

## 3rd Sunday Easter B 18

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April 15, 2018

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.  
Amen.

You are witnesses to these things. Twice in our readings we are told; 'you are witnesses to these things'. So what are the things to which we are to give our witness? Are we to give witness to the extraordinary events the people witnessed in Acts when Peter and John healed a man born lame and unable to walk? Are we to give witness to the fact that Jesus, who died and was resurrected suddenly appeared to the disciples and others in the house they were staying? No, we are to witness to the events of Easter, but more than that to the fulfillment of the scriptures as given to them and to us in the Law of Moses and the Prophets.

So when Jesus came to stand among them, why is it they were gathered? Our text comes following one of my favorite accounts of Jesus showing himself after his resurrection. It took place on the evening of Easter. A couple of the disciples were making their way back home to a town called Emmaus, a few miles from Jerusalem. On the way they were discussing the events of the last week, from Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and death on the cross and now to the rumors that he was alive. As they walked and talked Jesus joined them on the road, but the scriptures say they were kept from knowing he was Jesus. Along the way we are told that Jesus opens up the scriptures explaining how the prophets fore told of the Messiahs suffering before he would enter into his glory.

Then as they arrived home, they invited Jesus to eat with them, then at the meal in the breaking of the bread we are told their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus. Looking at each other they said; 'were our hearts not burning within us as he opened to us the scriptures?' Then they immediately got up and returned to Jerusalem to tell the disciples everything of their

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encounter with the risen Christ and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. It is into this discussion, to this gathering that Jesus came and stood among them saying; 'Peace be with you'. Which startles and terrifies them thinking Jesus might be a ghost.

Many of us may not blame them for being startled or terrified, after all would not most people be frightened seeing what they perceive or think might be a ghost. Interestingly discussion about whether ghosts are real has been a part of my conversations lately. Last week when Debbie and I were on vacation visiting her sister in Rapid City, we also had the opportunity to spend time with our great niece. Bailey is 11 years old and fascinated with haunted places and with ghosts. She had books of the famous haunted houses and hotels, especially out there in her area of Rapid City and Deadwood and the towns of the old west. They were complete with stories of individuals who saw the ghosts and with drawings of what they experienced. They were as we expect, translucent drawings of the bodies, but as it is with ghosts, their feet are never on the floor and they point to where they are going by using their arms and the sleeve of their coat. Most of the time ghosts also are seen as frightening and scary, never in conversation with individuals, not in trying to enter act with or prove they are real. They just haunt and frighten people away.

This is the picture and the image many of us have of ghosts and so it was with the disciples when Jesus showed himself to them as they were gathered in the house that day. Jesus tells them; 'Peace be with you, see it is I, myself. I am not a ghost as you might think, see here are my hands and my feet. Touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.' Then Jesus showed them his hands and feet, the skin and bones of his body as if to prove he was there in the flesh.

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Jesus offers them proof as he reminds them of the reason he is there. 'You are my witnesses'. You are my messengers to tell the nations all about the things which you have witnessed. Jesus then begins to remind them of all the things he taught them while he was with them. Jesus also opened up the scriptures reminding them of all the things the Law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms had to tell them about the Messiah. Yet during the crazy days the disciples had just been through, watching their teacher and friend arrested and killed it is easy to consider they had forgotten all the things Jesus told him. Even after telling them three times that he would have to suffer and be put to death but that he would be raised from the dead and now they have proof that he had been raised from the dead, just as he told them. It is to this gathering, to their shock and joy and grief, Jesus comes to them to remind them of the calling and purpose they have now been given.

There is another reason I really like Luke's account of the risen Christ showing himself both to the followers on the road to Emmaus and in this recording of Jesus coming to stand among them here as they gathered in that place. Jesus comes and meets his followers and his disciples where they were. He meets them on the road as they head home from a confusing and disappointing and disheartening time in Jerusalem. Jesus meets them in the places they have gathered to share stories and to share their grief at the apparent death of their friend and leader.

It is to this gathering where Jesus continues to reassure them that he is with them in the flesh as Luke writes. *"While in their joy, they were disbelieving and still wondering. Jesus said to them; 'Have you anything to eat?' they gave him a piece of fish and he ate it in their presence."* Here Jesus knows of their struggles to believe that He is present with them does not chide them or

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reprimand them for not believing, but gently helps them along by eating a piece of fish in their presence.

Jesus proves to them he had been fully resurrected and restored to life. Jesus then helps to move them along as he opens up the scriptures and commissions them to be witnesses to all these things. Now we too have been commissioned to be witnesses to all these things which have been made known to us. But what is it that we are to give witness to? How are we to give witness when we like the disciples are also in joy yet still disbelieving and wondering at all that has taken place.

We are able to give witness because like the disciples and followers, Jesus comes to us where we are. He comes to greet us on the road and in our homes, at our workplaces and here where we gather so to be reminded of all the scriptures have to say about our Savior. It is here as we gather for the meal and Christ is made known to us in the breaking of the bread and in the pouring of the wine. Here we come to see that Christ has been raised from the dead to the glory of the Father just as he told us it would happen. It is here as we gather in our disbelief, wondering if it is all true that Jesus makes himself known. It is here we ask for and receive forgiveness for our sins and the promise to life with our risen Lord. It is from here we give witness as we proclaim, 'Alleluia, Christ has risen. He has risen indeed. Alleluia.'

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

*Pastor Michael*

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**Luke 24:13-37**

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?' He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.' Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?' Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.

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**Luke 24:38-48**

They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

**Jesus Appears to His Disciples**

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.'