Christ is even better. The more you read each section of the Old Testament—what Jesus referred to as “the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms”—through those 3D glasses, the more you will clearly see the incredible beauty and comprehensiveness of God’s love for you, love so great he sent Jesus Christ to be the Messiah to die and be raised to prove that love for you.

Everything in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament—what Jesus refers to as “the law of Moses”—points to Jesus Christ. As the Second Person of the Trinity Jesus Christ was active as God created the heavens and the earth. In the same way Abraham took his only beloved son Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him to God, Jesus ascended Calvary to be the sacrifice for our sins as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world—and in so doing fulfilled the entire sacrificial law of the Old Testament. In the same way God delivered the Israelites from four centuries of bondage in Egypt, Jesus delivered us from the bondage of sin and death. In the same way God provided manna for the Israelites in the wilderness, Jesus gives himself as the Bread of Life for all of us in the wilderness of our lives. In the same way the serpent was lifted up on the pole to save the Israelites from a plague, Jesus was lifted up on the cross to save us. In his death and resurrection Jesus completely fulfilled the law of Moses.

As the prophet Elijah multiplied the oil for the poor widow at Zarephath Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish for the hungry multitude—and in the same way Elijah raised the widow’s dead son from the dead Jesus raised Lazarus. When the prophet Isaiah prophesied about the Suffering Servant who would be numbered with the transgressors and take our sins upon himself and seek out the lost sheep who had gone astray he was talking about Jesus. In the same way the prophet Jeremiah wept over the destruction of Jerusalem at the hand of the Babylonians, Jesus wept over Jerusalem the week of his passion and death. When the prophet Ezekiel spoke about the glory of God returning to the temple as Jehovah Shammah (the Lord is there) Jesus is the glory of God and Immanuel, God with us. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet Micah foretold, was pierced just as the prophet Zechariah foretold, and raised on the third day just as the prophet Hosea foretold. In his death and resurrection Jesus completely fulfilled the prophets.

When the psalmist wrote about the Lord being our shepherd he was writing about Jesus who identified himself as the Good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep—you and me. When the psalmist wrote, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” he foretold Jesus’ cry of dereliction on the cross—and when the psalmist wrote “into your hand I commit my spirit” he foreshadowed Jesus last cry as he surrendered his spirit into the hands of our Heavenly Father. When the psalmist described God as the rock of our salvation he was writing about Jesus, the Rock of Ages. When the psalmist was writing about the Lord being seated at the right hand of God he was writing about Jesus who left his throne in heaven to save the world and ascended there again as the Risen Lord. And when the psalmist wrote about the Lord delivering his soul from death he was writing about the same Jesus Christ who has delivered your soul from death because God’s love is stronger than death.

In the same way King David defeated Goliath on behalf of the entire world, Jesus defeated Satan on behalf of the entire world. In same way Solomon was the wisest king in the history of Israel Jesus is the personified wisdom of God that dwarfs all human wisdom. In fact, the three primary offices of leadership in the Old Testament—prophet, priest, and king—all point to Jesus Christ, who is the Prophet, the Great High Priest, and the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All of this is just barely scratching the surface of how Jesus fulfilled the entire Old Testament. We could go on and on and on.

So how do you put on the 3D glasses to see how the entire Old Testament points to and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ—or as Jesus said in today’s passage—“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations”? Luke answers that as when it came to the disciples, Jesus “opened their minds to understand the scriptures”—so we ask Jesus to open our minds (and hearts) to see in the scriptures how God always has and always will reveal unconditional love in Jesus Christ for the entire world, including you...and you can respond to God’s unconditional love by repenting (turning back to God) and receiving forgiveness for your sins, because God has already turned toward you.

Amen.