

Receiving Preaching for Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd Pastor Scott Trevithick

Date: April 18, 2021 Year B, 3rd Sunday of Easter

Text: Luke 24:36b-48

Title: The Real Jesus

Focus: Luke emphasizes that the resurrected Jesus is real—that he can be seen and touched and known and that he is hungry and eats. The disciples are changed by this encounter and Jesus commissions them to be witnesses. When has Jesus been most “real” to you?

Gospel Reading: Luke 24:36b-48

^{36b}Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look 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.” ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then 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.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”

Parlor Games—Charades and “Would You Rather?”

“Back when I was a boy. . .” When I was growing up and also now with my own family, now and then when friends were over for dinner or when a larger part of the family came for a special time like Thanksgiving or over Christmas, we’d play Charades after dinner.

You know Charades: you divide your group into two or more teams and then come up with titles of songs, movies, books, or TV shows that the other team has to act out with. Without using words, you’re signaling or gesturing to give clues to your team to guess the title of that particular thing, which could be a . . .

- TV show: *make box with hands.*
- Book: *Open hands as in opening a book*
- Song: *cup hands around face as in projecting a song*
- Movie: *hold hands to mimic a camera lens and filming motion*

When our family gathers now, the game may be Apples to Apples or Pictionary or Balderdash. They are fun and a little bit silly. . . Another type of game like this is “Would You Rather?” in which you pick up a card which poses a question: “Would you rather do this or do that?”

1. Would you rather have more time or more money?
2. Would you rather be able to talk with the animals or speak all foreign languages?
3. **“Would you rather give up the ability to see or the ability to hear?”**

Luke’s Text and “Would You Rather?”

Reading this story from the end of Luke’s gospel—chapter 24 is the last chapter in the book—made me think of that game “Would You Rather?” and that question about giving up the sense of sight or the sense of hearing.

- **“Would you rather give up the ability to see or the ability to hear?”**

I thought of that question about one’s senses because Luke so pointedly emphasizes the physical nature of this resurrected Jesus. In this interaction with the disciples, Jesus can be known or experienced or encountered through one’s physical senses.

Before we get into the text in more depth—a word or two to orient us: **We are in Luke’s gospel.** The gospel writers have different perspectives and tell the Easter and resurrection stories a bit differently. It’s especially important to pointing out that we’re in Luke because it’s different from the last two weeks: The specified gospel texts from the Lectionary were from Mark for Easter Sunday and from John’s gospel last week.

Another thing to note for orientation is the *timing* of the story. This is the day of Jesus’ resurrection. The preceding story in Luke is about Cleopas and another disciple who have encountered Jesus as they walk along the road to Emmaus.

That story takes place “that same day. . .” meaning the day of Jesus’ resurrection, and then this story from today follows back-to-back after that one, which we call the Road to Emmaus. It is very late on the day of resurrection.

In the Road to Emmaus story, they don’t recognize him as Jesus— they only know him as this stranger along the road. When they get to Emmaus, Jesus walks ahead as though his is going on. They urge him Jesus to stay and have a meal with them. It is during the meal that Jesus takes to role of host. He took bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And then their eyes were opened, and the recognized him. (Luke 24:30-31).

Cleopas and this other disciple are so excited that—even though it was the end of the day—they got up and went back to tell the other disciples who were in Jerusalem. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning in within us on the road, when he was opening the scriptures to us?”

And when they arrived, they excitedly told the others, “The Lord has risen indeed. . .” (Luke 24:34) and they told them what had happened on the road and how they recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread” (v. 35).

That’s how we get these stories back-to-back. They could be understood as two parts of the same connected story.

Back to today's story and Luke's focus on sensory information—on experiencing Jesus with your senses:

- In today's passage, Jesus says ³⁹"Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see. . ."

This resurrected Jesus is *real*. He can be touched and seen. He shows them his feet and hands (v. 40).

