

The Terror and Delight of Resurrection Living

Luke 24:36-49

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I want to begin with a quote this morning. Eugene Peterson wrote: "The greatest errors in the spiritual life are not committed by the novices but by the adepts [veterans]. The greatest capacity for self-deceit in prayer comes not in the early years but in the middle and later years" [*Working the Angles*, p. 177]. Wow. Such brutal honesty. And I would submit to you that we fall into these errors when we lose the sense of wonder. The Risen Christ walking among us, living within us...that should evoke terror and delight. And if it doesn't, something is wrong.

Note in our text the repeated emphasis in v. 36 "Jesus himself..." Not a stand-in, a stunt double. And note the range of responses from the disciples as they experience Jesus, back from the dead: startled, terrified (v. 37); frightened with doubts (v. 38); full of joy, disbelieving and wondering (v. 41).

Have you noticed how all the gospel writers want to make it perfectly clear that Jesus was physically raised? Like John 20 from last week, Jesus invites them to explore his crucifixion wounds (vv. 39-40). Luke now takes it a step further. Jesus suddenly looks up and says, "I'm starving. Do you have anything to eat?" And then he ate in front of them! (vv. 42-43). Now Jews were taught that angels don't need food, and by extension that spirits and ghosts don't need sustenance. So they know Jesus is real!

Why is this important? Because ghosts don't make demands on our lives. Ghosts don't ask anything of us. Jesus, the real person, does. That's the terror and delight of resurrection living. In my own spiritual journey, nothing started clicking, nothing came together until I got this--that what Jesus wanted from me is a real, personal relationship that claims every area of my life, that has something to do with every part of life. Jesus wants to eat with me, be with me, and do all the things you like to do when you're in a relationship with someone--guide me and do life with me and challenge me to grow.

But don't think the believer's walk is only a subjective experience. There is an objective side: written scripture (vv. 44-45). The Easter Jesus must never be separated from the witness of written scripture (see vv. 44-45). We were attending a language arts festival once when our children were small. The children had been encouraged to write whatever they wanted. One little girl had written, Dear Tooth Fairy. Are you real? If you are, please write me." Yes, if Jesus is real, he would write! And he has! Jesus is the key to understanding scripture and scripture is the key to understanding Jesus. If you would like, think of it this way. There is an experiential, relational side to our faith--the subjective, our relationship with Christ. And there is a more cognitive, content side to our faith--objective scripture. We need them both. No Bible study or worship service should be all one or the other.

Take it from me. There is just nothing like the sustained, daily, regular exposure to God's Word, as you experience his real-ness and his love. This must have been on Luke's mind too, because he uses the phrases opened eyes (v. 31); opened scriptures (v. 32) and opened minds (v. 45).

But let's say you're still not feeling it. You hear me talking about the terror and delight of a personal, risen Savior. But something isn't clicking for you. The fire and romance of that relationship just isn't there for you. Do you know what might be missing? You might need to simply get up and start serving. Do something! We can't just sit and soak. Maybe that's why vv. 47-49 are tucked in here right after the resurrection appearance. Because the Risen One is known, felt and experienced more deeply when we are busy joining him in mission. Have you ever prepared gifts that have glitter on them? As you prepare to give it away, you get some of the glitter on you.

Here's what I've discovered. When I'm busy sharing my faith, I'm also growing my faith. The Good News we get to announce--that God is "sending our sins away" (that's what forgiveness literally means, v. 47) has a way of rubbing off on us as we share it. Glitter all over us!

Sometimes I'll just feel stale. Then I get up and go visit some person who is homebound or in a care facility. I read about a man who had retired from the insurance business. For four years afterward, he was bored stiff. Then he got a call to work for CBF Arkansas. He designed some shower trailers for emergency and relief work. After Katrina hit, they were needed in abundance. The retiree had tears in his eyes as he talked about how doing had transformed his walk with the Risen Christ. Sometimes we just need to blow out the cobwebs; we need to get over our funk...and over ourselves. Whether it's Mission JC next weekend, sharing Jesus with a co-worker, listening carefully to someone who's hurting, let's get some Jesus glitter all over us by giving him away. Then we'll discover all over again the terror and delight of walking with the Risen Christ.