

*They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”*

*When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.*

One: This is the Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

It's 6:00 in the morning and with the glimmer of light barely in the sky my alarm goes off calling me into my morning run. It goes off at the same time every day and there are mornings when I wake up... ready. My eyes fling open and with a burst of energy and I roll out of bed without a second thought. But then, there are mornings, when the warmth of my covers and tiredness of my eyes invites an immediate inner dialogue of all the reasons why I should forgo my morning jog and allow 30 more minutes of sleep.// When I am at my best, I will get up anyways. I will go through the motions of my morning routine. I will do my best to just show up for the run. Even when the air is cold on my face and my legs feel as if they might as well be cement... even when all I gain on that particular morning is the ghost of inspiration rather than any actual immediate gratification or satisfaction... I go through these motions of chasing ghosts, because I trust that it's for something, something more.

Our passage opens with the disciples actively talking about Jesus. “INDEED IS HE RISEN” they exclaim to one another. Which lets us as readers know right away then, that at this point in the story now, the disciples do in fact believe that something has happened. They believe Jesus has risen from the grave and is in their midst again. We know from the onset of this story that they do have *some kind* of faith. And yet, when Jesus comes to them, when Jesus is standing RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEM – they are not able to see him. In fact, the text tells us they think they are seeing a **ghost**. They somehow believe that seeing a ghost is easier to believe than Jesus actually physically being there with them. Jesus then goes as far as showing them his hands and feet – he eats fish to prove that he is not a ghost, he is a living, breathing, eating body – and he is there with them.

Now this story is interesting not only for what it does say... but also for what it doesn't say. Nowhere in this passage does the Risen Jesus appear to lose his temper for their inability to recognize him. As we mentioned last week, throughout Luke's entire gospel Jesus set up the pieces to the puzzle, and yet still they are unable to make sense of the image. Time and time again, they are unable to recognize the Risen Lord when he comes to them. And yet, time and time again, Jesus continues to come. He doesn't become angry or give up on them – but rather he continues to come to them. I wonder, I wonder what that tells us about Jesus? I wonder what that tells us about discipleship?

This interaction between Jesus and his disciples is one of Luke's six occurrences of resurrection accounts. Six times the Risen Jesus appears which is somewhat striking particularly when you compare it to Mark's gospel which leaves us with the empty tomb. Luke goes into significant detail to help us understand that the Risen Jesus continues to appear to his followers. And each time he comes to them, there seems to be traces of doubt, disbelief, or just a blatant

inability to recognize him. Whether it's Thomas, Cleopas, the two men on the road, or the collective group of disciple's, there are human boundaries keeping them from recognizing him but still, Jesus *continues to come*. The first thing this interaction with the Risen Jesus and his disciples tells us is that no matter where we are in our journey of faith, no matter what we do, Jesus comes to us. That ultimately, it's not about us, or how great our faith is, or how faithful we are, or how loyal, or smart... Jesus comes to us all the same. So first and foremost this passage is a passage of God's grace. God's grace is not about us at all – it's about God choosing and claiming us. God's grace extends to each of us because God so loves God's beloved creation.

But, the story doesn't end there. When Jesus asks the disciple's for fish, they give it to him even though they don't see that it is him. They continue to proclaim that he is risen even though they themselves can't recognize that it is him. They go through the motions, and they continue to show up even though they don't get any immediate gratification in return. They are not gaining any extra knowledge or any superior faith from being disciples, they simply follow, trusting it's for something, something more... so the second thing this story tells us is that to be a disciple is not about gaining knowledge, or instant satisfaction. To be a disciple means to follow faithfully trusting that what we are following is bigger than us. This contrast between Jesus and the disciples ability to see him sets a clear contrast between humanity and the divine. As disciples, we will always be limited in our humanity, we always be limited in our ability to grasp the complex nature of God. We will always have moments where we can't see Jesus in our midst, moments when it feels all we are doing is chasing ghosts – ghosts of what we hope God to be, long for God to be. But to be a disciple means, we press forward anyways following in the place of tension. For it is in that place of tension or discomfort that we discover faith – a faith in which we are called to take part.

Which then brings us to our third and final understanding of this passage. Our post resurrection perspective gives us the advantage of understanding that what will be revealed about God through the resurrection of Christ far exceeds anything the disciples thought they had expected. When they acknowledge that Jesus had risen from the grave, they were actively out there looking for him, they never could have imagined what this would reveal about God's relationship with God's beloved world or what this would mean for in the call to discipleship. Never could they have expected that this was bigger than ghosts or even a human Jesus being raised from the dead by some divine power... you see this is not a Lazarus moment, this is an Easter Moment. *A moment when God broke through our human boundaries to dwell among us.*

When we trust that God meets us because we are God's beloved creation, when we respond – following faithfully in the trust that this is so much bigger than us, then *we become a part of the resurrection by being God's new creation*, because in us **God is not done creating**. You see discipleship is not about gaining the knowledge in understanding how the pieces come together in order to understand God, discipleship is recognizing that we are a piece of the puzzle. That in the resurrection God continues to dwell among us calling us to be proclaimers of the gospel by sharing peace, love, and faith of God. We now have become a part of the story. God continues to come to us because the work, the endurance, the act of discipleship is about rising above our human limitations and achieving a divine spiritual unity with the one who created us, loves, us, and calls us into more. In the resurrection, God continues to create in us.

On my morning jogs, it's hard to hard to tell how it will happen, perhaps it's an immediate reaction when my route takes me past the beauty of the morning sun rising above the corn field that I otherwise would have slept through – or perhaps it's not until several weeks or even months later when I am grateful for the strength and endurance for another run because of

the dedication to the mornings I just didn't feel it... but no matter how or when it comes, always, *always* I am reminded that it's not about the individual run, it's not about an instant gratification, it's about something more... It's about building an endurance for a greater cause, about nourishing my spirit, it's about going through the motions sometimes, if nothing else, for the sake of discipline. Always I learn, each individual run is a piece to a much larger experience.

In the passages that follow Jesus will remind the disciples that their work has only just begun. He will remind them that what they are working for, goes so much further than what is right in front of them and that each of them is vital piece of a much larger purpose. This story does not end with the cross or even the empty tomb. In fact, the story doesn't really end at all... it continues with the resurrection of Christ and call to discipleship for each of us. It goes on my friends in each of you.

So, I wonder, what ghosts are you chasing? Where are you experiencing a lack of faith that God is with you, or quiet, where are finding spiritual exhaustion or human distraction? How can this community, this congregation, help to nourish your spirit that we can come to God with all that we have to offer – *not all that we have to gain?* Christ rose from death to reveal that God loves God's beloved creation, Christ rose from death to call us to be a part of this much larger story, Christ rose from death to dwell in and with and through you. May it be so. Amen.