

“Peace” (Luke 24:36-49)

All around us, outside these walls, the world has moved on. Easter items have been put on clearance to drastically reduced prices. Spring has sprung so well with new life most of us have already mowed our lawn at least once. The last of the leftover ham and hard-boiled eggs have mercifully disappeared, thanks be to God. Flowers that were just fragile green shoots on Easter morning have popped open in a beautiful array of colors. Talking about Easter seems so five minutes ago. I mean what more is there to say?

Now two weeks removed from brass reverberating around us; two weeks removed from our glorious celebration. And Luke just will not let us leave Easter day so quickly or conveniently but challenges us to linger on this one sacred day that sets our faith in motion. Two weeks ago we were outside an empty tomb with women and heard people say it was all just an ‘idle tale’. Last week, that tale grew taller as Cleopas and his unnamed companion encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus Easter afternoon, even though they did not realize it until they sat at table as the sun was setting and broke bread. And today, as dusk descended into darkness and stars slowly started to shine softly down on an out of the way room in Jerusalem, we are invited to the place where disciples huddled together talking about these weird, wacky, and the totally incomprehensible events that kept happening on the **very first** Easter day. As if angels appearing, grave clothes tossed hastily aside, an unrecognizable Jesus who strangely warms hearts before vanishing in thin air wasn’t enough to overwhelm the disciples during the day time on Easter; now Jesus defies the laws of physics and poof magically appears in the room where the disciples are trying to make sense of that which will not submit to logic no matter what kind of mental gymnastics we try to use.

Easter lingers in Luke, refusing to end. Jesus second resurrection encounter with his disciples has a familiar tune to which our souls almost instantly recognize and respond. The room, the disciples gathered, and Jesus grand entrance; I mean why use the door when a wall pales in comparison to conquering death? Note that this is the first time in Luke that Jesus appears to his closest friends. They had to wait; wait all the way until Easter evening to experience the truth of the reports from the women and Peter and Cleopas and the others. They had to wait in the midst of mental and spiritual chaos. Easter is a new creation where God’s creative work breaks in to lives in the most unusual ways and unsuspecting times. All day long, the disciples kept going over and over and over the details of the stories; until finally Jesus bursts into the room once and for all. Jesus offers peace, but the disciples think they are seeing a ghost. Strike that, the disciples really think they are seeing a ‘spirit’, the Greek word *pneuma*, the same word Luke will use in Acts 2 and that we will hear on Pentecost in May when the Spirit bursts into the room again where the disciples had gathered. It is this same word, spirit, *pneuma*, or *rauch* in Hebrew that stirs and surfs over the chaos in Genesis 1 on the first day of creation. Easter is a new creation, only this time in addition to whole world feeling incomprehensible and disorderly; there is this mental and spiritual chaos within to overwhelm the disciples. Poof in comes Jesus with a word of peace to hearts that are so hungry for peace, for souls so exhausted from the last few hours the word almost rings hollow.

Why Jesus seemed surprised that his sudden appearance might have scared the heebie-jeebies out of his friends, I don't know. The disciples' response seems quite logical to me. And so, Jesus offered evidence to the disciples. He held out his hands, showed his feet, and I am sure that only set the disciples minds spinning more out of control, as if that was even possible at this point in the day. At least if Jesus was a spirit, some kind of sacred, ethereal being that could be reconciled with the truth of death in some way. If Jesus is spirit, then death becomes a kind of transformation to something different, rather a complete reverse and upheaval of what we've been told and hold to be true. Instead, Jesus showed the disciples his hands and feet; invited them to see that he was real, flesh and bone. Jesus offered the disciples evidence of what seemed like an "idle tale" that morning. Jesus offered the disciples evidence that what Cleopas had said to them about his encounter was real. Jesus offered the disciples evidence that new life and hope and love being stronger than brokenness. Jesus offered this evidence of death not having the final word as something to not roll your eyes at, but a sacred, holy truth that is set in motion by God's presence rolling a boulder away that just kept on moving. Jesus, on Easter evening, offered evidence. What evidence do we offer in our lives of the new life we feel surging within us? What evidence do we offer as a church of the new life that bounces off these walls, not just on Easter but any time and all the time we gather? Evidence need not be confined to logical and rational words, theological thoughts that we offer to others. And, as the video I watched on Monday morning at jury duty reminded me, the best evidence is tangible, real, something we could actually hold. Hands that have bone, feet that walked to Emmaus, bread that is broken, a cup of forgiveness poured out for everyone, and unconditional love that was felt when you drew near to Jesus, this was the evidence he brought and his physical presence reminded them of that on Easter evening. What might you put on our evidence list? Perhaps serving breakfast to hungry kids at Wilson, carrying in grocery bags to offer our visible love for our neighbors; what ways can we as God's people keep challenging ourselves to show the hope and love we sense here with others who feel lost, lonely, or just plain left out in our world?

