

Sunday 14th April 2024
Easter 3 (B)

Liverpool Parish Church

NT: Acts 3.12-19

NT: I John 3.1-7

G: Luke 24.36b-48

“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.”

It has often been said “that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” I am sure that is equally true of a woman’s. Food although a basic necessity, which is sadly all too scarce for many in the world for us in the west it is a central element in our lives filling much of our time if not in preparing, cooking and eating but in shopping or if we are fortunate deciding where to eat. So much of our relational and social life is centered around food, the very act of sitting at a table and eating together can be the place where relationships are formed, and lives changed. The breaking of bread together the most basic of human act being transformational and, in our Gospel, today and last week the most simple act of sharing food being the key to the transformation of the disciples. Transformed from living in fear to being witnesses of the resurrection.

Cleopas and his companion are telling the other disciples how Jesus appeared to them on the road to Emmaus when Jesus, again, shows up out of nowhere, interrupting their conversation. “Peace be with you,” he says. They see him, they hear his voice, but they don’t recognize him. They “thought that they were seeing a ghost.” They know Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried. They also know that dead men don’t come back to life. This can only be a ghost, a spirit without a body.

They are unable to recognize the holiness that stands among them. They are continuing to live, think, and understand in the usual human categories. They have separated spirit and matter, divinity and humanity, heaven and earth. Whenever we make that separation we close our minds, we deny ourselves the resurrected life for which Christ died, and we lose our sense of and ability to recognize holiness in the world, in one another, and in ourselves.

With Jesus’ resurrection, however, God shatters human categories of who God is, where God’s life and energy are to be found, and how God works in this world. Resurrected life can never be comprehended, contained, or controlled by human thought or understanding. Jesus’ resurrection

compels us to step outside our usual human understandings of reality and enter into the divine reality.

That new reality begins with touching and seeing, flesh and bones, hands and feet, and broiled fish. Jesus said to his disciples, “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.”

Flesh and bones, hands and feet, and broiled fish are the things of creation, the natural order. The resurrected life of Christ, it seems, is revealed in and through the created order. It is not, however, bound by the created order. Rather, the resurrected body and life of Christ unite the visible and invisible, matter and spirit, humanity, and divinity.

On the one hand Jesus has a real body.

On the other hand, it is not subject to the natural laws of time and space. It's not one or the other. It's both. It is a new and different reality. The degree to which we have allowed ourselves to be bound by the created order is the degree to which are unable to see resurrected life and holiness in this world. We bind ourselves through our fears, our sorrows and losses, our runaway thoughts and distractions, our attachments and addictions to things, people, and even beliefs. Sometimes it's our unwillingness to allow or trust God to grow and change us.

The resurrected life of Christ reveals that all creation and every one of us are filled with God, with his holiness and divinity. Nothing can bind or supersede the grace that is given us through resurrection: unconditional love, unconditional forgiveness, unconditional life.

That is, I think, one of the most difficult things for us to see, believe, and live into. It is, however, the divine reality into which we are invited, not at some future time and place but here and now. Christ our God longs and desires to open our minds to understand the scriptures, to understand all that has been written, spoken, and revealed about him in whatever form that happens and has happened. That's what Jesus did for the disciples and it's what he does for us, but this is not an academic or intellectual understanding.

That the disciples are witnesses does not mean they now have all the answers. It means they now have the life Jesus wants to give them. They are witnesses based yes, on what they know, but also on who they are and through their relationship with the risen Christ.

The resurrected life is not acquired it is received. It happens when we risk unbinding ourselves from the usual ways of seeing, living, and relating. This is not a rejection of the natural order. It is allowing the natural order to open to and reveal something more. That's what happened for the disciples with Jesus' hands and feet, with his flesh and bones, and the broiled fish. The disciples saw and recognized something about Jesus and in so doing they saw and recognized something about themselves, holiness. It happens for us too.

Those are the moments when Christ opens our minds to understand. They are moments of awe and wonder that leave us in sacred silence. In each of those moments the one who is fully alive and risen, the Christ, is calling us to see and recognize him, to join him, and to discover our new life. This is the authentic self we long to become, the self that we already are, and the self we are becoming. This is resurrected life.

Let's not lose this moment. Let's not put this text behind us. It is much too easy to come here each Sunday, listen to the gospel, hear, for better or worse, whatever those preaching have to say, and then return to life as usual. Don't let that happen. Your life is too important to let that happen. "You are witnesses of these things," he says to us. Tell it. Live it. Become it. The resurrected life is yours. You are witnesses.

The reading from I John tells us that 'we are God's children now'. Not when we are less doubting and braver witnesses – but now. Wherever we are and whatever our situation, we are called to tell the story of resurrection hope and the God who draws near to us. 'Now' is an important word in the Scriptures. Now a time of change, a time of choice, a time of turning away from wrong and walking as children of light. It doesn't seem to matter if we are old or young – the time is now. We don't have to grow up or be perfect or know more about God. We don't have to be expert speakers or even particularly talented people. We just have to be ourselves and ready to trust in the promises of God and the resurrection power of Christ. We are never too old nor never too young to be witnesses to the resurrection hope and the transforming presence of Jesus. The encounter with Jesus described in Luke is one of those transforming moments. It is a kind of sacrament in reverse. Jesus is fed by the disciples, who then are called to be witnesses to go and share their food – both spiritual and practical – with everyone they meet. We are also now witnesses to the promise of Scripture and to a life in touch with God's life even in difficult situations. Now. Post resurrection, the gospel is for all people and for now. It involves choices about our lives. Now. It is noticeable in Acts that the first effect of the Spirit's outpouring is shared lives, shared possessions and daily sharing of bread and prayer in each other's homes. The

disciples build lives that are lived in the 'now' moment – uncluttered and ready to act and speak and live in ways that demonstrated the 'nowness' and nearness of God.

As Easter People, are we ready for God's 'now' are we ready to meet the resurrected Christ in the breaking of the bread are we ready to lead lives transformed through the power of the resurrection and to be witnesses now?

Fr Bill Addy