

Do you often find things that no matter how hard you try, you just can't understand them. For example, you look at a tall skyscraper, such as the Comcast Center in Philadelphia, and wonder how did they do that? I Think about all that is involved – the foundations, the support, the electrical system and especially the plumbing for all the bathrooms. Personally, for me, it boggles my mind. I simply cannot comprehend how an architect does it. And, they are scheduled to build an even bigger one – the tallest in the US.

Another example – and I don't want to get too political – is some of the things that our government does or wants to do. No matter how hard I try, some things that Congress and the Senate just don't make sense. I think that they have no basis in reality. For example, in Philadelphia and other cities the government wants to tax beverages with sugar in them, like Coke. On the surface, it might make sense to some, but who do they think they are telling us what we can drink, and in some cases, eat? I just don't understand.

If we look at our Gospel Lesson for this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Easter we see a group of people who also just didn't understand – the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. Turn with me to John 16:16-22.

The setting is the last night of our Savior's life. His disciples had been with him for only three short years, and during that time, while Jesus had taught them many things and shown them his power and authority. He also on numerous occasions told that he would be going to Jerusalem, where he would be arrested, tried and crucified – but then he would rise from the dead. And each time the disciples did not understand what he was saying.

So now, on this last night, he had washed the disciples feet, identified his betrayer, predicted Peter's denial and celebrated the Passover with his disciples and at the same time instituting the Lord's Supper.

For some, you might need a little bit of background. As you know there are four Gospels. Matthew, Mark & Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels – which means “same eyes” or “view together” – in that they cover basically the same thing — basically our Savior's birth, as well as his three year life and ministry here on earth.

The record of John on the other hand, while it has some of the same elements as Matthew, Mark and Luke, focuses more on the last week of our Savior's life. This record of his last week that is recorded for us covers about half of the Gospel of John – as it focuses on the reason for our Savior's coming – that he would die for the sins of those who believe in him, and that he would be raised from the dead.

That is part of what we see in our Gospel lesson as Jesus is telling them what is about to happen. Again, it is the last night of our Savior's earthly life. In a very short time he would be betrayed and arrested, tried and crucified. However, we do know the end of the story as we shall soon see.

But as we look at our Gospel lesson he is trying to prepare his disciples for what is about to happen – which again, they did not understand.

We see first of all that Jesus tells them what will happen – John 16:16 (READ). Immediately we see that they really didn't understand what Jesus was tell them. In fact, they talked among themselves saying that they really didn't know what Jesus meant – John 16:17-18 (READ).

It is at this point that Jesus explains what he meant, but we know that they still did not really understand what he was saying – John 16:19-22 (READ).

Now, I don't know about you, but if I was there I probably would not have understood what Jesus was saying – first, you won't see me, then you will see me, you will weep and be sorrowful, but then you will be filled with joy. The disciples were not Rhodes Scholars, they were simple, everyday men – they didn't understand at all – AND, I don't think a Rhodes Scholar would have either.

To me, it sounds like one of those teasers that you used to see in the newspapers and you had to try and figure out what the phrase was. Or one of the phrases on “Wheel of Fortune” – but I think you get the idea.

Thankfully, for us, we have the full Gospel record before us and we know exactly what happens. In a short while they will leave the upper room and go to the Garden of Gethsamane, where Jesus will begin to pray and the disciples will fall asleep.

Soon, Judas would come along with the religious leaders, where he will betray Jesus with a kiss, and the religious leaders will take Jesus, have a mock trial, after which they will turn Jesus over to Pilate who will scourge him and then crucify him. Again, however, we know the end of the story, so we can understand what is happening.

While this was going on the disciples, with the exception of John, will flee for their lives and hide because they thought the religious leaders would come after them next. And Peter, in fulfillment of what Jesus told him, would deny his Lord three times and then weep, as Jesus had said.

Only his mother Mary, her sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene, along with the Apostle John would be at the Cross. All the others were no where in sight – in fact, they were afraid for their lives and so they were in hiding.

Indeed, they would be very sorrowful and sad. Even though Jesus had told them what would happen to him on many occasions, they still did not fully understand. Again, they were simple men, not religious scholars – so they either were not familiar with or didn't understand the prophecies that had to be fulfilled — or, as I believe, their hearts had not yet been open to the truth of the Gospel.

When they went to the tomb that first Easter morning, they went there to finish anointing the body for burial, as it was late on the Sabbath, which was Friday, when they took Jesus down from the cross and they didn't have time to properly prepare him for burial. They certainly did not expect to find the tomb empty. The immediate response was that someone had stolen the body of Jesus. The Angel of the Lord told them otherwise, but not all the disciples were there.

Again, as we compare Scripture with Scripture, we see that even on the night of the resurrection day, they were still hiding – even after the report of the women and those who had seen the empty tomb.

We see this in the Gospel lesson for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Easter from John 20:19-20: *“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”*

Here we see the fulfillment what the Lord Jesus had predicted only four days before. They still did not fully understand that Jesus was really alive – that he had risen from the dead. Further, they did not fully understand

the implications of the resurrection – what it meant for them and for the future of what would be known as the Christian faith.

In the upper room the disciples, and probably some of the women who had followed Jesus and were at the cross were in a locked room – hiding. They were fearful that the Jewish leaders would come after them next – after all they were the chosen disciples and some of the followers of Jesus Christ.

But in the midst of that fear and sadness Jesus suddenly appears in the midst of them. The idea that is conveyed is that he went right through the door. Remember, Jesus now had a resurrected body – a spiritual body – something that all Christians can look forward to. You can read about this in 1 Corinthians 15.

And as we read: *Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* Their sadness had been turned into joy – just as Jesus had told them a few days earlier – when they didn't understand what he was saying.

Now, we know what happens next. Jesus commissioned them to take the Gospel to all the known world – as we read in Matthew 28:18-20: *“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.”*

And also in Acts 1:8: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

The power to do so came through the Holy Spirit – the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead and lives in the hearts of every Christian. All in fulfillment of what Jesus had told them on the last night of his life, shortly before his death for us and our salvation.

We must then ask what does this mean for us as Christians about 2000 years later? There is much. The most important thing for me in all this, and I hope for you, is that we see that we serve a God who is faithful and fulfills His promises.

There are literally dozens of prophecies in the Old Testament concerning our Savior – his virgin birth, the place of his birth, Bethlehem – his betrayal, arrest, crucifixion and resurrection. Dozens of prophecies were fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As I have mentioned before, think about Psalm 22, which accurately describes what happens during a crucifixion – written over a 1000 years before the Romans even invented it as a means of execution. And in this same Psalm we read of what actually would happen at the Cross.

Listen to just a few verses – Psalms 22:6-8: *“But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people. All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, “He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”*

And Psalms 22:16-18: *“For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.”*

Again, all this was fulfilled at the cross. We serve a God who we can trust. What He says He will do – He does. We do not serve a fickle God, such as Allah who changes his mind. We do not serve a vindictive God. No, we serve a faithful God, and part of that Godhead – the Lord Jesus Christ, who just a few hours before his death for us and our salvation told his disciples what would happen to them – even though they didn't understand, but shortly they would.

So, if you are looking for someone to trust ... to put your faith in ... look no further the God of the Scriptures and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead for the sins of those who believe in him.

They finally understood and so do we, because God has revealed it to us – that there is only one God and one Savior – the Lord Jesus Christ.