

## **Sermon April 14, 2024**

### **Luke 24:36-48**

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.

### **Beloved**

Breathe – Be Still and know I am God!

The disciples really hadn't had time to breathe. So much had happened between that wonderful meal shared with Jesus and the moment when the women discovered the empty tomb.

When things happen that quickly... when you don't breathe... when you don't stop and process what's happening around you... you are more likely to make mistakes. You respond in fear or out of trauma. Maybe you even run away.

Now the disciples today are not running away, but they are leaving town. There is no indication that they plan to live into Jesus call to discipleship, even though they are fully aware of what has happened.

They are walking on the road to Emmaus, grieving what was and gossiping about what they know. Maybe they just didn't want to get to get involved... following Jesus had become risky business.

History is cluttered with examples of people, good Christian people, who decide not to get involved, even when the evidence of horrors is right in front of them. Who choose self-preservation over doing the right thing.

In the 1994, Rwanda experienced horrific genocide over 100 days. Over 90% of the population was Christian. Where were all those Christians, as men, women and little children were slaughtered? Some stood by, helpless and afraid to get involved. And many others actively participated – more people died in churches and parishes than anywhere else in the country.

Sometimes the church fails through silence, sometimes the church just fails. Who knows how much damage has been done by Christians who have failed to live by the ways of Jesus... failed to act for justice and mercy. Nazi Germany, filled with Christians who either were silent or complicit in the face of the Holocaust. Priests who abuse children. The ongoing horrors in the Middle East that keep escalating, as drones fall and take away life. The rise of Christian Nationalism in our country that rejects the Sermon on the Mount as too weak. Good church going men and women who lie and cheat at work. Ordinary people who leave the safety of sanctuary and forget all that they hear Jesus say to them.

When Jesus walked down the road towards Emmaus he wanted so much more for us.

God wants so much more for us.

In that Easter moment, when the whole world changed, a new movement was born. A movement that God wants so much to be successful. A world filled with "Jesus people." And who are "Jesus People?" Ordinary people like you and me, who try to live life like Jesus did... People who are committed to the way of Jesus... People who are bending their lives to become more and more like him. People who get involved or stand up in city squares and

proclaim "Never Again." People who are lifted up by the God of the Exodus and Emmaus because that God is always in the midst of things.

Ordinary people like you and me.

God wants us all to be "Jesus People"- agents of reconciliation and understanding, of healing and hope, of love and mercy. Jesus people" make the world a better place.

And Easter people can do remarkable things. After the resurrection, Peter found a new voice and a new connection to God. Today we heard how he was able to heal someone who was born unable to walk. Jesus People find that we are able to accomplish things beyond our imagination because we know that Christ is on our side!

Some think of Easter as something in our future – the fulfillment of life after death... the promise that we will be resurrected just as Jesus was. But the fact is, Easter is happening here and now. Easter is happening all around us. Easter people follow Jesus, knowing that God is already victorious... God is unstoppable. Not that God will be these things; God already is... Our God is victorious and unstoppable and embodies love.

We need to live our lives as Jesus people, reflecting the promise of Easter, every single day.

Yes, the risks are great... and the bigger the danger, the greater the risks. No matter what risks we face as we follow Jesus, we can be assured of one thing - we are God's beloved children.

"Peace be with you..." Jesus tells them, in the same words that he said to the other disciples. In the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the Spirits peace, Jesus presence is revealed and the road to Emmaus is no longer an escape route. It is the pathway to faith.

The road to Emmaus leads us to go wherever God wants us to be - to join Jesus in his compassion for our broken planet... his passion for peace, his

hunger for justice, his thirst for mercy. When we welcome the excluded and embrace the victim, we are doing exactly what God wants.

May the God of Exodus and Emmaus lead us today. Amen