

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, April 14, 2024

“ Broiled Fish Commission” based on Luke 24:36b-48

“Have you anything here to eat?” I love this question of the resurrected Jesus to his confused and startled disciples. Jesus, in his resurrected body wants to show that he is not a ghost, so he asks for something to eat. This makes me wonder, will we have our favorite foods in heaven? Who would have think that watching Jesus eat a piece of broiled fish bite by bite would mark a new beginning for the disciples?

This story is for anyone who struggles with their faith or has a hard time believing in the resurrection of Jesus. If that's the case, you are in good company. The disciples, who had the privilege of walking with Jesus and listening to him teach about his upcoming death and resurrection, still had a hard time believing. But the resurrection appearances in the Gospels, like the one we have today from Luke 24, remind us that Jesus put on a resurrection body and hung around on earth for 40 more days until his ascension to the right hand of the Father.

If you recall, just before this in Luke, some women returned from the empty tomb and shared what they heard and saw about Jesus being raised from the dead, but the men thought it was an “idle tale. They didn't believe the women's testimony. This was their first mistake. Then in Luke 24:13-35, Jesus joined two of the dejected and grieving disciples on the road to Emmaus. He opened the scriptures to them about the Messiah, how he had to suffer and die and rise again, but they didn't recognize Jesus... that is, until he broke bread with them. Then their eyes were opened, they saw that it was Jesus, and they quickly returned to Jerusalem to tell the others. That's where our Gospel picks up today.

Jesus mysteriously shows up where the disciples were gathered... saying “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified... thinking Jesus was a ghost. Then Jesus shows them his hands and feet... the wounds from Good Friday... and he invites them to touch him. Luke tells us that in their joy they were disbelieving and still

wondering. They are thinking this is a good thing, but I still don't believe it is you, Jesus.

We too may have times of great joy because of our faith and times of doubt and disbelieving. Jesus knowing their confusion asks...

“Have you anything here to eat?”

Jesus, in his resurrected body, is hungry. They gave him a piece of broiled fish. And he took it and ate it in their presence. Imagine watching Jesus eat a piece fish bite by bite. How long did it take? How did it taste?

This meal changed the trajectory of the disciple's lives. Jesus was alive. Yes, Jesus is the resurrected one, but here, he revives the flesh and bones of his followers. It started with the Word of God. He enters into a Bible study about everything written about him in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms... and how the Messiah was to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day... and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in Jesus' name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. And that the disciples are to be witnesses to these things.

How can we apply this story to our lives today? Can you relate to the disciples in their fear or confusion? Who among us has this faith thing completely figured out? I continue to learn every day what it means to be a baptized child of God and how to share my faith with others. It often comes in small packages. A visit, a letter, an opportunity to help a neighbor. You never know when God will spot you up.

This story reminds me of the four movements we have in church every weekend. We gather just as we are. We open the Word. We share a meal, Holy Communion. And then we are sent out to be Jesus' witnesses in the world.

When we gather, we come as we are. We admit that our lives aren't perfect... that they are messy. We come with our fears and doubts. We come with our guilt or shame over things we have done and left undone. We come with all our grief. We then confess our sins and hear the words of forgiveness.

Then we open the Word. Like Jesus did... he opened the disciples minds to understand all the scriptures. We hear about a God who put on a body and walked the earth. A God who was fully human and fully divine... who experienced things like pain and hunger. A God who had compassion for those who are hurting. We see how Jesus showed grace and proclaimed forgiveness of sins through the cross.

Then we share a meal of simple bread and wine. A meal where Jesus is present in, with, and under the bread and wine. It is a meal that changes the trajectory of our lives. It is a meal of forgiveness and wholeness. It is a meal that makes us brand new. It reconciles us with God and one another. It is like power bars for our daily walk with the Lord. Eating the body and blood of Jesus moves us from fear to trust, doubt to joy, from disbelief to power, and from grief to witness.

At the end of the service we are sent out to be witnesses. Through our words and deeds, we are invited to demonstrate and usher people into lives of repentance and forgiveness that we ourselves live into. Amen