

Jesus In Our Midst

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Luke 24:36-49

36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you."

Its Sunday. The people are gathered. Jesus is in their midst. He gives them his peace. He sends them out into the world. What am I describing? Am I describing our text or am I describing Sunday morning worship? The answer is both.

Every Sunday this same event that we read in our text happens again in every Christian church in the world. The believers gather. Jesus is in our midst. We receive his peace. He sends us out into the world with his promises.

Exo 20:24 In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

We might not be able to see him, but there is no doubt that Jesus is truly here in our midst as he was then, so he is now. This last section of Luke is here so that we might have no doubt that not only is Jesus risen but that he is here in our midst.

37 But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

They were startled and became terrified.

If I jump out from behind a door and scare my wife, at first, she is very startled, but very quickly her fear goes away as she realized it is just me. The opposite happens to the disciples. They are startled but their fear grows as they realize it is not just Thomas playing tricks, but it really is the Lord. Jesus however reassures them that his presence is not a thing to be feared.

Just as the twelve tribes of Israel trembled at the appearance of the Lord on Mount Sinai, so also the twelve-apostle tremble in fear. The Lord urges them not to. At Sinai it was right that they should be afraid but not anymore. Never again does Jesus want us to fear his coming.

No matter how great the fear. No matter how big the sin we are trying to hide from him. We never again need to fear his coming. Sunday morning should not be a thing to fear but a time of joy when Jesus comes to our midst to give us peace.

He is in our midst to give peace not fear.

39 "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." 40 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.

This is the first of three proofs that Jesus gives that he is truly risen. Jesus is not an imposter, a look alike, or his twin brother. He didn't pull a fast one and have someone else die on the cross in his place. The holes in his hands and feet clearly identify him. He stands in their midst as the one who was crucified and is arisen.

The angels identify Jesus in the same way. They said to the women, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who is the one who was crucified."

It is impossible to put in English the full significance of the title given Jesus by the angels. Most translations simply say, "who was crucified," but that fails to really convey the fullness of the ongoing status which that crucifixion gave to Jesus. The marks are still there, they are not going to go away with time. He is the one who was crucified.

In Revelation he is, "the Lamb who was slain."

He does not continue to be slain, and yet the marks of the crucifixion are the indelible mark of his eternal love for us sinners. There is no greater ID Jesus could give the apostles, then to show them the marks. There is no greater proof of his love.

He stands in our midst as the one who was crucified one but is now risen.

41 But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" 42 So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. 43 And He took it and ate in their presence.

This is the second of the three proofs. It is a very tactile proof that appeals to our senses. He ate the bread showing that his resurrection was a bodily resurrection. Later when Peter is in Cornelius' house he stresses this eating and drinking

Acts 10:40-41 40 "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, 41 "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

This eating of fish was clearly not the Lord's Supper, but it does shadow the Lord's Supper in that Jesus reveals himself to the disciples in the eating of a meal. He revealed himself to the Israelites in the Passover meal. He revealed himself at the wedding feast of Cana. He revealed himself to the Emmaus disciples when they sat down to break bread. He will shortly reveal himself to the apostles on the shores of Galilee again with the eating of fish.

We can go all the way back to Abraham and remember how the Lord came to Abraham while he was under the trees and shared a meal with him. There is no indication that Abraham knew who it was until they were eating and then the Lord revealed himself to Abraham.

All these meals, including the Lord's Supper, foreshadow the wedding feast of the Lamb, in which the Apostle John reminds us that then we shall see him as he is.

The Lord's supper reveals Jesus' presence among us in a tactile way. We can touch and taste. He is in our midst through the eating of the meal.

44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

The third proof of his resurrection was the scriptures themselves. All this was foretold from the beginning and has now happened just as it was written.

Jesus is in the midst to catechize them. To open their eyes to understand the scriptures. He has always been there in all the prophets and psalms, but now he teaches them to see him in the word.

He is in our midst as well through the reading and the teaching of the word of God.

It is easy to fail to appreciate the scripture readings including the psalm of the day which are included in our Sunday morning worship, but these readings reveal Jesus to us. He is there in the midst of every reading.

Psalm 4:3 But know that the LORD has set apart¹ for Himself him who is godly;

Do not despise or get bored with the reading of the word, for this is our chance to see Jesus in our midst.

46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise¹ from the dead the third day, 47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Already repentance and the forgiveness of sins were preached. It was preached in the Old Testament through the sacrifices and the temple itself. It was preached by John the Baptist and the apostles. But what is different now is that the same teaching is given far more power, because now it is preached on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection.

The crucified and risen Jesus becomes the foundation and center of the preaching of repentance.

Remember that Luke was a doctor. He knew the importance of cutting of an infected limb, or of setting a bone, maybe even breaking it to reset it. His entire gospel portrays Jesus as the one who had come to heal the world of sin.

At the heart of that prescription from God the Father was the necessity of Jesus death and resurrection. This is the prescription which was written and was necessary and is now fulfilled.

Jesus is in our midst as the crucified one to give the forgiveness of sins.

48 "And you are witnesses of these things. 49 "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Even as Jesus came to the disciples in order to bring them peace, to eat with them in fellowship, and to preach forgiveness through his death and resurrection, so now he sends them out with the power to do the same.

The disciples are now to go and do the same. They are to gather together the disciples, stand in their midst, announce the peace of God to them. They are to show these new disciples the the marks which reveal Jesus as the crucified and risen Lord, to eat and fellowship with them, and to catechize that is teach the scriptures. The central focus of that teaching is always "remission or sins through Jesus death and resurrection."

The same events of Easter evening continue the same today as they were two thousand years ago. We are gathered together and Jesus the crucified one is among us. Amen