

Sermon – Luke 24:36b-48; 1 John 3:1-7  
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Grace Lutheran Church  
3 Easter – Year B  
14 April 2024

“Peace, and a Piece of Fish”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! **Christ is risen, indeed. Alleluia!**

Sisters and brothers in Christ, grace be unto you and peace in the name God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

1. It's almost unbelievable. On a beautiful day for Opening Day, Torsten's team found themselves with the bases load against them and nobody out. The batter lifted the ball high into the outfield, setting the runners in motion. But the kid made the catch. And then, as if that wasn't enough, he knew what to do with the ball, throwing it to Torsten at second to double off the runner. And then, as if that wasn't enough, Torsten threw to third. His teammate didn't make the catch, so the runner tagged up and bolted home. But then, as if all of that hadn't been enough, the third baseman grabbed the ball and flung it home, where the catcher put the tag on and completed an 8-4-5-2 triple play. Of course, they still lost. But for a moment, on a verdant field under a cloudless sky, everything was right with the world. Or so I hear. I didn't see it. I was sitting at another field watching Anders's team play. An Opening Day triple play and I missed it? Kids playing good defense early in the season? Did that really happen? It's almost unbelievable.
2. But if an Opening Day triple play is hard to believe if you didn't see it with your own eyes, well, you're going to have a hard time with the tale spun by Cleopas and his friend. These two, part of Jesus' larger circle of followers, are making the long trip back to Emmaus, disconsolate in the wake of Jesus'

death. A stranger comes alongside them, asking about the news of the day. They tell him of Jesus, this one they had hoped would be the one to redeem Israel. But they hope no longer. Death is death and that was that. But then, as you remember from the verses preceding today's reading, in the breaking of the bread their eyes are opened. The stranger, strangely, is Jesus. And then, he's gone! They run back to Jerusalem, to tell Peter and the others. Could it be true?

3. In the midst of the disciples' confusion and disbelief, as if out of nowhere, Jesus shows up. Jesus shows up, and here in this first meeting, we see Jesus do what he has been doing ever since when he shows up. He speaks and creates peace where there was no peace. He turns doubt not so much into certainty as celebration, a meal breaking out among them – which also serves to demonstrate that Jesus is no mere ghost. Phantoms don't eat fish. He is not a shadow of life. He is life itself, hard won over death and the grave and now freely given. And with life, forgiveness. Forgiveness for these disciples, deniers and abandoners whose sin remains in the tomb, while they are embraced in the joy of Christ. Peace. Celebration. Forgiveness Life. Jesus shows up, and brings with him these gifts, breaking into the locked places in which we would hide ourselves away and setting us free. And set free now sent, witnesses to all these things, bearers of good news in a broken world, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
4. In the midst of our doubts and many fears, Jesus appears to us today. Places himself in our hands, body and blood given in, with, and under the bread and wine. Whereas he caught his friends by surprise that first Easter night, we, the church, have come to depend on his promises. We know he'll show up today, right on time. 10:00 a.m. It's in his calendar. But is it any less surprising, that in God's great love for us Jesus would dependably meet us week after week on the corner of Division and Bonnie Brae, giving himself to us? And we are reminded by his appearing among us that he appears

elsewhere, too; that our eucharistic gathering is not confined to this time and place. That when the bread is broken by the side of hospice beds or in hospital rooms, shared with those confined to their homes or imprisoned behind bars, Jesus shows up. Brings the same gifts of peace, celebration, forgiveness, and life to those who cannot come here. How often I've been blessed as a pastor to witness the arrival of Jesus in such places, revealing himself anew to us and opening our eyes to see him. Our dependable Sunday appointments do something else, too. They train us to be ready to be surprised, to see the Christ who meets us here at work in this world, the author of life who is not yet done writing this world's story.

5. And thanks be to God, for this world needs its Savior. War in the Middle East threatens to run even hotter. An election that highlights our deep divisions creeps ever closer. Problems abound, reminders that on this side of things sin and death have not yet accepted their defeat. We do not know what the future holds. But we know Jesus. Our doubts are not fully dissipated. But we know Jesus. In today's epistle, John puts it this way: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed." Which is to say, we live between new birth and resurrection. I don't quite know what life in the Kingdom of God will be like, but I know it's coming. And I don't know what will happen in this life tomorrow, but I know that I am a child of God now, and that this cannot be taken away from me. Or from you. You are a child of God for the sake of Jesus Christ who has made a place for you within the life of God forever. Whatever may come between now and then will not undo these basic facts of your life, gifted to you by Jesus. See? He shows up even now. With peace. In celebration. To forgive you. To make you alive. It's almost unbelievable. But it's also too good to not believe. Jesus who was dead is alive, and in him is the life of the world. Amen.

And now may that peace that passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus, this day and forever. Amen.

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