

Sermon for Sunday, April 26, 2009

Third Sunday of Easter

By Tim Ljunggren

First Lesson	Acts 3:12-19
Psalm	4
Second Lesson	1 John 3:1-7
Gospel	Luke 24:36b-48

While the disciples were telling how they had seen Jesus risen from the dead, 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."

In today's gospel lesson, we hear of yet another miraculous appearance by the risen Christ amidst his disciples. Once again, those present thought that they were witnessing the presence of a ghost—Jesus is quick to assure them that this is not the case.

As we are constantly reminded during the fifty days of Easter, the resurrection of Christ is not just something that happened; it goes on happening as spring goes on coming. It is the indestructible hope that has sustained Christians for over 2,000 years. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then our faith is worthless. Without the triumph over death that the resurrection represents, Jesus' kingdom is as illusionary as all the others—as Caesar's, as the Dictatorship of Proletariat that can never be overthrown, as Hitler's Reich that is to last for a thousand years. If there is no resurrection, then Jesus was forsaken on the cross, and his ministry a fiasco. With his last gasp of mortal breath he said: *It is finished*, and there the story would have ended, except that with his immortal breath he added: *I am with you always, even to the end of the world.*

This morning, we hear yet another resurrection tale. That the resurrection happened, and that in consequence of it Jesus' followers who had scattered drew together again, resolved to go about their master's business, is, without a doubt, true.

Likewise, Jesus' claim to be the Light of the World, and his related promise that through him we may be reborn into new people, liberated from servitude to the ego and our appetites, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

This, then, is where we stand today, on this Third Sunday of Easter: We are standing with the risen Christ, completely unafraid, willing to share a meal with him. We stand in awe as we hear his words:

"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." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

Let us bear witness to the risen Christ.