

RCC in the Word

Luke 24.36-49

Week of April 2

It is hard for me to imagine the emotional spectrum Jesus' disciples experienced on that first resurrection Sunday. Grief. Fear. Confusion. Guilt. Disbelief. Joy. As the day unfolded, news and testimonies of a missing body AND a resurrected Jesus circulated through the streets of Jerusalem. Several times that first Easter, Jesus appeared to some of his followers. Mary Magdalene encountered the risen Christ alone in the garden (John 20.14). The women spoke to him as they ran to tell the disciples the news of the empty tomb (Matthew 28.9). Jesus walked alongside two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24.13-35). Christ appeared privately to Peter (Luke 24.34).

As resurrection morning turned to night, the disciples assembled in Jerusalem. According to John's account, there was a spirit of fear among them as they wondered how the Jews might retaliate against them. Suddenly, the disciples' discussion about the day's events and their speculation about the future was interrupted as *Jesus himself stood among them* and greeted them, "*Peace to you*" (vs36). There in the midst of the eleven frightened and perplexed disciples stood – in the flesh – the crucified yet living Lord. Since it is impossible for a human being to de-materialize and walk through a locked door, there was only one explanation the disciples could give for this strange appearance: GHOST! Now, their fear escalated to new heights. Although Jesus greeted them with peace, fear controlled their minds.

Gently, Jesus rebuked the disciples. "*Why are you troubled*" (vs38)? The word "troubled" literally means to shake back and forth causing an agitation or a stirring up. It is a description of a mind that is unsettled, confused or disturbed by various emotions. "*Why do doubts arise in your hearts*" (vs38)? Doubt comes from the Greek word *dialogismos* which refers to inner reasoning. Its as if Jesus was saying to this scared group of followers, "Come on guys. Why are your minds confused? Why are you so unsettled? What is it that you are saying to yourselves that is causing you such fear, anxiety and panic?"

To help calm their fears, Jesus held out his nail pierced hands. He showed them his nail pierced feet. The fully physical, really resurrected Lord said, "Touch." Then, the fully human, living Jesus asked the disciples for food. Before their very eyes, he ate a piece of broiled fish. Ghosts do not have hands and feet. And, spirits certainly don't eat. Standing in that room was none other than Jesus himself. Using all five senses – sight, sound, taste, touch, hearing – the disciples realized that Jesus was truly alive. This encounter was etched in the disciples' minds forever. Decades later the Apostle John wrote: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands...[we] proclaim to you* (1 John 1.1-2).

Jesus proved that he was the risen Christ. But, the disciples should have known this. They should have never mistaken Jesus for a ghost. They had both the eyewitness testimonies and the Word of God (vs44-49) to help them understand and interpret all that had taken place on that unusual day. They should not have been afraid. They should not have been unsettled.

When we read of the disciples' fear and confusion on that inaugural Easter evening, we can be very critical. We can look on them with much disdain. How can they be so afraid? So dull? Yet, when we read this story in Luke 24, in some ways it is like looking into a mirror. Are we any different than these confused and fearful band of brothers? How many times has the risen Christ gently rebuked us, "Why

are you so troubled? Why do doubts arise in your hearts?" When we get that negative doctor's report...when we lose our job....when we fall into sin....when our devotional life is weak...when our children are wayward....when we face a major decision....when our plans fail...when a relationship ends...when we are heartbroken...when we grieve. In those dark and difficult times of life, the Savior says to us, "Why are you so troubled? Why do doubts arise in your heart?"

Commenting on verse 38, Matthew Henry writes, "Many of the troublesome thoughts with which our minds are disquieted arise from our mistakes concerning Christ. They here thought that they had seen a spirit, when they saw Christ, and that put them into this fright." Fears and doubts arise within our souls when you and I fail to see Christ in all his resurrection power and glory. When faced with pressures within and troubles without, our problems often seem too large, and our Christ is too small. The challenges in front of us seem like locked doors that we can never open. Yet, we serve a God who walks through locked doors and rolls away sealed stones. Nothing is impossible for the God who has conquered sin and death.

When fear and doubts arise in our hearts and trouble our minds, let us hear the Savior say, "See my hands and my feet...touch and me, and see." Let us remember our death-conquering, sin-shattering, fear-crushing Redeemer. Let us look again to the risen Christ, touching and seeing him through the pages of God's Holy Word. Let us, *turn our eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face; and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.*

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