

No Hands But Ours

A Sermon for Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC, Lexington

Rev. Reebee Kavich Girash

April 18, 2021

Text: Luke 24:36b-48

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence. ⁴⁴ Then he said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.

Though I may speak.

Fish, bread, Jesus.

When Jesus is involved, food becomes sacred. The most ordinary things become sacred in Jesus' presence - fish, bread, walks, time with friends.

That's a perfectly good sermon and I have preached it many times. I intended to preach it again today. But....

This week, I had in one window of my computer, a blank sermon canvas. And in another window, [a statement from the Minnesota Council of Churches](#) about the death

of Daunte Wright and the trial of the police officer who knelt on George Floyd's neck. In another window, a news site where each morning a new name, a new place, joined the list of tragedies. Rev. James Forbes is fond of saying, enter the pulpit with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.

So, fish and bread and sacred meals started to seem less compelling this week.

Suzanne Guthrie says, about the scars of the risen Christ, and the meals he shared with his followers, that these are part of the mystery of our faith.

"The mystery: the Paschal Mystery, the mystery of life, and our personal and collective participation in those mysteries, "hinges" on the flesh. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, attend to the stranger, reveal the structures that mask injustice and challenge the institutions that perpetuate suffering. That, I'm sure, is the point."¹

And if her point is true, then every time we speak of the risen Christ, it should be in connection to bodies, in our world, our care of bodies.

This week a colleague of mine, parent of three children of color, received a frantic text from one of her members, mom of a young black man. This mom had gone out for a run without her cell phone. When she returned home there were two missed calls from her son, a young black man. Instantly, she was afraid of what may have happened to him during those missed moments. This is what it means to be a mother of a child of color in these days. My colleague prayed with this mom:

Protector God, watch over your beloved child, (use Drew, not real name) so that (use Cathy, not real name) can just go for a run without being afraid her child will be killed. Watch over our black and brown babies. Amen.

If the risen Jesus had scars, ate fish, then bodies are important to God. Every body.

'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

¹ <http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/easter3bfish.html>

We are witnesses in this way: witnesses of the good and holy and miraculous.

Witnesses to death defeated

Life revealed

Meals made holy

A fleshy, scarred Jesus who eats a meal with his friends.

The Jesus of Easter is the Jesus of incarnation and bodies are important.

But are we not also witnesses in this way: witnesses of racism, terror, violence?

We could be called at any moment to testify

To Easter

Or to testify

To repentance and forgiveness of sins

To witness to goodness

Or to witness to injustice

Perhaps we are called to be witnesses to goodness in the face of injustice.

Christ is risen - his work of justice is not over.

Violent death at the hands of empire will be defeated.

Faith without works is dead.

Easter Christians, followers of one both alive at Christmas and alive again at Easter,
Easter Christians today are called to witness in the way our conference minister Darrell
Goodwin says it:

**Prayers for every leader
preaching today! May you find
the words and courage to speak
truth to power, declare racism
as a public health crisis, deplore
gun violence and police
brutality. The SPIRIT has your
back so walk boldly. -DLG**

Kenosha

Omaha

Indianapolis

Boulder

Atlanta

Samaria

Amarjit

Karli

Soon Chung

Yong Yue

Delaina

Eric

Rikki

Denny

We are called to say their names.

We are called to speak out against gun violence, against racism, against violence incited by racism.

We are called by the one who showed up with scars all over himself and ate a meal with his friends, to be his hands and feet in this world.

We are called,

Teresa of Avila wrote these words:

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

Christ has no hands but ours.

We are the eyes that witness care and compassion.

We are the eyes that witness injustice.

We are the voices who cry out for George, Daunte, Adam, Brionna.

We are witnesses to all these things.

Amen.