

We are in the third week of our worship series, *Living the Resurrection*. On Easter day, Resurrection Day, we remember, we commemorate this extraordinary event in the history of the world. We acknowledge that it happened, but what do we do with it after that? Do we say, "Okay. That happened. It's great," and then go back to our lives as if nothing has changed? This worship series is based on the premise that the answer to that question is no. What comes after matters. How we live our lives in light of Jesus resurrection matters.

While people have been celebrating Jesus' resurrection for almost 2000 years, what that means for us today may be different than it has been at any other time in our lives on this planet. On Resurrection Day, Jesus was back, but things were different. They would never be the same again. The same is true for us. We're together, both in person, at the same point of time and space, and with others at other times and places. We are alive, and yet things are not the same, and we grieve for the ones who are missing.

Many of us in the church refer to today as the Third Sunday of Easter. Often we can think of that as the third Sunday in the Easter season that takes us to Pentecost, which is very true. Yet, at least through this week, we can think of it in another way. As we prepare for our Scripture reading today, it is still the same day. Easter was early in the morning at the tomb. Last week was John's interpretation of later that day, then a week and a day later. This week is Luke's version of that same encounter Easter evening. Like hearing two different witnesses of the same event today, their recollection is not exactly the same, but both give us insight.

Our passage begins just after the narrative of the walk to Emmaus. Two of greater group of disciples are walking home toward Emmaus talking about all of the things that have happened over the last several days. They encounter a stranger who walks with them not seeming to know what has just happened in Jerusalem. So, they proceed to tell him. Then, Jesus, because it was Jesus even though they didn't recognize him, he leads them through the Scriptures explaining the necessity of it all. When they arrive at Emmaus, they invite Jesus to stay and eat. It is in the breaking of the bread that they are enlightened and see Jesus with them. He suddenly departs, and they rush back to Jerusalem to share the news with the rest of the disciples. They are in the process of doing that when today's Scripture passage begins, **Luke 24:36b-48**. Hear the word of the Lord.

*36b Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

*37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost [or a spirit]. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."*

*40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

*44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."*

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

## **The word of Life.**

### **Thanks be to God!**

Last week's and this week's Scripture passages can seem so similar, but there are differences. In this case there are details that are important to Luke that aren't featured as strongly in John. At least one of the big differences is that last week Thomas demands to see things about Jesus. He says, "Unless I See, I will not believe." If you recall, Thomas isn't even in the room during time of this passage in Luke. Perhaps, we can understand his frustration even more when we realize that Jesus actually commanded the people there. "Touch Me!"

We can all agree that it's a bit strange that Jesus can appear and disappear at will, get into and out of locked rooms, but still have this physicality. It's like Jesus says in effect, *I know you need this proof that you are not dreaming. That the others were not speaking non-sense before. You are not merely seeing what you want to see. I am not a ghost. I am real.*

This was actually a big deal for me in my journey toward faith. Is all of THIS we do and think in the church a result of people merely grieving their executed leader and friend? No, how do we know? This passage is Luke's answer.

According to Mark Hoffman of United Lutheran Seminary, "Among the ghost tests in antiquity, one could check extremities where bones were evident (namely, hands and feet [anything not covered up with clothes]), make sure that a person's feet were touching the ground, and show one's teeth and eat food. (WorkingPreacher.org, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/third-sunday-of-easter-2/commentary-on-luke-2436-48-4>)

Through these things Jesus is announcing that he is real. This allows the disciples to ground their' faith in the reality of Jesus' presence, in the concreteness of his being. This, of course, is vitally important, not just for them, but also for us. It is the foundation of everything that we do here. We have to accept the physicality of Jesus' resurrection or the rest of it is moot. It's pointless. Otherwise, it is all vapor that will burn away in the morning sun.

The way that we've had to do things for the last 13 months can **feel** like vapor, a mist that we can't get ahold of, fog. We need something to hold onto, that concreteness, even if it's more figurative. We need reassurance of the reality, that it's not just an illusion, that it's more than just words, or going through the motions. We like things that we can touch.

It's like raising money for this very building, carpet for the Sanctuary, repairing the roof of the historical church. Often it can be easier to raise money for those kinds of things because you can see it. You can touch it. We need money to fund other aspects of ministry, but they're less tangible than these buildings. The buildings are great because they do help us. Give us a place to gather to worship, to learn, a place to do the behind the scenes work

to prepare for ministry, to feed people. Yet, they are also merely things, tools, important tools, but tools that we haven't been able to use much in the last year. The purpose of these tools is to help people have that concrete connection to God. The same thing that Jesus was doing for the disciples in that room.

It actually follows the same pattern as with what happened on that walk to Emmaus. The disciples encounter Jesus, but they don't understand what's going on. They know that this entity they are encountering is connected to Jesus, but they think he's a disembodied spirit. They find it all confusing and doubt what they're seeing. Jesus then explains what's going on by offering to let them examine his body, reminding them of the cross. Then, he eats with them. Ghosts don't eat, right? He shares the meaning of the Scriptures with them, demonstrating their importance by showing the disciples, his followers, how everything they have learned before the crucifixion led to this moment. Then, finally, he sends them out as witnesses of these events to share this news. True, Jesus did not "send" the people from Emmaus, but that didn't stop them from hurrying back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples. (Lucy Hogan, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/third-sunday-of-easter-2/commentary-on-luke-2436-48> )

But how does that help the rest of us who cannot experience this firsthand, as Jesus shared with Thomas last week, "those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29)? How can it be concrete for us?

This is where we enter the story. We come to this place of worship, however we access it, bringing our doubts, our confusions, our fears, and our misunderstandings. Then, through worship we encounter the risen Christ. We do it through music, through prayer, through imagery, through each other. The Spirit in me greets the Spirit in you, every time, in this space, and across time and space.

When we read the Scriptures and hear the interpretation opening them to see how they work in our lives, we are offered an explanation. We hear a proclamation of the good news of what God has done and what God is doing. As Jesus did with those first disciples, we hear the promises of God continuing to show up for and with people who keep walking out of the story that God's writing for them that God's writing for us. So when we hear of terrible things happening in the world like another shooting, another tragedy, another example of how much hate there continues to be in the world, we can receive a fresh serving of hope. We can be refreshed by knowing that even in our own personal tragedies, or own personal failures, that God will continue to show up, will continue to write us into the story, no matter how many times we try to walk out of it.

We may be reminded of the physicality of Jesus and his sacrifice when we take communion or share a love feast, even if it has to be at a distance. And through this worship, the Spirit brings a fresh serving of knowledge and understanding or perhaps remembering what we've forgotten through the opening of our hearts and our minds. Then, we are released to go, sent out in Jesus' name into the world to be witnesses to share our lives, to share this amazing news of God's Love.

Jesus tells us to touch and see. In Texas they'd say, "All y'all, grab hold and hang on. Grab hold of me and see! As if your life depended upon it. As if your hopes will be found in it." Grab hold of the reality of Christ, and you will see not just him but yourself too. See your path, your future, your mission, and your reason for being. Here's one of the ironic things about our faith. The upside down ways of it, as preposterous as it may seem. The best way to grow in your own faith is to reach out and help another person grow. The best way to confirm your own experiences of Jesus is to help someone else see. The giving is never one way. Maybe that's why we call it

sharing our faith. It is a two-way connection. We are built up as we build up others. I can absolutely testify that this is just how it works. We receive life, power, encouragement when we give it to others.

And that my friends is Living the Resurrection.

Amen!