

Scripture: Luke 24:36-49

Text: Luke 24:39-40

Message: These Hands Live

April 21, 2019; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON

Easter

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The Easter story is such a fun story of discovery. As we read this story in the gospels, we can smile at how the disciples came to realize the wonder and truth of the resurrection.

No, it can't be true. They didn't believe the women.

I've got to see it to believe it. They run to the tomb and find it empty.

It doesn't make any sense. Until Jesus begins with Moses and the Prophets and shows that it makes perfect sense.

It's beyond possibility. When he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them, they recognized him and accepted the impossible as true.

Dare we believe this? Can we believe this? Simon saw him. So did the disciples from Emmaus.

Peace. Shalom. Jesus appears among them. He eats a piece of fish.

A stuttering step at a time, the disciples come to realize the unthinkable. Even so, they don't fully understand what this all means. They only know that a real, living Jesus is standing among them and this same Jesus had been dead and buried just days before. And now, he's alive!

Will we ever truly understand the fullness and richness of the meaning of Jesus' resurrection? Not likely. We can't explain it. We can believe it and celebrate the difference it makes in our lives.

Knowing and believing that Jesus rose from the dead means that Jesus is among us. Just as he entered the room with the disciples and stood among them, so Jesus is here with us. Today. Tomorrow. Always.

It brings to mind a comment some people occasionally make when I walk into a room: "Oh, we better behave. The minister is here." When I hear that comment I sometimes wonder how much these people misbehave when I am not around. And I'm amazed, and humbled, at the positive influence that my presence can have on people's lives!

But it's sad if the *minister's* presence influences proper behaviour. Because someone greater than the minister is always here (to paraphrase Matthew 11:11). Jesus is risen from the dead. He is alive and is among us.

Wherever we go, whatever we do, we can know that the living Lord is present. That not only might influence our behaviour, as we desire to be more like Jesus, knowing he is present. It can also be a comforting trust to know Jesus is with us. We are never alone.

That's one small part of this story in Luke. Jesus reveals himself, alive, among his followers. Jesus himself stood among them, as he continues to live and stand among us.

But our celebration is more than just the wonder and miracle of the living Jesus being present. There's another theme running through these stories:

“he has risen, *just as he said*” (Matthew 28:6).

“He is not here; he has risen! *Remember how he told you* while he was still with you in Galilee?” (Luke 24:6)

“Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them *what was said in all the Scriptures* concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

“Everything must be fulfilled *that is written about me* in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms” (in other words, the entire Old Testament) (Luke 24:44).

Jesus stands among us as the fulfilment of God's Word. The hands of Jesus were pierced for our transgressions, he was crucified for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed... though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days (see Isaiah 53).

There are so many other places where we can read of the promise of forgiveness through the suffering of our Saviour, and the promise of new life because of Jesus' resurrection.

These hands: that heal, that bless, that hold, that rescue, that rearrange, that were nailed to the cross....these hands live. And because we know that Jesus is alive, we too will live. We are no longer under the control or power of sin. We can live the freedom of new life.

This is not just a story of discovery on the first Easter Sunday. This is the story of God's rescue plan throughout the Bible. This Easter story has that firm and solid foundation. As we read and study the Bible, we learn and discover the richness of the peace or shalom that Jesus offers to us.

“Peace be with you.” Jesus' first words to the gathering of disciples are not a command, but a gift. There is no reprimand for their failure to support him; no call to repentance; not even a call to faith. “Peace be with you.” There is sheer grace.

Peace. Shalom: love, forgiveness, favour, blessing, healing, hope, restoration.

As we hear and receive the blessing of peace, our hands live to share that peace. We desire to bring the peace of resurrection life into the hearts and lives of others who are hurting, searching, longing.

If the story is true and the hands of Jesus live, then we have a story to tell. Then our hands are alive with new life.

Our hands can live and continue the work of our Saviour as we heal and bless and hold and rescue and rearrange. The life of Jesus flows through us through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts.

Knowing and believing that Jesus rose from the dead means that Jesus is among us. And we can be with him always, in this life and for eternity.

These hands live. The hands of Jesus are in heaven, continuing to rule over all things. This is a comfort, knowing we can trust in the care of Jesus. It is a comfort, knowing that the enemy of death has been defeated. As we know and trust in the presence of Jesus in this life, we are assured that we shall enjoy life forever in his presence.

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”

These hands live. These hands heal and bless and hold and rescue and rearrange and forgive. Receive the gift of grace and peace.

And know that the resurrection of Jesus changes everything. Jesus is Lord! In Christ, your hands live. The life of Jesus is in us, and we can change the world to bring his shalom/peace. Because Jesus lives. He has defeated the power of death. These hands live!

Amen.