

“Flesh and Blood”

In our scripture passage today in Luke 24, 36 -48, we have another Gospel account of Jesus’ appearance to the disciples after the resurrection. The issue is: will the disciples be led from fear and doubt to worship? When Jesus enters among them, he says ‘Peace be with you.’ Let us focus on what this peace means for us today.

In the first part of his appearance, Jesus must present proof of his resurrection. Naturally, the disciples were “startled and terrified.” They thought they were seeing a ghost or spirit. They either misunderstood the nature of the resurrection or thought that a spirit other than Jesus was deceiving them.

The doubt about Jesus arises in other post Easter appearance stories. Last week we had the story of the doubting Thomas. Stories are needed to tell and convince future generations that Jesus truly rose from the dead. We learned last week that examination of biblical texts was critical to teaching and preaching to future generations how they can believe that Jesus rose from the dead even though they never saw him.

The first proof of Jesus’ resurrection is the invitation to examine his hands and feet. He was inviting the disciples to examine those parts of his body that were

not covered by clothing, that he was solid flesh and not an apparition. A spirit would not be substantial. It would not be flesh and blood.

Even after this presentation of his hands and feet, they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement. A second proof is needed. The second proof Jesus is not spirit is because he eats in front of them. The reference to fish recalls the feeding of the five thousand. The meal here has an apologetic purpose. It provides us and the disciples with a verification that Jesus is real. In Luke 8:55, when Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus, he instructs her parents to give her something to eat. Acts 10:41 distinguishes the eyewitnesses to the resurrection as those who “ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.” Once there were those who could say, “We saw him.” The preaching of the Gospel does not rest on fiction or fantasy but on the experience of the Apostles.

As I reflect on the experience of Jesus proving to his disciples that he was resurrected, I think of my experience each day with my cats, Kitty Cent and Ru Paw. Each morning, about 6 am, Kitty Cent meows at my bedroom door, scratches on it and wakes me up. Ru Paw is with him and they will not let me go back to sleep. I go downstairs and try to read and do work at my worktable.

The cats, however, will not usually let me get much work done without visiting with them first. They lay across my books or my computer. I rub their

heads and tummies, which they enjoy, and sometimes they give me a love bite on my hand. This can go on for about a half hour. They then want me to feed them wet cat food, so I get up and do that (ironically, most of the flavors they eat are fish and you can smell it!)

My cats' presence with me each morning reminds me that they are real; they are real flesh and blood. Their needing to eat reminds me that they are alive and real as well. They are not pictures or holograms or apparitions or spirits. They truly exist.

As part of the witness the world of Jesus's resurrection, in vv. 44-46, Luke returns to the theme of the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection and fulfillment of scripture. Fulfillment is tied to the resurrection. Jesus reminds the disciples that he had told them these things while he was still with them. In Luke 18:31, we read, "Everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished." In Luke 22:37, the Gospel writer says, "This scripture must be fulfilled in me." In fulfillment, Luke lists not only Moses, and the Prophets but also the Psalms. Luke's whole Gospel is devoted "to the things that have been fulfilled among us (Luke 1:1).

Earlier in Chapter 24, Luke reported that the risen Lord had "opened" the eyes of the two disciples in Emmaus (v.31) and opened the scriptures to them (v.

32). He once again uses the same verb in verse 45. “Then he opened their minds to understand the scripture.” The message of the scriptures is not self-evident---one’s mind must be opened to it, and they are rightly understood only in light of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

We are called to be witnesses to the Christian message in the world. The uniqueness of the Easter message is that it invariably changes the lives of those who find themselves touched by it. We need to remember this message as we deal with the fears we have today. Many are afraid of what will happen when there is a verdict in the George Floyd trial being held in Minneapolis. Tensions are high. These tensions have been made even greater by the police killing this week of Duante Wright, a black man. This killing happened in Brooklyn Center, a community not far from Minneapolis. Protests and unrest have occurred.

If Derrick Chauvin is not convicted in the George Floyd trial, there are concerns about rioting and unrest. A failure to convict brings worries that there will never be justice for African-Americans in this country’s justice system.

We need to speak to this situation as Christians with what Jesus said, “Peace Be with You.” We must remember that Christ is here through his resurrection and his Holy Spirit to give us peace. As we consider his resurrection, we focus on the fact that he was human, that he was flesh and blood when he arose. We need to

Rev. W. Wallace Culp, III
Latimer Memorial United Methodist Church
April 18, 2021

think of all the players in the George Floyd trial as human, not just statistics. Let us not think in terms of us versus them. Let us not think in terms of Black Lives Matters versus Blue Lives Matters. Let us realize that all involved in this case are human beings, flesh and blood, and all are hurting and in fear

Our focus at this time should not be to exercise judgment, God is the ultimate judge and we need to leave that up to him. The message we take from our scripture today is to preach that all should repent and receive the forgiveness of sins that was made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Pray for that continued opening of our minds to understand the scriptures so that we may know best how to bring justice to our society and to make the changes which are needed.

And we take the example of breaking of bread as evidence of one's humanity. What the scriptures show us is that our humanity, our ability to understand each other, comes when we sit down together and break bread. We gather to share our joys, our fears, our likes, our dislikes, and what we really want out of life. As we move towards a time when we can safely gather together with others in the sharing of meals, let us come together with those who are different and break bread together. Just as Jesus used eating to show he was real and human, our eating together with others will help us show our humanity to each other. This being together goes a long way in working out our fears and worries.

Rev. W. Wallace Culp, III
Latimer Memorial United Methodist Church
April 18, 2021

We may not have ever seen Jesus in the flesh. As we close, though, let us reflect that Jesus' living presence is tangible today in soup kitchens, around the kitchen table and around the altar table. We see him in the "the breaking of bread." The most convincing proof of the resurrection is the daily testimony of the faithful that Christ still lives on and the work of the kingdom continues. Let's make sure that work continues, even in the scariest situations. Let's not let our doubts or fears overcome us, but always let the presence of Jesus lead us to worship him and praise him for the peace he has given us.