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## DEVOTION – Luke 24: 45-48

Accompanies [“Complete Joy Over Guilt: Marta & Wojtek's Story”](#)

**“<sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup>He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup>and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things.”**”

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We mentioned earlier that so many are living in spiritual darkness. And we know that there is only one true light for that darkness– the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet in so many parts of the world, and also in our country, there are plenty of what we might call “false” lights that people look toward to light up their darkness. As we heard in the video from Marta and Wojtek, they lived in a very different culture in Poland, where you were a member of a congregation by virtue of where you lived. In their situation, their darkness was being lit by a false light that leaned heavily on guilt brought on by the Law to motivate people in their faith life. The Law is a part of the message of Scripture, but it's spiritually dangerous to leave things there. The gospel *must* accompany the Law. The Law in one sense produces guilt and a sense of helplessness, because we can't obey it perfectly. The gospel, though, is the solution to that guilt and helplessness. It's the true light for the darkness that people are in by nature.

As we heard in Luke's gospel just now, Jesus himself, while appearing to his disciples after his resurrection, reminded them of what the Scriptures said about what he, the Messiah, would do: he would suffer and die to pay for the sins of the whole world, and then rise again. He had accomplished that mission. After Jesus ascended into heaven, those disciples, with the help of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, would start the process of sharing that gospel message with all nations. But it of course didn't stop with their work. It continued as generation after generation were fed with that gospel and shared it themselves. People just like you and me. Human beings would for the rest of time need to hear the Law to convict them of their sinfulness, and then hear the healing message of the gospel, which reminds them that Jesus took care of that sin on the cross.

That message is life-changing, just as it was for Marta and Wojtek. It was also life-changing for us, even if we heard it from when we were young children. Jesus said to his disciples: **“You are witnesses of these things.”** All of us are. And as we seek ways to reach others through building relationships and lovingly providing what they need, we get opportunities to share Jesus with others who are still in that spiritual darkness. Like the disciples, God the Holy Spirit works within us every time we take in God's Word and Sacrament to grow our faith and further enlighten our minds and hearts with the message

of Christ. The more we take it in, the more we want to share that good news with others.

As I mentioned earlier, you may not be directly involved in opening up a new mission at this time. But our work together as a synod gives us the privilege to support others who are doing that mission work. The “100 Missions in 10 Years” initiative seeks to gather additional support, in both prayers and offerings, to start 10 new missions for each of the next 10 years, while also facilitating up to 75 ministry enhancements to congregations like the one we saw in the previous video. That seems like a lot, but as we know from experience, nothing is impossible with our gracious God. With such efforts, people like Marta and Wojtek, and so many others, perhaps even some from other countries who have come to our country to live, can hear that gospel message and be moved from guilt to joy in their lives.

Maybe you also noticed something else in the video: Wojtek, even though he had yet to really grow in his knowledge of Scripture, brought his sister with him to instruction classes. In our culture these days, religion tends to be an “off-limits” topic in our conversations with others, especially family who may not be churched. I found it very interesting that Wojtek thought to invite his sister. What a great example of showing love to those we are close to! Because he thought to invite his sister, she too ended up learning the gospel truths and joining that congregation, just as he and Marta did. Family and friends that you know and are close to might also be walking in spiritual darkness. They already know you and trust you, so don't be afraid to talk to them about how important your faith is to you. Share the message of Jesus with them, especially when they are struggling with difficulties. Then they too might be brought from spiritual darkness to light, and experience complete joy over guilt.

*Written by Rev. Thomas Mielke, WELS Christian Giving Counselor. Used with permission.*