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In the Breaking of Bread
Luke 24: 13-48

³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called **Emmaus**, about seven miles^[l] from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, **Jesus** himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.^[g] ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "**Are you the only** stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹ He asked them, "**What things?**" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth,^[h] who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.^[i] Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah^[j] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he **interpreted** to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, "**Stay** with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, **he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.** ³¹ Then their **eyes** were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us^[k] while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

While they were talking about this, **Jesus** himself stood among them and said to them, “**Peace** be with you.”^[u] ³⁷ They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ **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.” ⁴⁰ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.^[m] ⁴¹ While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to **eat**?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴ 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.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah^[u] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses^[o] of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Imagine having to **convince someone** that you are in fact alive, when they assume you are dead.

Exactly the situation of Vietnam Vet Charles Hubbard of Austin, TX, when he received a letter from the V.A. informing his family to return thousands of dollars in benefits, because he was dead.

Talk about a worst nightmare, right?

He was a victim of **stolen identity**,

and he soon discovered that even his checking account had been closed by the V.A. After dozens of phone calls,

he was informed that it would take about eight months

to have him declared officially alive, and his benefits restored!

Incredible, right?

Peter W. Marty, “Living By the Word”, Christian Century, March 28, 2018.

Jesus isn’t making phone calls to the V.A.,

but he is trying to **convince** some very weary, grieving, scared disciples that he is in fact alive!
Flesh and blood alive!

So what does it take to **convince** the weary followers that Jesus is alive?
It takes Jesus doing what we all have to do to stay alive—**EATING, FOOD!**

Their hearts may have burned within them as Jesus explained the scriptures on that road to Emmaus,
but their **eyes were opened** to his resurrected identity when he **took the bread**, blessed, broke, and gave it to them, just as he had done for the twelve at his Last Supper.

Then, when Jesus appears to the scared followers in the room in Jerusalem, he says what close friends might say to us when they come over.
Got any food in the fridge?

Isn't that essentially what he is saying?
He's also looking for a real, meaningful way, to say—look, I'm alive!
Watch this---ghosts don't eat food and digest---I'm eating!

Isn't it interesting—that "**proving**" his resurrection involves **eating**? Food?

It goes hand in hand with him saying,
Look, **Touch me**—I am flesh and bones!

Jesus says, 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." ⁴⁰ *And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.* ^[m]
⁴¹ *While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"* ⁴² *They gave him a piece of broiled fish,* ⁴³ *and he took it and ate in their presence.*

So, what does this story mean for us **today**?
Why does it matter how Jesus proved his resurrected identity?

What if it tells us how we are to **break bread** with one another?
What if it tells us **how and where we find** Jesus today?

Think about what usually happens around a table with friends--
 You often really **get to know** people, right?
 Sharing a meal can create a sense of **community**!
 It can even **break down barriers**,
 or bring a sense of peace, right?

I know we've all been held hostage at Thanksgiving or Christmas meals
 gone awry with crazy relatives...
 but think about what it means to **open your home and host a meal** for
 friends, or even strangers?
 There's a vulnerability in that, isn't there?
 You know people in a different way after you share a meal, don't you?

I think about all the **meals I've shared** with you over the years,
 and how much I've learned about you around a table.

I think about the power of my **Grandma Morene's** constant hospitality,
 always setting out food for guests,
 and having almost all her conversation around her dining room table.
 This is how we knew we were loved by her!
 It's one thing I love about meal time—it's a natural time to talk, and listen.

Could it be possible to open hearts and minds around a shared meal?
 I mean, eating together can get people talking, right?
 Maybe it's the fact that you can **shove some food** in your mouth at any
 moment to avoid an uncomfortable question,
 but I think that having food as a distraction can actually help conversation,
 and put people at ease.
 Most of us know how to say 'pass the potatoes', right?
 When all else fails, say that. (unless potatoes are not on the menu!)

Food reminds us that humanity is about
inhabiting these bodies we all have.
 Do you notice that every time Jesus appears,
 it's as a **person**—not a spiritual ghost, apparition, or a free floating soul?

This is **important** to our faith.
 Paul reminds us that if Jesus has not been resurrected, our faith is in vain...

Listen to **1 Corinthians 15:14-19**:

and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. ...¹⁷ If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.¹⁸ Then those also who have died^[e] in Christ have perished.¹⁹ If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

And he also talks about having a **resurrection body (not just a soul)**
*Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die,^[m] but we will all be changed,
 ...⁵³ For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality.*

In other words, we will not be exactly the same as on earth,
 we will be **changed** into a perfect body—
 but we will still have a body, not just a free floating soul or spirit.

