

What then if we believed?
 Preaching in the Age of COVID-19
 Luke 24: 36b-28
 April 18, 2021
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I propose to show, that Christ's resurrection has been tamed and become boring, so that those hearing this sermon will try to hear and see and live these stories with new eyes and ears—thus living our lives with a profound sense of awe and possibility appropriate for people who believe that Jesus is not dead, that Christ is alive.

May the God who creates us...
 Good Morning.

Years and years ago, probably when I was in 10th grade or so, I read Taylor Caldwell's classic book, *Dear and Glorious Physician*, a novelized account of St. Luke's Gospel. The book ends, at least in my memory, it ends just as Luke's Gospel ends with Jesus resurrected and no longer dead appearing to his disciples and asking for some broiled fish. I remember swallowing the book in a day staying up all night to finish it. Then, getting out of bed that morning walking down the dark hall turning to go up the stairs and being completely terrified and utterly convinced that there was every possibility I would meet the risen Christ on the landing of my family's split-level suburban home. I remember the conversation I was having with myself: would I actually go up the stairs and risk seeing him? Because I knew if he was standing in the foyer, barefoot on the parquet tile my dad had laid, that was going to be way more than I had bargained for. I remember vividly the feelings of anticipation and dread, reverence and astonishment—every emotion I associate with awe, something new, something so much larger than myself. It was a momentary embodiment of the realistic possibilities of resurrection. That moment when we know that everything in the world could shift, change and rearrange.

Looking for and receiving the risen Christ: when has it been for us more than a metaphor, more than an ancient text whose point and meaning has been tamed by familiarity and battered into boring domesticity?

“Peace be with You,” he said.
 Why are you frightened and why do doubts arise in your hearts?
 Look at my hands and my feet, see that it is myself;
 touch me and see;
 for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Because they were continuing to wonder and question in the midst of their happiness, he said to them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”

They gave him a piece of baked fish. Taking it, he ate it in front of them.

Alive. Again. Hungry and fed.

Then he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and seek a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in my name to all nations beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things.
You are witnesses of these things...

Are we witnesses to these things? Where is our awe? Our trepidation? Our insane motivation? We read this story, we hear now a third story of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and why are we all not looking at each other gaped jawed and stunned? Why do our minds drift to such profound things as what we might pick up at Meijer’s this afternoon—

Where is our awe? Our astonishment? Our anticipatory fear? Our belief?

What would happen if we were to put ourselves back to that time? Take ourselves back to those moments? If the risen Christ is standing in front of us, snacking on some tasty whitefish, how then do we live our lives differently?

Christ is alive. Knowing that what is our three-step response to proposed voter suppression laws in this pleasant peninsula of ours?

Christ is alive, so no more are a frightened powerful minority allowed to push laws and lies that prevent all of us from voting. What are we doing about this, now? What state senator are you calling, what state rep are you emailing, who are you organizing with? Who are you educating about these bills? Or are you assuming someone else will do the heavy lifting? Jesus said, and you will be witnesses to it all. We are those witnesses.

Christ is alive--How now are we re-imagining our public safety system? Before another person of color is shot and killed, when a white person would be ticketed and sent on their way. What are you doing about this? It’s us, if we believe Christ is alive.

Christ is alive.

How do we rethink our culture of guns and violence? What steps can you take today?
Christ is alive.

Why are we having such a hard time understanding that we must care for each other, and wait a bit longer, to tame this virus, before resuming all the activities of our lives?

If we were truly to believe that He is Alive, would we still be so very daunted by the changes and chances of this life? Or would we see in every challenge, every obstacle a hurdle we can handle with God and with each other?

Would we feel overwhelmed by all that is going on—be constrained by a continuous sense of powerlessness or aloneness?

Or would we see in Christ's presence, in his wounds, the possibility of resurrection, not free from scars, nor absent pain, but a platform for hope, possibility, action and change.

Dear friends over and over again I make the mistake of thinking and believing that I, that you, that we need do so many things on our own, by ourselves. And that is daunting and overwhelming.

But if we took the resurrection of Christ seriously, if you and I took the resurrection of Christ as more than a banal metaphor then with God with us, who can be against? With God for us and with us what might we do? How might we be?

Might our movements be more than fits and bits? Might we have the faith, hope and love, to carry on day by day. Knowing that God, in the person of Jesus came into the world and lived and breathed and loved and cared, who died. Who now is —is not gone, but alive.

What then if that knowledge were in our very bones of our being—What then? How then would we be witnesses? How would we live our lives?

Christ has died, Christ has risen. We, thank God in heaven, that we are not and never will be alone again in this mess.

It's time for us to embrace the power of His Resurrection.

Amen.