But it does not end with evidence. Just in case, the hands and feet were not convincing. Just in case this second resurrection appearance was not strange enough, Jesus decided he was famished and asked for food. Once he ate the fish, Jesus taught them; reminded them who he was; and tells them to stay put. To which, I believe the disciples said, "no problem after the day we've had."

Luke's two resurrection appearances echo each other. Both the walk to Emmaus and night time visit to his disciples, have similarities. In both, Jesus' appearance is not fully understood at first. In both, sharing food whether it is bread blessed and broken or fish to refuel after resurrection is central. Table fellowship becomes a way of connecting with Jesus; and we still know this today whether here in the sanctuary at communion or with wonderful, diverse aromas of a potluck filling our fellowship hall. In both, Jesus taught and he reminded the disciples what his life was all about. In both, Jesus started with Moses and worked through the prophets to help the disciples wrap their minds around what was going on. In both, it is an interaction with others that brings about the deeper truth of resurrection.

One of my favorite phrases from this passage is, "While in their joy they were disbelieving." Ever have one of the moments when the joy of a new opportunity intersects with the reality of change that is coming into your life? This certainly happened for me when I

received the letter from Luther Seminary; joy after waiting so long, it was hard to believe even as I held that thin piece of paper in my hand proclaiming truth...then a few days later receiving my homework in the mail. Joy and disbelieving can co-exist within us and produces a powerful reaction. "Wait, wait"; I can hear the disciples wanting to say even though their tongues would not cooperate. "If you are alive, Jesus, then that means, that means...well...what does that mean?" Jesus responded by saying wait.

You see, we don't always have the answers or understanding right away. If you were to flip to the book of Acts, which is the Gospel of Luke part two, the first chapter, we are told that the disciples had to wait forty days before they received the spirit. During that time, Jesus kept popping up. But there was still waiting. Living into the possibilities of new life does not always correspond to our time table. Offering evidence of the hope that is Easter takes time, patience, awareness to notice tangible signs that awaken hopefulness. To be sure, while we wait it can be an anxious time. And I don't want to minimize the doubts that creep in as days slip past waiting. For the reality is fear finds room to roam in the space of waiting. Our apprehensiveness, our continually questioning what we could have said or done to speed up the process and countless other thoughts create chaos within our souls. Peace, like an oasis in the desert, can feel elusive. We are used to hearing about waiting and peace at Advent, in December. But the truth is these words are just as appropriate no matter the season outside or in our lives; for we all carry with us today waiting moments that long for some sense of peace. Whatever you are waiting for today maybe an upcoming vacation or word about a job or response to an email you sent or a phone call from a loved one, know this truth, Easter was and still is about waiting. In the midst of the waiting, the sacred can stir, even if momentarily and offers us the same blessing of peace the disciples felt when Jesus burst into the room. Whatever you are waiting for today, know you do not need to wait alone.

In some ways I feel like our church is in the midst of waiting to see what new life and Easter hope might spring forth in the unfolding days. As we wait, I invite us to keep our eyes and hearts open to the visible evidence that appears, bursts into our midst. I've encouraged our Ministry meetings and Consistory to do just this, to have a "Good News" report in the midst of their meetings. For people to name, out loud and for each other, those places where they have sensed the Spirit, the *pneuma*, the *rauch* of God; and now I want to encourage and invite all of us to do this. In these unfolding Easter weeks as we wait alongside the disciples, inside your bulletin each week there will be a Good News sheet for you to fill out with places where you have encountered the living presence of God. Perhaps it is a moment in creation that connects you to God that week, or a particular hymn or having coffee with a fellow church member. Whatever, wherever you encounter God's spirit stirring, write it down, and then place it on the altar as you walk into worship beginning next Sunday. As we wait, know that we wait together, with open hearts to the swirling and stirring of the living God.

Thanks be to God and let all God's people in one voice say, "Amen!"