

There is something dynamic about good news. You finally got the job you were hoping for. Your baby has been born. You accomplished something great and are being recognized. It’s almost impossible to keep a lid on good news like that. These days, good news travels faster than ever. I remember watching a baseball game and seeing someone in the stands catch a home run ball and in the same moment, reach into their pocket, pull out the cell phone and dial someone—“You’ll never guess what just happened...”

Good news wants to move and be shared. It has an outward direction. Good news that really means something to you lights a fire under you and gets you communicating. Don’t you love it when people get in touch with you because they have good news to share? It’s refreshing.

The Christian Church has not just good news but the greatest news ever to share. Jesus Christ has died and come back to life—that we might belong to God and live forever with Him. This news ought to animate everything the Church does. It ought to be in the minds and hearts and on the lips of every believer in Jesus. But is it? And if not, how come?

When we first see the disciples in today’s gospel lesson, they are hiding out behind locked doors, trying to figure out what the news of Jesus’ resurrection meant. Gripped with fear and silenced by doubt, they had barricaded themselves away, when all of a sudden, people they know and trust show up with incredible news—they had walked and talked and broken bread with Jesus. Jesus was alive! The good news had broken into their little safe house—and it would break in again in mere moments when Jesus would appear, standing among them, speaking His peace to them, showing them that his risen body was flesh and bone. The words Luke uses to describe their reaction are: startled, terrified, happy and surprised. But there were more surprises in store that day.

Their resurrected, once-again-living Friend began to teach them. And what a lesson it was. Again, to use Luke’s words, Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. He taught them that everything in the Bible has to do with the message of repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins. And furthermore, Jesus said that they were going to be the ones to deliver this message not just to the people of Jerusalem, but to all people. He reminds them, “You are witnesses of these things.” That’s a lot to absorb in one evening. But today’s first reading reveals that the disciples learned their lesson well.

First of all, the Holy Spirit and the good news of Jesus’ Easter comeback had propelled them out of hiding; out from behind their four walls and into the public eye. Second, you can see how Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. Peter makes a quick sketch of Israel’s history and identifies Jesus as the Christ—the promised Messiah. And finally, the message of repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins comes through loud and clear—Peter is preaching exactly what Jesus taught him to preach. This is some of the most beautiful language in Holy Scripture: “Repent then and turn, to have your sins wiped out that a time may come when the Lord refreshes you and sends Jesus, whom He appointed to be your Savior...” If you

keep reading in Acts you quickly see that there would be consequences for this bold proclamation—but it was a price the apostles were willing to pay, because the news was too good. It was too important and too life-changing to leave it unspoken.

So let's review: good news wants to move and be shared. We Christians have the best news ever. The resurrection direction is outward. What does it say about us if we are not sharing this news with our world?

I'll tell you what it says: it says that in many ways we are just like Jesus' disciples, huddled behind locked doors, keeping faith a private matter in our little safe house, afraid of admitting our allegiance to a crucified, humiliated teacher.

But now in the hearing of His Word Jesus comes to you and me. Walls, doors and locks that we construct mean nothing to Him. He comes give you peace. He comes to open your mind. He comes to lead you first to repentance, to that turn-around, that change of direction away from sin and to lead you to forgiveness. Your Savior can offer you full pardon and release from your sins because He is alive to do so. He paid your invoice by suffering and dying on the cross. But He lives. In the words of the classic Easter hymn: "He lives to silence all my fears; He lives to wipe away my tears; He lives and grants me daily breath; He lives and I shall conquer death!"

You see, the glory of the resurrection is that it eliminates fear. Jesus' saving work for you means that you never have to fear paying an eternal cost for your sins. They've been paid for in full. Jesus' saving work for you means that you don't have to fear death. Jesus goes with you through the valley of the shadow of death, and your baptism unites you with His resurrection. Jesus' saving work for you also means that you need not fear how people are going to react to the greatest news ever. If someone rejects the saving word, they're not rejecting you—they're rejecting Christ! And if someone is moved by the good news to faith in Christ—think of what it would mean to be a part of that! Now in the hearing of His Word, Jesus enlists you to carry the greatest news ever into the places you live your life. You have a story that is uniquely your own to tell about Jesus' working in your life and the difference He has made. He has chosen you for this purpose. He is on your side to help you. Good news wants to move and be shared. We Christians have the best news ever. As you've seen, the resurrection direction is outward. Let's go!