Every appearance of the resurrected Jesus is in **bodily form**.
 Resurrection is **not just a metaphor**,
 it is a physical reality for Jesus, and for all of us one day!
 And Jesus' resurrected body has **scars**—his scars from the cross!

Why is this so **important**?

Well, to me it's important because we have scars too,

We **live in physical bodies**,

And many of us live in chronic pain or illness—our bodies are broken in some way, and we want, we need, a Savior who has visible and invisible wounds in his resurrected body!

I believe we all **need a Savior who brings healing** to broken bodies,
 not salvation coming to us just spiritually, or intellectually.

The Greeks often **separated the physical world from the spiritual world**,
 with the spiritual realm being **more important** than the physical.
 The Greeks thought of life after death as being a **soul**,
 released from the physical body.

This is **NOT** what we see with Jesus.
 The resurrected Jesus has a **new body**.

And he is very much alive, with ***flesh and bones***, and ***scars***.
That's hopeful, when you think about what it means for us!

The resurrection of Jesus reminds us
that we are ***both physical and spiritual*** beings,
and we need to ***pay attention to both*** realms,
because they are equally important and connected.

When the Bible calls Jesus ***Emmanuel***, God with us—it means in the flesh,
Both ***physically and spiritually***.

I think this is why there have been so many ***interpretations***
about the Lord's Supper over the years,
different beliefs about how Jesus is present in the meal.

Catholics assert that the elements are blessed and then transformed into the
actual body and blood of Christ.

Lutherans believe in the actual presence of Christ in the meal, in, with and
under the elements.

Presbyterians believe that as we take the meal we are remembering and
memorializing that Last Supper—and the power of what Jesus gave those
disciples then is the same power and presence we feel today.

I think that it's ultimately a ***mystery***
how Jesus is present in our communion meal,
but we do believe he is in it,
and it is ***both physical and spiritual food*** and drink!

I think it's so powerful that Jesus appears to his followers,
and ***convinces*** them to believe he is alive—
by showing ***scars*** on his body, and asking for something to ***eat!***
He leads them to understanding by being ***vulnerable***.

There's that word again, that we usually want to avoid.
But what if we followed in his footsteps,
and led others by ***being vulnerable*** ourselves?
What if we showed one another ***our scars***,
and welcomed one another around our own ***tables?***
Simple acts, but powerful. Transformative.

Both things show we are just humans.
 We all need **peace and healing**,
 And we all need **food**.

There's something very moving to me,
 about sharing the communion meal in this church,
 especially through intinction.
 It's **simple**, a little **messy**,
 And **beautiful**.

Because we are invited by a **living, scarred** Savior,
 to join in a meal of **his own body and blood**,
 And we **bring our own** living, scarred, broken selves to partake,
 And that simple meal brings peace and healing—if we open our lives to it.

We start our worship with the **passing of Christ's peace**,
 remembering that Jesus removes all fear,
 and then we come to the place where true peace
 becomes **bread and wine**, broken and poured out for us.
 And just like the friends traveling to Emmaus,
 our **eyes are opened** when we hear his words at the Lord's table.

I like what I read from Pastor Debie Thomas in her blog, *Journey with Jesus*:

What if pushing past fear — fear of the stranger, fear of our inadequate culinary skills, fear of our messy kitchens, fear of wasting time or money, fear of experiencing rejection or failure, fear of not having enough left over for ourselves — is the best way to reveal Jesus to the world?

*What if **practicing hospitality is practicing resurrection**?*

What if more is at stake in a piece of fish (or a cup of tea, or a loaf of bread) than we have yet imagined?

When the disciples fed Jesus, he fed them in return.

*When they chose generosity over suspicion,
 their eyes were opened, death fled the room,
 and the resurrected Jesus **came alive** in them.*

Belief didn't come first.

Food did.

Scarred and hungry.

This is our God.

This is resurrection.

This is the Word made Flesh.

“Scarred and Hungry”, by Debie Thomas, *Journey with Jesus*, 2018

Scarred and hungry.

Just like us.

Friends, hear the ***Good News of the Gospel*** today!

We can find Jesus today, right in our midst,

if we have the hearts to see him.

May we open ourselves to one another, just as He did to us,

May we break bread together, at the Lord’s Table, and our own tables,
and welcome His presence!

Amen.