

Easter 3 B 2015 Earth Day Aurora

Here we are, two weeks after Easter. I find myself like the earliest disciples, wondering about Bible stories, the liturgies, the celebrations we shared at church and with family and friends. Like most events, in just a short time, we move away from them and fail to savor the experiences. The “world waits for no one” is absolutely true.

We’re wrestling with the question, “What does all this resurrection stuff mean?” And also deep in our hearts, “What could all of it mean in MY life? Is this all just a story from long ago, or does it mean something important to me? Could it profoundly change my life?” Or, our lives.

Luke’s Gospel tells us that the disciples were frightened and confused and filled with questions. We are in good company indeed.

I find it marvelous that the story takes us into a place of familiarity and comfort. Jesus appears to the eleven and their companions as they prepare to eat together. Reports of encounters with Jesus alive is the topic of discussion. Suddenly he is in their midst, most likely as they sit around a dinner table.

As you know, the Gospel of Luke is full of references to food and meals, and through the food something important is communicated to us. Remember the banquet at Levi’s house (Luke 5:27-32), the dinner at Simon’s house (7:36-50; 9:10-17), the feeding of the 5,000; (10:38-42), meals at Mary and Martha’s house (11:37-52), a dinner at a Pharisee’s house (14:1-24), another Sabbath Meal at a Pharisee’s house (19:1-10), also dining at Zaccheus’ house (22:14-38), and of course the Last Supper (24:28-32), and after the Resurrection the breaking of bread at Emmaus and now eating one of the same items shared at the miraculous feedings in Galilee.

Of course the resurrected Christ would not need to eat. His eating was proof that he is not a “spirit.” A fully human and fully divine Jesus Christ, was, in human nature, a physical and material being who needed sustenance like all other living parts of creation.

Jesus’ eating recalls the Last Supper. His eating recalls Luke 8:55 when Jairus’ daughter was raised and Jesus tells her parents to give her something to eat. His eating recalls the road to Emmaus when he was recognized in the breaking of the bread. Isn’t it interesting that food stories actually point to nourishing not only our bodies, but also our spirits, and our relationships between people! Eating is a religious, a sacramental experience always even when we’re not aware of it.

I suggest that what we have in this story are insights not only into our Lord’s resurrection but also right back to the beginning of His being born among us in the Incarnation. God takes on flesh, physical existence in a world of substance, of animate and inanimate reality.

We Christians hold to an understanding that the material world is sacred and that God is Creator, Redeemer and Savior of the whole cosmos. All creation contains the life force of God in some way if it is to exist.

This resurrection appearance story notes that the Risen One does not leave the world behind but rather returns to call us to restore, indeed to save, all living things on a healthy planet. In the Book of Revelation, chapter 22, we see a vision of God one fine day coming down to a holy city, with the river running through it and trees growing on either side. There we are to dwell together for all eternity.

Earth Day is this coming Wednesday. It is a day in which to recognize the vital connections between us and the earth. First and foremost, we are sustained by the food and water produced upon it. But also food links us to those who grow and harvest it. This global interconnectedness flows and beats in all living things. Yet in our own era, humans are actually destroying the very necessary ingredients to life as it should be.

Few of us could sustain our lives for very long if the complex systems that provide us with food and energy were interrupted. Just look at the suffering caused by wars or natural disasters that make life suddenly so tenuous for those caught in troubling circumstances.

Yet we continue to rely upon ways and means that are most likely diminishing if not limiting future resources. The massive system of dependence on fossil fuels is taking its toll on the earth. The pollution of the atmosphere and waters is advancing at an alarming rate. The diagnosis is in: the earth and life on it is in trouble.

In a time of fear, grief and loss when Jesus died, the disciples looked inward, tending to their own business. Is this familiar to us? In our own corporate time of grief and loss and fear (be it climate change or Trinity Church's future), we too are tempted to look inward and tend only our own nets. In our personal lives, instinct tells us to act like a wounded dog and crawl under the porch when pain and loss rise up.

Can we still be surprised and scared by the appearance of a stranger, The Risen Christ? This stranger may appear in person, or as a prophetic word or a flash of insight and understanding seen and unseen. The Risen One still appears suddenly among us to proclaim New Life, Salvation, and deliverance. For us who believe, he is no stranger at all.

Christ calls us beyond this self-protective instinct. Yet Jesus' greeting of "peace" was startling, almost unwelcome, but nevertheless He calls us to come out of the painted sepulchers, the tombs of cynicism and apathy that have become refuges, perhaps even comfort zones for us.

Jesus is leading us, going before us to show the way.

God is calling us to action, to live into a new reality beyond climate change, or sickness, or sadness, beyond even death itself.

The question remains: What kind of response can we make to Jesus call for peace and justice? What sort of food can we offer to nourish a world which is hungry for spiritual and physical security? A world which wants to avoid death.

First, we can offer hope. We can share the news that there is life after death. We are all able to be risen with Christ.

Second, we can offer faith. We can share our belief that God is ready and able to guide and strengthen.

Third, we can offer love. A love which shares, which cares, which acts, which speaks words of comfort and inspiration and challenge.

Easter has meaning beyond measure and infinite in power. God's presence is available to all who seek a better way of living. Come, take a place at the table prepared for you, now is the holy moment, eat and be satisfied. Amen.