He is real. He is not a ghost. (Two times *ghost* is mentioned.)

He is hungry and asks for food. Does a ghost ask for food? Does a ghost have flesh and bones, asks Jesus (v. 39)?

Another interesting detail: Luke says the disciples offer him "broiled fish." Not poached or pan-seared, but broiled. I don't think "broiled" or the method of preparation necessarily means anything in particular, except that the detail again emphasizes that this Jesus is really real, and he really ate with them. The broiled fish detail is an indicator of one's indelible memory—*Yes, I remember, we had broiled fish that day and Jesus ate it with us.*

Where is Jesus most "real" to you?

If this risen Jesus was real to the disciples and could be touched and seen and known by them and they were changed by that encounter, then I want to ask, "When has Jesus been most "real" to you?"

These back-to-back stories—the preceding one of Cleopas and the other disciple on the road to Emmaus and then today's reading of the 11 who encountered Jesus suggest a couple settings in which Jesus is most real or can be encountered:

- **In a meal—in extending or receiving hospitality.**

Has there been a time when extending or receiving hospitality, in intentionally welcoming others, has helped you to touch and see the real Jesus? Perhaps it has been when sharing a meal with others from Good Shepherd. Maybe it was the sense of community or connection fostered from a "Tables of Grace" meal—when you had the time and opportunity to open up to someone and to be vulnerable in a way that you might not have were it a coffee conversation following worship. You connected and you sensed a kinship on the basis of shared faith.

Do you remember the "Multicultural Sunday" worship and fellowship time we had? It seems so long ago—Pre-COVID—but it was January 19, 2020—a little over a year ago. In worship, we were enriched by a variety of music—mostly mariachi with Jose and Ian and others in their mariachi band. At the close of worship, I remember Rowan and Andi and Ruta gave a Latvian blessing. The celebration continued in Shepherd Hall. People were wearing traditional dress and we tried all these wonderful foods representing people's different heritages.

Jesus became real to Cleopas and the other disciple in Emmaus during the sharing of a meal. When we share something of our own heritage and appreciate

something of someone else's, isn't that being "real" with each other and valuing the variety and diversity in which God created us?

- Another setting suggested by these stories about where we encounter the real Jesus is not just a meal, but **the meal, meaning in the sacrament**. In recent weeks, we've reflected on how Jesus reveals himself to us in the sacrament—around the table. On Maundy Thursday, we talked about how Jesus offered the bread and cup—offered himself to everyone around the table:
 - To Judas, who he knew would betray him.
 - To Peter, who he knew would deny him.
 - To the others, who he knew would scatter and abandon him.
 - Jesus reveals himself to us at this table in self-giving love. We come to this table not because we've earned some status or right, but because Jesus extends himself by grace and chooses to welcome us.
 - Jesus is "real" to us at this table and is revealed in ordinary things of bread and wine at the table and the water of the baptismal font.
- **Another place suggested by these back-to-back stories is that Jesus becomes "real" to us in the opening of the scriptures.**
 - When has Jesus become real to you in reading and reflecting on scripture?
 - The first reading today from 1 John 3 describes our relationship with God. "See what love God has given us, that we should be called children of God. Beloved, we are God's children."
 - By the way, please see the video of Ms. Becky reading the book *God's Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu which is drawn from the theme of this text. The video was circulated by email on Wednesday and is posted on our YouTube channel.
 - Drawing from that passage as one example, how have you been changed, how is Jesus more "real" to you when you know yourself to be, by God's grace, a beloved child of God?

We are invited into these stories ourselves. When Jesus was host at the table in Emmaus and blessed and broke bread with Cleopas and the other disciple, "their eyes were opened and they recognized him." They were so excited (is that the best word to describe how they had been changed?) that they immediately went to tell the others in Jerusalem.

The others there could look, touch and see that this was the risen Jesus, as real as could be. May we, too, encounter Jesus and experience him as real and life changing as well.