

Luke 24:36b-48

Jesus appears to the disciples, showing them his hands and feet, and eating a piece of bread to prove that he is not a ghost. Then he shows them how he has fulfilled the Scriptures, and he calls them to proclaim repentance and faith in Christ as his witnesses.

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them 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 in their joy 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." 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.

Schema of this resurrection story:

Encounter - failure to recognize

Explanation - interpreting the resurrection through the lens of the scriptures

Eating - Jesus eats fish

Enlightenment - the disciples eyes are opened, and they recognize

Exit - Jesus departs

We are able to enter the story in the same way. We come with our doubts, confusions, fears and misunderstandings. Each week, through worship, we **encounter** the risen Christ. In the reciting of the scriptures and the preached word we are offered **explanation**, proclaiming the good news of what God has and is doing. We may eat with Christ, breaking the bread of the resurrection in the Eucharist. The Spirit brings **enlightenment**, opening our hearts and minds, setting our hearts afire. Finally, the **exit** should be ours for Christ has sent us out into the entire world to be witnesses to this amazing news.

COCU33B.Easter 3B Readings

The resurrection is a lived reality that has the potential to change us and our world - if we only believe, open ourselves to the change it brings, and proclaim its life-giving power through our lives. This is the clear message of all of the readings: because of God's work in our lives, we should live differently, and we should be witnesses to God's grace and love. It is joyful and challenging and transforming - because it requires us to live, speak, think, and act like Christ. The Acts reading describes how Peter, after healing the lame man at the Temple, bears witness to Christ and calls his listeners to turn back to God. The Psalm speaks about God's goodness to God's faithful ones, and exhorts people to turn back to God. John's letter teaches, in a clear and direct way, that following Christ has to change how we live, with sin no longer being welcome in our lives, and Christ's righteousness being the pattern by which we now live. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus challenges his disciples, who are now witnessing him as the Risen One, to believe and to be witnesses that call others to repent and believe and find life in Christ. The implication this week is that, as all of these biblical witnesses teach, we are also called to become witnesses to Christ, changing our own lives to live as true Christ-followers and calling others to repent, believe, and find life. The task of witnessing to the resurrection, historically, has been one motive behind colonialism, Christian triumphalism, and even Christian violence against people of other faiths. This is tragic and horrifying, since nothing could be further from the Gospel of peace and grace that Jesus lived and taught. Even today, in a mistaken belief that we are somehow "witnessing" to Christ, Christians have engaged in crusades against evolution, climate change, Islam, abortion, homosexuality, and even social justice. Yet, the economic, political, and social implications of the resurrection have largely been ignored. However, when we place the resurrection, and the teaching that accompanies it in the New Testament, in the context of Jesus' message of God's Reign, we see that the resurrection is far more than just a promise of life after death. Rather, it is a challenge to everything that brings death into our world, and a call for all people to live differently - in ways that bring life to others. This means that we, who seek to follow Christ, need to begin by repenting ourselves, as John directs, seeking to remove sin - whatever would bring injustice and death into our world - from our lives, while embodying the same grace and love that Jesus showed. Then, through Christ-like lives and words, we are able to call others to a new, loving, gracious, and just way of being. The true power of the resurrection is felt not so much after death, but here and now when God's life is brought to all who are dying under oppression, poverty, persecution, and hatred. (*John van de Laar, Sacredise*)

Acts 3:12-19

Immediately after the healing of the lame man, Peter addresses the crowds, explaining that the power to heal the man came from the same Jesus that they had crucified. Peter then calls the people to turn back to God.

Peter addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. "And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,

Psalm 4

A plea for God to remember God's faithful servant, and an affirmation of how God cares for those who trust in God. A call for people to stop chasing lies and turn back to God.

Answer me when I call, O God of my heart!
You gave me room when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

How long, you people, shall my honour suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? Selah. But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful; the LORD hears when I call. When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. Selah

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD.

There are many who say, "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!" You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound.

**I will both lie down and sleep in peace;
for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.**

1 John 3:1-7 *(The author of 1 John is conventionally called "the Elder" in scholarship)*

Because of God's love, we are God's children, and we have hope that when we see Christ we will be like him. Therefore, we resist sin and seek to live in righteousness as Jesus is righteous.

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

While many of the background details of the Epistle are lost to history, we have some clues in the text that some dissenters were trying to lead the Elder's own community astray (see 1 John 2:26). And perhaps these dissenters were trying to get them to turn their attention away from Jesus and to safeguard their identity in something or someone else, even to the point of forsaking Jesus (see 1 John 2:28). But, as is clear in 1 John, there is no safer place to be than in the family of God, and there is no other way to enter this family than through Christ the Son.

The Elder offers support for why this community might face rejection from others (including the dissenters): "The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him" (1 John 3:1b). Where is your attention?, the Elder asks. Is it constantly looking to the world for legitimation, security, and accolades? Are you just trying to "fit in"? Do you simply want to be like everyone else? Follow their regulations for acceptability? If you do that, you will miss what is happening right in front of you - God is calling out to you, saying you are Mine, with overflowing love.

The NRSV translates the "what" of "what love" in 1 John 3:1 based on the Greek word *potapen*, which has a literally meaning "of what country?" In that sense the Elder is saying - from what foreign country did this strange, amazing love come, that we could be called children of God? Possibly the Elder used *potapen* in its more generic sense of "what type" or "what kind" - in this case it would mean something like, what type of love is this - what amazing love that calls us children of God? In either case, the Elder shows wonder, joy, and bewilderment that God would treat sinners so graciously.