



CATHEDRAL *of the* INCARNATION

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND



Sermon on the Third Sunday of Easter

April 18, 2021

*Luke 24: 36-48*

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How are we doing on this side of Easter? How is the world doing? Does it all seem transformed, or does it seem pretty much the same? Has our point of view changed? Our has the varnish of a newly resurrected lord already begun to peel? Do we think to ourselves – oh right, it’s still Easter. Alleluia!

Wherever you may be on the spectrum of Easter hope and spiritual forgetfulness is OK. The important thing is to check in with yourself and acknowledge where you are.

On these Sundays of Easter, the Gospels bring us back again and again to accounts and glimpses of Jesus following his dying and rising. They give us a window into how the resurrection struck the early disciples of Jesus – and if we are open to it – these stories give us some clues about where life is to be discovered in the paschal mystery.

In today’s story...Jesus himself stood among the disciples and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself.

Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”

But they didn’t get it at all. Jesus strands among them again and they are filled not with faith and hope and love – but disbelief. This is so important.

I think it is very easy for us to be filled with disbelief and to think – well this is the best I can do. To look around and see others allegedly believing that these stories have the power to transform – the power to make the resurrection real – but to feel numb about it all ourselves. To feel like it is all hearsay. It's someone else's experience, not mine. To stand in front of the risen Christ in disbelief.

Luke's Gospel reminds us that feeling of doubt, of disconnection and an inability to see what is right in front of us - is par for the course in discipleship.

The movement from death to life may leave us shocked and at a loss for words.

It is in these times that the actions of the risen Jesus help us to see where the grace of the resurrection may be found for us.

As his friends struggle to understand what's going on following the news of the empty tomb – Jesus shows up himself, in a familiar place offering a familiar greeting. He shows them his wounds and asks them for something to eat.

He doesn't shine light out of his head or levitate or reveal the mysteries of the universe. He does what a friend would do when they have been through a harrowing ordeal.

He shows them what happened to him. He invites them, in a moment of tenderness to touch the wounds they see. In Sarah Ruden's new translation of the Gospel's Jesus says – “Feel me over and see...It's me, in person.”

In the story as we have it from Luke – the disciples have no response to this invitation. We have only stunned silence.

And then Jesus asks them for something to eat. This moment gets me – Can you feel the awkwardness?... It's as if things have gotten maybe too intense too soon – everyone is just looking at each other and so eventually Jesus breaks the silence: “anybody have anything to eat?” How about them Yankees! It's so awkward.

This moment, as awkward and strange as it is - is a real clue about what it means to be in a relationship with God. It is not all that complicated. It's about revealing wounds and sharing food. It is about embracing, not hiding, our humanity and responding with care to what is right in front of us.

We see this clearly in the Gospel. Living on this side of the resurrection requires vulnerability and generosity. It's characterized by intimacy.

Jesus presence among his people makes no sense without the sharing of wounds and food.

Think of a time someone has really shared what is going on in their life with you. A time when someone really trusted you with an important story. A time when you felt really honored to listen. What did that mean to you?

Perhaps you left that encounter with a sense of resurrection. Perhaps witnessing the vulnerability of another person sharing their story gave you the strength to share your own.

That's what happens in the Gospel.

After sharing the wounds and the food...

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things...See the wounds, eat the food, become his witnesses. AMEN.