

Ordinary Welcome

Luke 24:36b-48

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It is easy to get sidetracked about what is of importance. For some of us, it is clear that we have to figure out menus, decorations, table settings, etc., for special celebrations and gatherings. However, over the last year or so, we have done little to no entertaining and/or partying. So all that stuff has not happened. We still have to eat, and so we have figured out the priority of food in another way...delivery or pick-up or cooking for the week.

The practice of eating together in different places is nothing new to our family. For many years, I was an interim minister in places other than home. So for Easter Sunday, we had to figure out how to spend time together. My girls and Bruce did the technical side of things so that we could be on FaceTime. We decided how we could set computers on the table so that they were almost face-level. It was my task to get the recipe for Tres Leches Cake to everyone. A favorite dessert, we have done that for years, so we all had Tres Leches cake at all of our locations! It worked well, and it still works in this pandemic time in which we are living. But often, the simpler the better: come to the table, let's visit and share important times.

You have to love the simplicity of the scripture for today from Luke 24, where the disciples are gathered and Jesus comes to stand among them. For some reason, they think they have seen a ghost! After all that's happened, why would they not think of Jesus first? Jesus kind of introduces himself, and then he simply asks if they have anything to eat. Jesus took it and ate broiled fish in in their presence. Surely this is the living Christ!

I wonder how we would react in similar circumstances. Do we recognize Christ for who he is and was? We are persons who have seen him in action through the persons with whom we share this life.

The gospel of Luke emphasizes the physical reality of the resurrection, according to Jin Young of Colgate Rochester Divinity School. "Jesus' resurrected body has flesh and bones, Jesus feels hungry and eats a piece of fish in their presence." (1) It seems that the important thing for us to notice in this scripture is that Jesus is with the disciples, "in the midst of them," and he essentially calls out to them to be a part of his reality and their understanding of the real nature of God's love in and for us all.

From this small story, we see the amazing truth that is of God. Jesus has fulfilled everything that was said about him in scripture. He ministered to people everywhere and he called his disciples together in his name. He was crucified, died, and was buried, and was then raised from the dead on the third day. So Jesus appearing among the disciples and simply greeting them and asking for something for breakfast is just part of the truth, isn't it?

I wonder if this is not the heart of the forward movement of the gospel. Jesus has preached and taught, and we have listened over the course of many years. We know that God's love is made known through Jesus, through his life and death and resurrection. Jesus offers up his hands and feet for the disciples to see and touch. This is real. (2) What an amazing story! So where, then, do we go from here?

Jesus surely calls us to take up the mantle of the Christ-like life! We are invited into lives of hospitality and joy. Maybe that is why we have railed against being home so much in the last year---we long to be among God's people, our people, to find that sense of connection once again. Jesus walks among

us, wherever we are; but we need and enjoy the sense of connectedness in his name.

The gospel of Luke carries the message of the reality of the resurrection. As such, that person wants us to see and feel that Jesus stood among the disciples, just like “old times” and he asks for something to eat. For some people, it is just not right that Jesus even had to ask! Bring on the food! But maybe at this point, the disciples were so stunned—because who had ever been raised from the dead and then came into their presence? Faithful they were, but amazed into silence is likely what happened on that morning.

And so here we are, faithful people in our time and place. What would we bring to such a time as this—realizing that Jesus stands among us? I love the idea that most of the actions by the disciples and witnesses after the resurrection were simple, ordinary actions. Yes, they take on the divine quality of welcoming Jesus, the Risen Christ, but is this not the way we should be acting and thinking? The gospels show us the stories of Jesus, the ways of faithfulness, and the love of God in Christ Jesus.

We need to be ready and willing to see Jesus, to welcome him into our lives, even if it means sharing a cup of coffee or a piece of French toast or whatever! To think that Jesus stands among us, in spite of all the brutality and hatred that has been blasted at him in those last days, is to bring huge blessings to us as witnesses once again. What do you think that simple welcome to Jesus would look like in your life? It is this, my friends: If we are willing to speak a word of joy and thanksgiving to Jesus, for what he has done for us and for all those who come after us, then we are willing to follow the risen One.

It is joy, it is the act of those who understand welcome rather than exclusion. It is hope rather than the dismal thinking that all is lost. That word of welcome, the simple act

of turning your life toward Jesus every day, is what will make the difference for us all. The hospitality of the gospel is radical stuff in this world! But remember the disciples—that simple act of realization that dawned upon them on that day of discovery is what ignited lifetimes of service and care, lifetimes that have learned how to design peace and joy, hospitality and a belief in the Risen One, who comes in the name of the God of Israel, Amen.

- (1) “Commentary on Luke 24:36b-48.” Jin Young.
www.workingpreacher.org
- (2) “Luke 24:36b-48” www.churchofscotland.org