

Luke 24:36-48 3 Easter Pastor Bill Uetricht 4.15.21

My son Micah and I are a lot alike, not totally alike, but quite similar. One of the things that we share is our primal love of food. My wife thinks that we are a bit caveman-ish when it comes to our consumption of food, but that is neither here nor there.

Micah, when he arrives at our place, after a several hour trip from Chicago, very frequently heads directly to the refrigerator. When he stays with us for a few days and we come back from some kind of outing, he often also goes to...the refrigerator. Now like me and others from the *nice* Midwest, he is relatively polite and doesn't in either of those occasions ask, "What've you got to eat?" But you know when he's standing there, that is what he is thinking. To be truly human, especially as the two of us are truly human, is to ask that question: what's there to eat?

That is precisely what Jesus asks in Luke's gospel today. The disciples are talking about what has just happened on the road to Emmaus where Jesus showed up on their journey while they were trying to get away from all the pain that occurred when Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem. They are now just processing Jesus' presence with them in the scriptures *and particularly* the breaking of bread, and he shows up to them again. And as he does, he greets them with shalom, this great sense of well-being.

The disciples are startled by what they see. They think they are witnessing a ghost or a spirit, as the Greek literally says. In Biblical days, there was the belief that the spirit of a dead person often appeared to people after they first died. Some of you who have lost loved ones will report similar kinds of experiences. Luke is busy telling us that the resurrected Jesus is not a spirit in that way. He is a real body, real physicality, which is why the story moves to Jesus' question, "Anybody got anything to eat?"

Jesus is not a spirit. He is a real human. “Look at my hands and my feet. Touch me and see me. Use your senses to apprehend my physicality. A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And then in his primal humanness, he seeks food. He stands at the refrigerator wondering what can fill an empty or maybe even a not-so empty belly.

Back in the seventies, back before I was married, of course, I was smitten a bit by the popular singer, Olivia Newton John. You oldsters among us might remember one of her classic hits, “Let’s Get Physical.” Truthfully, when I hear this song now, I say, “That’s pretty shallow.” But the title is getting at what I think Luke is getting at today: “Let’s get physical.” Jesus is not an idea. Jesus is not a spiritual essence. He is not warm feelings. He is not formless hope. The resurrection of Christ is not a reality that is distinct from life as it is really lived, from life that is lived in bodies. The resurrection of Christ has everything to do with this life, with what appears to be the inconsequential, the ordinary, with bodily reality.

The resurrection of Christ is not an invitation to sit around, enduring life, waiting for the really real when we float off to heaven. The resurrection of Christ is experienced in ordinary life lived in ordinary bodies, among ordinary people, in the midst of ordinary pain and suffering. The resurrection of Christ is about the transformation of ordinary lives, and may I say, an ordinary *world*. Resurrection is not just about private hope. It is about a world where the poor are fed, the left out are let it, science is respected, the scourge of a too-real virus called Covid is gone. It is about a world where race, skin color, income status, gender, sexual identity—real life aspects of our humanness—are not detriments to our full humanity, but essential components of it.

Let’s get physical. And let’s realize that the raised Jesus is right in the midst of our physicality. Sometimes I think that people perceive

the religious journey to be about escaping real life and real people. They use the word “spiritual” to describe that escape. While I think that word has very significant meaning, I don’t think its meaning has to do with escaping life. I think it has to do with going deeper into real, physical, ordinary life.

Many Christians talk about the materialism of our age and the way it misshapes our journey. And they are right. Our preoccupation with stuff is so destructive. But here’s my theory. What drives our materialism often is not a concern for real physical life, but what is perceived to be an *ideal* life. We seek the ideal home, the ideal body, the ideal family, none of which exist, except perhaps in magazines, on television home shows, or in pornography. We seek after an idea. An idea is not physical. It’s not material. Let’s get physical. And maybe if we did we wouldn’t be so preoccupied with all our stuff. Maybe we would more content with ordinary work, ordinary gatherings, ordinary homes, and, yes, ordinary people and families.

I think it’s fascinating how Luke depicts the disciples when Jesus appears to them today. He tells us that they are frightened, doubtful, disbelieving. If you read any of the resurrection narratives in the gospels, you will note that among those who experience the appearance of Jesus there is almost never certainty. There is always doubt. David Lose says this: “For while the four gospels have many interesting variations in their account of Jesus’ resurrection, they are absolutely consistent on one thing: no one believes the good news of Jesus’ resurrection when they first hear it. No one. And that includes Jesus’ own disciples, the ones who were closest to him and spent the most time with him. In fact, that level of disbelief starts with the disciples.”

The disciples were real live people. The disciples are just like us. Doubt wasn’t foreign to them. It is not foreign to real live people. I

think what Paul Tillich says about doubt is so important to understand. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. It is integral to faith. A threat to real faith, which by the way is not belief, but trust, is not doubt, but rather certainty.

As we live the very physical lives that we do, our biggest problem is not when we show our vulnerabilities, when we struggle, when we doubt. Our biggest problem is when we know too much, when there is not room for doubt in our opinions, our politics, our religion. Trust me, the religion of certainty has done more harm to people than has the religion of doubt. When you know too much, you exclude too often, you get too rigid, you often get angry, you become a pain to other people. Doubt in real physical life is a good thing. It is a sign that you are living not on the basis of your own certainty, but on the basis of faith, trust. Trust makes it clear that it all isn't about you—your certainties, your opinions, your little club that you are a part of.

And note this. It is in the midst of the disciples trying to get away from it all, in the midst of their struggles, in the midst of their conversation, in the midst of their doubts that Jesus appears and says, "Peace be with you." In the midst of all the realness, he shows up bringing what calms their fears, centers their conversation, embraces their humanity. And then he asks if they have any food that they can share with him.

In a few minutes we will ask the same question of Jesus. Do you have any food you can share with us? And he will say, "Yes!" You can eat my body and drink my blood. You can share in me, the real physical me, in other words. This me will include my wounds, your wounds. It will welcome your doubts. And it will stand at the refrigerator with you wondering if there is anything to eat. And trust me. There will be plenty to eat, enough for you, for Jesus, and the whole world.