

Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections
based on this week's lectionary readings

April 18, 2021

Third Sunday of Easter, Year B

The readings this week:

- Acts 3:12-19 ◦ Psalm 4
- 1 John 3:1-7 ◦ Luke 24:36b-48



[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

What's for Supper?

Luke's version of Jesus' appearance to the disciples is both similar to and different from John's (that we read last week). Luke brings his own details.

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 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.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence. [from Luke 24]

"Shalom," says Jesus, which is sort of a cross between "Peace" and "Hey." It's both a meaningful greeting and a casual, everyday one. The friends did not experience it as either meaningful or casual; to them it was terrifying. The dead one is among them, and acting as though nothing weird has happened.

"C'mon, people. Here I am. No, really. Look at my scars. You can touch me and see that I'm not a ghost. It's okay." Some of them are starting to come around and then he asks for something to eat. They give him some fish and he eats in "in their presence." Luke is obviously writing for those who say that the resurrected Jesus was not physical.

What attracts me most, though, is Jesus' humanness. After three days of being closed up in a tomb, he's hungry. Who wouldn't be? When he walks in, his friends are so frightened they forget to show common hospitality. They don't offer him a place to sit, something to eat and drink, a traditional welcome.

He smells the food and looks over their shoulders while they are backing away from him and crowding around him in equal measure. Finally, in the midst of reassuring them, he can't wait any longer: "Uh. Do I smell fish?" Someone catches on to his hunger and goes to get him a plate, and they watch him chew and swallow. (Ghosts can't eat, can they?) As they are assessing him in a more friendly

manner, he's simply having some leftovers. Finally, after nourishment, he's ready to engage in real conversation.

Spirituality and relationships are so often connected to eating. It makes sense. It makes us human. We talk about "being fed" spiritually, or we call friends and make plans to eat together. Eating is human. Relationships are human. Spirituality is human. Those things are linked by the realities of life. While we cannot exist without food, it's also true that our existence is deeply impaired if we lack significant relationships or some type of spiritual awareness.

That's why it's rare to experience a social gathering without food: because we sense in some elemental way that feeding our bodies feeds our souls and moves our relationships to deeper levels.

We live better when we eat, especially when we eat good things together.

What's for supper?

~ Melissa Bane Sevier, [Contemplative Viewfinder](#)



Reflecting on the Word



1st Reading: [Acts 3:12-19](#)

Have you ever been afraid to pray for something that seemed “too good to be true?” From your own understanding of the Old Testament and the Jewish faith, in what ways did Peter carefully connect the story of Jesus to the story of the Jewish religion? Why do you think Peter was so careful to say that the man had been healed in the name of Jesus? Peter says that the man was healed through “faith in Jesus.” Jesus himself frequently told those he healed that their own faith had healed them. Whose faith healed this man? What is the difference between a simple prayer, and a prayer made “in faith?” How might our own faith – or lack of faith – affect the outcomes of our prayers? How might our own faith – or lack of faith – influence the ways we pray, and the kinds of things for which we pray? [Faith Element](#)

Psalm Reading: [Psalm 4](#)

What does verse 1 reveal about David’s relationship with God? What does verse 2 reveal about David’s relationship with some men? What brings comfort to David? What counsel does David give himself and us? Why does David pray as he prays in verse 6? Can you explain the comparison that David is making in verse 7? How does this Psalm minister to you personally? In what way will this Psalm help you to face the challenges of this week? [Magnify the Lord](#)



Easter is about transformation. This transformation is symbolically, mythically, sacramentally, imaged as death/resurrection, in turn imaged as Baptism. We are trying to undergo the transformation by experiencing the sacramental power of these images. We are following Jesus as our archetype, as well as our teacher and our friend, the one who exemplifies the very transformation we are facing. He is also what is called in Greek the *mystagogos*, the *mystagogue*, the one who leads us into the mysteries, the one who initiates us into the secret, into that which is told with closed lips. And he is himself the Way into which he leads us, as he is the Life into which we are led.

~ Beatrice Bruteau, *The Easter Mysteries*, via Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

3rd Reading: [1 John 3:1-7](#)

What do you think John means when he says, “the world does not know us”? What has not yet been revealed in us, and why? In what ways does John say that we will one day reflect God... and what does seeing God “just as he is” have to do with it? What do you think it means to purify ourselves? What is John’s argument in verses 5-6 about our sins – once we live in Christ, why should we stop sinning? Do you think this happens automatically, simply a result of our life in Christ? Why or why not? What, according to John, is the source of our good or “righteous” actions? Verse 6 seems like a strong statement – do you think John is really saying we will stop sinning altogether? Some Christians believe this... some even say it is necessary to salvation. How do other verses in this passage support or contradict this idea? [Faith Element](#)

4th Reading: [Luke 24:36b-48](#)

Jesus’ words to his disciples, “Peace to you!” are more than a greeting. It is a gift. What does it mean to have peace with God? How is the resurrection at the very heart of Christianity? The disciples struggled with doubt, even with the risen Jesus in their presence. How did Jesus confront their doubts? How does this speak to your doubts? Why does Jesus continue to bear the scars (“stigma”) of his crucifixion in his glorified body? What does it reveal about him? Jesus commands his disciples to touch his body. Jesus also eats a meal. Why is it important that Jesus possess a body of “flesh and bone”? What does it mean for us? What does it mean that the disciples “disbelieved for joy”? Has that happened to you? [Kings Chapel](#)



Praying Toward Sunday

How do we find the faith to believe the story of Easter, Jesus?
How do we grasp its truth?
We can only accept it;
refusing to reduce it to scientific debate
or historical literalism
kneeling with humility and awe beside the blood-
stained cross
and the empty grave;
For then, we are your witnesses.
How do we understand the mystery of your death and
life, Jesus?
How do we explain it?
We can only live it;
allowing it to permeate every grain
of this sand that forms us,
every thought, every priority, every act and every
interaction,
For then we are your witnesses,
and you deserve nothing less from us. Amen.

~ John van de Laar, [Sacredise](#)