

Sermon Easter 3 Year B

Luke 24:36b-48

Jesus himself stood among the disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look 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." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

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." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Prayer: In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Sermon:

Today's Gospel is part of a string of readings that show Jesus
as a real person, risen from the dead, flesh and blood. ⁱ

But of course, he keeps popping up in locked rooms,
like he caught his friends by surprise at the tomb.

The Risen Lord was *and is* more than flesh and blood.

He sure seemed real to the 11 disciples.

Last weekⁱⁱ, we heard that when Jesus first appeared,
in a locked room, he said "Peace be with you".

He said that because they were terrified.

But Jesus showed them his hands and his side,
to prove he was who he said he was. ⁱⁱⁱ

Don't worry you guys, I got this. You're safe. ^{iv}

And then said:

"As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

And he breathed on them and saying,

"Receive the Holy Spirit."^v

When Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples,
he was probably speaking in Greek.

In the New Testament he used the Greek work *Pneuma*.^{vi}

Back then most folks had some Greek.

The word *pneuma*^{vii} was familiar.

From Genesis to Revelation...^{viii}

It's used in the Bible almost 400 times!

From Aeschylus to Herodotus, the word *pneuma* described
a breeze, or a breath or a spirit.^{ix}

With Jesus it meant the *Breath of a New Life*.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was
[everywhere] ...; and the Spirit of God was moving over the ...
waters.^x

Creation began with the holy breath.^{xi}

Our lives as Christians begins

with the breath of the resurrected Lord.^{xii}

As we live our lives as God's people,

Christ calls us to spread the word and to

breathe his Sprit of Love and Life into the World,

just like he did.

Every living thing needs the breath of the Holy Spirit.

And so, the Kingdom is not only about us.

It's also about everyone and everything else.

The Risen Jesus told his people,

“ ... when the **Holy Spirit** has come upon you; ...

you shall be my witnesses to ... to the end of the earth.”^{xiii}

And He said to his eleven (remaining) followers in Galilee:

“... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy
Spirit, ²⁰ ... And ... I am with you always....”^{xiv}

From the beginning to the end of God's Salvation Story,

Jesus lives, the Spirit is upon us and our God reigns!

And God's work continues ... right now ... right here!

These are tough days. So much to do.

And there doesn't seem to be enough money or time or energy.

Let's remember that the Holy Spirit is with us.

Jesus said it would be so. And I know that it is true!

Let us hold tight to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

With them, we are never alone, and *each of us is an army.*

Whatever happened in the tomb is a mystery.

But the risen Lord was a real person.

And the Holy Spirit remains.

How to live our lives as Christians is not always
as clear as we would like.

The world sows confusion and fear, like weed seeds
amongst a crop of wheat or a field of Bluebonnets.

If God wrote in the sky “Here I am. I love you”,
some would believe, but others would doubt.

Some folks might, as we’d say in California, have
“issues”.

But, here’s the Good News: Jesus is real and he’s here with us.
Right now. Right here.

He’s here in your hearts. He’s here in every breath we take.
He’s here as we all work together to re-build this place,
and to build His Kingdom,
from one generation to the next.

We can choose to live as Jesus lived.

We can choose to accept our call to be a community of faith.

We can and We Must!

We have a lot of work to do. I know it's hard.

But that work is what we are called to do.

And it'll be worth it.

Can you imagine a world where rules and wealth and stuff
don't define us?

Can you imagine a world where our politics and our religion,
and our race and our gender, are not all we talk about?

Can you imagine a place where we all agree,
one day at a time, to act with kindness towards one another,
with respect, even if not affection.

The old song says, "They will know we are Christians by our love."
They won't know us by our rules or
by the stuff we've lost or gained.

Imagine a Christian community,
built patiently with careful thought and commitment,
where each person lives for the other,
and God is at the center.

This day, let us pray that the Holy Spirit comes anew to this place.

The Sprit will breathe into us a new life,

and a new outlook, and that each of us will know

what work he or she is called too do,

as we work together.

One God, One Church, One People, One Kingdom.

--Amen.

ⁱ We all take that for granted almost, but in the 1st Century this was not an assumed reality.

ⁱⁱ See, Luke 24:37-38 They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.
πτοηθέντες δὲ καὶ ἔμφοβοι γενόμενοι ἐδόκουν πνεῦμα θεωρεῖν

ⁱⁱⁱ John 20:19-31

^{iv} And, apparently, he didn't stop by Whataburger on the way, so he also asked them for something to eat. That showed them that Jesus was hungry and that the Risen Lord was more than a mere ghost.

^v If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven...If you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

^{vi} i.e., pneumatic, like a tire.

^{vii} πνεῦμα

^{viii} See, John 3:8, Hebrews 1:7, 2 Thessalonians 2:8, Psalms 32:6, 33:6, 103:4 and 104:4, 1 Kings 18:45 and 19:11; Job 1:19, and in countless Greek writings. Notably, in Hebrew the same word is Ruach. Two languages, same idea.

^{ix} STRONGS NT 4151

^x Gen 1:1-2

^{xi} It's all about the Holy Spirit. Whose been with the Church from the beginning and will be with us until we all go Home!

^{xii} See, also, John 20:22 καὶ τοῦτο εἰπὼν ἐνεφύσησεν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς λάβετε πνεῦμα ἅγιο
And when [Jesus] had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

^{xiii} Acts 1:8 ἀλλὰ λήμψεσθε δύναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος

^{xiv} Matthew 28:16-20 -- The Great Commission