

St. Christopher's Episcopal Church
The Rev. Cara Spaccarelli
Luke 24: 36b-48
April 14, 2024

Sometimes there is something right there, you see it all the time, staring you in the face, and yet you don't see it, and then you do, and then you can't believe it took you this long in life to see it.

Like that pancakes are named that because they are cakes made in a pan

That BOGO is not just a sale term; it means Buy one, Get one.

The Target brand, Archer Farms, is a play on archer and target.

This one I just learned. When you use the blowing hand dryers, you are supposed to rub your hands together to disperse the water so your hands dry. I just thought it was one of those environmentally-friendly products that didn't work. Nope I was just doing it wrong.

As I prepared for the sermon this week, I had this experience once again. I never realized that Jesus doesn't do any healing miracles after the resurrection. Think about it – much of his ministry he was healing people's ailments. With a touch of a hand. A word. And then he rises from the dead, and no more of that. Yes, there are miracles – his resurrection being a big one, his appearing/disappearing to the disciples, his ascension up to heaven . . . but they aren't like the miracles he once did. Only one miracle post-resurrection is reminiscent of his prior miracles, he helps the disciples catch a lot of fish (just like he did when he was first calling the disciples).

The description of Jesus' post-resurrection existence is very physical. Jesus shows the disciples his hands and feet. He invites them to touch him. He eats with them. It is also clear that Jesus is not the same as he was before. One, he can walk through doors, and two, they don't recognize him right away. Perhaps that's why there is so much emphasis on eating and touching – they want to be sure to emphasize that the risen Christ was not the same as before, but he also wasn't a ghost.

Now those among us who have some church history or theological history stored in the recesses of our mind may dust some of that off remembering the early church debates around the bodily resurrection. The doctrine of the bodily resurrection – that Jesus really did raise from the dead, and it wasn't just a feeling of Jesus' presence among the disciples – went up against some serious doubt and objections, not just from unbelievers but from faithful followers. The early second-century bishop Ignatius warned Christians to flee any who denied the reality of Christ's resurrected body in favor of a purely spiritual Jesus. Most scholars would attribute the emphasis of the post-resurrection on Jesus' physical body to trying to secure the win of the bodily resurrection debate. The debate continued though and the theologians of the 4th and 5th century had to continue to affirm the reality around Jesus' human nature and divine nature both pre and post resurrection.

Now we don't debate this, at least publicly, today. Yet its remnants continue in the tendency for most Christians to be more comfortable thinking about Jesus in spiritual terms rather than physical, material terms. What I mean by that is to be comfortable thinking of the Jesus who operates in the realm of the unseen. The Jesus who helps our feelings or internal senses – giving us a feeling of peace, promoting a sense of compassion, a feeling of companionship in grief. The Jesus who hangs out in heaven with God. Even the Jesus of 2000 years ago – not that that is a spiritual Jesus but it is a distant one rooted in our imagination and far from the physical present. None of this is wrong; it's just not the full picture. A picture that the gospels go out of their way to describe.

What the resurrected Jesus does is what humans do. Hang out with their friends. Talk. Walk. Eat broiled fish. Resurrected life is life that looks a lot like our everyday life. Infused with the divine.

I don't know why the early church leaders fought so hard for the physical resurrection, but the lasting outcome of affirming the full humanity of the resurrected Jesus is that our humanity – our physical, tangible existence is not cast off as negligible to salvation. As separate from resurrection, as if resurrection is something that only happens in the unseen, intangible world.

To insist on the reality of the resurrected body is to insist that we accept our present reality as the place where transformations of ultimate significance take place. (repeat)

That is a lofty assumption.

Until you remember how Jesus lived into his resurrected body. He talked. He walked. He ate broiled fish. There cannot be anything less lofty than having a piece of broiled fish. Seriously.

The emphasis in resurrected life is not the healings Jesus can do with the touch of his hand or the miracles that are past our human capacity – turning water into wine, making five fish and two loaves of bread feed 5000 people. The emphasis on resurrected life is living with the sense of the miraculous embodied in the everyday acts of life. It is the emphasis in Jesus' resurrected life; it is in the emphasis in ours.

What would it look to live as if this is true? We say that in baptism we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus – what does that look like in the physical, present reality?

In the small things. In the ways we go about our everyday acts of living. As we move into this Easter season, it is an opportunity to pay attention to the everyday human experience with the sense that it is infused with the divine. In this Easter season, what about practicing resurrection in the small things? Engaging in small practices, small experiments in living the every day with a sense of the miraculous life happening. Taking a walk paying attention to the burgeoning life emerging around you. To breathe in and out, in and out, with an awareness of the life within you. To eat mindfully – appreciative of the nourishing of your body. To spend time with fellow faithful followers, aware of the nurturing of souls that is happening there. In this way, we practice resurrected life, we are grounded in resurrected life, we live resurrected life.

It may not seem like much, until we look and see and remember, that it was these small practices of living that the miracle of Jesus' resurrection was first made real to his disciples.

As his disciples in this time and place, that miracle of resurrection lies before and within us still in our everyday human existence.